

SEDA highlights record year

Corporate culture expert shares secrets to Disney success

The Disney brand is known for having some of the most cheerful, customer-focused employees in the world.

The secret is simple — the culture of courtesy, service and togetherness employees share behind the scenes, according to Doug Lipp, author and former head of training at Disney University.

“What happens ‘backstage’ will end up ‘on-stage’ if we aren’t friendly with each other and smiling, then we’ll have a similar attitude toward our guests,” he said.

Lipp was the highlight speaker for the Savannah Economic Development Authority’s annual meeting. The 500-plus business and community leaders gathered Wednesday morning at the Savannah International Trade & Convention Center to celebrate SEDA’s record year.

Lipp, author of “Disney U: How Disney University Develops the World’s Most Engaged, Loyal, and Customer-Centric Employees,” shared some of the training tactics Disney uses to develop their engaged and loyal employees and encouraged those in attendance to “hire right, train right and treat right” to develop a seamless work culture among employees and to ultimately be the good example they want to see.

“What is your mission, what’s your vision and how are you propelling your employees to be an extension of you?” Lipp asked the crowd.



Doug Lipp, former head of the Disney University Training Team, gives the keynote speech at the 2018 Savannah Economic Development Authority annual meeting.

“Every one of (Disney’s) employees are an extension of Walt Disney in one form or another. Nobody walks past a piece of trash without picking it up because that’s what Walt did and that’s how you create the happiest place on earth is through that culture of what your staff does every day without having to be told over and over again.”

Recapping 2017

Calling it a fantastic year, SEDA President and CEO Trip Tollison said the success could be measured primarily in jobs and investment, both of which reached new records in 2017.





"The two big measurements that we always look at are jobs and investment; in 2017 we helped facilitate over 1,000 jobs and helped facilitate almost half a billion dollar in investment, so it was a remarkable year for us at SEDA," said Tollison, who highlighted SEDA's successful year through a series of videos.

Tollison also announced that construction on the Savannah Manufacturing Center, a 685-acre parcel of land on Old River Road in west Chatham County, is set to begin at the end of the month. "... We made the conscious decision years ago and our boards of directors thankfully have been very, very supportive of this effort that is the next generation crossroad of Savannah Manufacturing Center. In 2017 we did a lot of work and planning to get ready to go under construction," Tollison said.

The organization purchased the land near Interstate 16 for development as a business/industrial park focused on manufacturing in November 2016. The development will provide more than 3 million square-feet of industrial space.

Outgoing board Chairman Steve Green, who passed the gavel to Kevin Jackson at the meeting's end, said the site will give Savannah a competitive advantage over other areas.

"We've been very pleased with the amount of investment over this past year, half a billion dollars and over a 1,000 jobs, which is another record, but

we're mostly excited about the Savannah Manufacturing Center," Green said, adding that the recent partnership between SEDA and the Savannah College of Art and Design to create SCAD+ will also bring new opportunity to the city.

Announced in November, SCAD+ is a jointly funded entrepreneurial program, which aims to help alumni develop commercially viable digital products and advance the city's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Each organization contributes up to \$300,000 to cover operational expenses of the program and both will receive a small stake in each successful program project. SEDA's share of any future

revenues will be used to create and grow a sustained funding source to support creative technology start-ups in Savannah.

"(Coding) is really where the entertainment industry is moving and we think that's a great adjunct to the film business we're engaged in and will be transformative in terms of the high tech space here in the community," Green said.