

Interview with Hunter Goosmann, General Manager, ERC Broadband
Conducted 11/20/07 by Joy Flora and Tim Johnson

Hunter Goosmann is a graduate of Leadership Asheville (class 25). He is native to Asheville and graduated from the University of Tennessee and the University of Miami (FL). He spent several years aboard and then worked in Denver, Colorado before joining ERC Broadband three years ago. ERC Broadband is a project of the Education and Research Consortium, a non-profit entity created in 1997 for the purpose of furthering economic development in the Western Carolinas through education, infrastructure, and capital development. Hunter serves on various boards and advocacy groups including the board of the Buncombe County Economic Development Coalition.

Question: How did you become involved with the Economic Development Coalition?

Answer: I applied for the board position. I thought it was a good way to help develop the community. I see my role as speaking to technology needs in addition to supporting economic recruitment and developing grass roots businesses. One of the focuses of the coalition is attracting and retaining high-tech manufacturing and information technology jobs.

Question: What are the major problems facing Western North Carolina?

Answer: Economic recruitment, the digital divide and the need to develop grass roots businesses. Young people today have such an advanced start in technology; it is like having lights compared with candles. They should be able to use their skills here versus having to leave the region for employment.

Buncombe County has a lot of broadband capacity. But it is not easily accessible to businesses or individuals in all areas. This capacity is integral to the present and future economy. The community has to help grow businesses. There is a need for awareness of opportunities to participate in all these areas. I spend a great deal of time developing personal relationships through ERC Broadband and other organizations I am involved with to create awareness of the issues and opportunities.

Question: What are the best examples of successful collaboration in the Western North Carolina region?

Answer: AB Tech is one of the best examples of collaboration. K. Ray Bailey did an outstanding job of collaboration with the community including continuing education with elementary students and the technical incubator with the Enka campus.

Question: Does the media help or hurt regional problem solving?

Answer: It draws light on problems but does not necessarily address solutions. There is no reward for members of the media to advocate for solutions.

Question: Has the region faced up to the issues of race and disparity?

Answer: Asheville is a very diverse community. With that said, there is still much to be done that addresses the issues of diversity and the digital divide. There are still large areas of "haves and have nots." As Asheville continues to grow, it will have to do a

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better job of bringing the community together under a common umbrella. Through the services offered at ERC and the boards I serve on, I believe I can at least be part of better addressing this issue which is still a major challenge throughout the community.

Question: What are some of your favorite leadership quotes?

Answer: “Never mistake motion with action” (Ernest Hemmingway).

“The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain” (Dolly Parton).

“The chief cause of failure and unhappiness is trading what we want most for what we want at the moment.” (Unknown).

We thought that Hunter summed up our time together when he said “leaders have to pick low hanging fruit and advocate for themselves.”

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