

W. BEN ROSS

MBA—GENERAL MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE - ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Results-driven General Manager with an Executive MBA, delivering targeted results in leadership, management, and direction of multi-site global operations to significant increased levels of performance. Organizational Leader with a track record of successful start-ups, as well as leading struggling organizations to successfully change directions by exploiting core competencies, better utilizing resources for competitive advantage, and reducing costs and waste. A professional who builds high performance teams and drives results through listening, collaborating, and inspiring organizational excellence.

Areas of Expertise

Business Retention – International Trade and Recruitment - Product Development - Kaizen - Organizational Leadership - Business Development - Start-ups - Executive Leadership - P & L Responsibility-Public Speaking - Executive Coaching - Capital Financing - Work Force Development - Strategic Planning - Group Facilitation – Consulting - Tourism Development

- **Forward-thinking leadership experience in international development**, business development and process improvement. Responsible for more than 25 direct reports for global operating budgets over \$1M. Achieves goals on time and under budget.
- **Big Picture General Manager with Vision:**
 - **\$1M project returned \$50M in cost avoidance in 10 years.**
 - Directed local business and retail trade study that **identified \$508M in import losses** and implemented **Shift 10**, expecting to keep **\$50M in county** and reduce **unemployment.**
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 - Fostered a community culture to value education and implemented initiatives that **reduced High School dropout rates by 34%** and increased the percentage of adults with a high school credential from **65% to 79%.**
 - Directed Educational study that **protected \$15M in federal education funding** to the community.

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- Appointed to expand international development in a southern state; increased budget by \$1M; hired staff comprising 100 years' experience and 11 foreign languages; opened and staffed two additional offices in Asia and Europe; secured \$1.2B in foreign investment and took 200 Louisiana companies into global markets.
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- **First Executive Director** of a 43-county regional municipal de jure corporation of the State of Kentucky to expand the economy of the entire region from a solely extractive economy to add manufacturing as an economic driver. In three years, recruited or developed seven manufacturing companies, including the largest non-coal manufacturing investment ever made in the region (\$106M with over 200 jobs).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES | CAREER HISTORY

ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGIES, LLC, Waukesha, WI (2017 – Present)

Ascendant Technologies, LLC provides strategic direction and financing to companies launching disruptive technologies.

Principal and Project Developer

- Secured new capital projects ranging in size from \$2M to over \$2.5B including:
 - Consulting with the developers of a \$2.5B synthetic fuels production facility which included working with the host state and locality to advise on unique incentives and advising on financing options.
 - Advising C-level executives at a UK firm commercializing a disruptive technology with an annual global market of \$140B, including valuing the market, strategic direction, developing capital sources, market entrance, and governmental relations strategies.

MT. CARMEL AREA ECONOMIC ALLIANCE, Mt. Carmel, IL (2012 – 2017)

Mt. Carmel Area Economic Alliance, with a budget of \$200K, provides community and economic development to Wabash County and Mt. Carmel, IL, a community of 13,000 in southeastern IL.

President and COO

- Led development of the Economic Development Strategic Master Plan outlining five strategic areas of activity.

- Led identification of \$508M annual import loses, which led to a buy local campaign aimed at creating over 300 jobs and keeping over \$50M in retail sales at home.
- Directed a regional business incubator feasibility study that did not recommend an incubator, but which led to achievement of the USRDA SET designation for seven counties improving the region's advantage for federal grants.
- Collaborated with local government and business to establish a 22-year Enterprise Zone enabling tangible state tax benefits to recruited companies locating in the zone.
- Established a youth program that enabled 50 teens to start companies.

DAVIDSON VISION, INC. Lexington, NC (2002 – 2012)

Davidson Vision, Inc. was charged with leading community development in Davidson County, NC, a community of 159,000 in the Piedmont region of NC: \$1M operating budget to prepare the community for economic growth.

President

- Working with business and education leaders, established programs that improved community marketability to industry including:
 - Reduced the aggregate HS dropout rate by 34%.
 - Established early college and career academy to ensure workforce readiness.
 - Increased the percentage of adults with high school credentials from 65% to 79%.
 - Protected \$15M in federal education funds annually.
 - Implemented programs that enabled 50 designated minority leaders to join boards/commissions.
 - Led local effort for Tax Increment Financing that passed referendum state-wide.

ATHENS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, Athens, GA (1996 – 1999)

Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, with a \$500K budget, served Athens-Clark County, GA, a community of ~100,000.

President

- Increased non-dues revenue to 25% of total; reduced red ink by 90%.
- Increased membership from 900 to 1000.
- Facilitated strategic partnerships resulting in a comprehensive economic development plan.
- Hosted a weekly business television program to raise awareness of the Chamber.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF WAYNE COUNTY, Richmond, IN

(1994 – 1996)

The Economic Development Corporation of Wayne County, with a budget of \$1M, serves this community of 72,000.

President – CEO

- Led the organization startup and strategic direction, acquired state property for an industrial park and recruited \$80M of new investment.

EAST KENTUCKY CORPORATION, Hazard, KY (1990 – 1994)

East Kentucky Corporation with a budget of \$500K was chartered in 1989 to expand the economy of 43 Appalachian counties with a population of 850,000.

Executive Director

- Directed development of seven new companies including the largest non-coal manufacturing investment (\$106M) ever made in the region and helped restructure the KY Economic Development Cabinet to a public/private partnership.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, Baton Rouge, LA (1988 – 1990)

Appointed by Governor Buddy Roemer to direct the

Office of International Trade, Finance and Development

- Appointed by Governor Buddy Roemer to triple the Louisiana International Development function. **Hired nine additional professional staff** at HQ with **100 years** combined relevant **experience and fluency in 11 foreign languages**. **Opened and staffed two additional trade offices in Asia and Europe** and **increased funding from \$500K to 1.5M** and defended before the legislature. Secured **\$1.2B in reverse investment** and **introduced 200 Louisiana companies to foreign markets**.

Prior to 1988, held positions in corporate communications, public relations, and public information in the energy industry. Responsibilities included public speaking, speech writing, being a spokesperson, and managing operations at industry pavilions.

EDUCATION

Vanderbilt University, Owen Graduate School of Management – MBA

University of Tennessee – BA Political Science

