Bill Blazar leaves footprint on Minnesota Chamber Federation

By Doug Loon

Bill Blazar retired last month as senior vice president of public affairs and business development at the Minnesota Chamber. His legacy will live on in the Minnesota Chamber Federation and communities across the state. I am hard-pressed to think of another individual with the knowledge and passion for developing and growing Minnesota’s economy.

His accomplishments during a stellar 27-year career have left an indelible mark on all programs and initiatives of this organization. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Grow Minnesota! Partnership, the Minnesota Chamber’s distinctive private-sector job retention and creation program. The brainchild of Blazar, the program is in its 16th year and operates with 70-plus local chamber partners.

Each year business leaders connect with nearly 1,000 companies. Every Grow Minnesota! conversation has four purposes. We thank the business owner or manager for investing in our state and employing Minnesotans. We learn as much as we can about the business and its Minnesota activities. We ask if we can assist the company to stay and grow in our state. We ask what policymakers can do to improve our state’s overall business environment.

Grow Minnesota! as a program, and Bill as an individual, truly represent the eyes and ears of a comprehensive economic development effort, enriching the state’s ability to address the needs of businesses in all corners of the state and to keep them growing in Minnesota.

Blazar is a walking encyclopedia of the state’s economic landscape. He has likely visited every county in Minnesota and has personally visited hundreds of businesses in all stretches of the state. He knows firsthand the challenges to develop the state’s economy; he can also showcase specific successes. For every business problem, he can provide a list of “best practices” to drive a solution.

In addition to spearheading Grow Minnesota!, Blazar was a strategic thinker with a keen mind for developing public policy that served all Minnesotans in the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota alike. He was a doer and a problem-solver, never satisfied unless he could deliver results. He was a firm believer that not every problem needed a legislative fix. The Grow Minnesota! Partnership is a perfect example of how he encouraged businesses to seek private-sector solutions to everyday business challenges.

It’s been my honor to work alongside Bill during my career in the Chamber community. I have long admired his work when I served the U.S. Chamber’s vice president for regional affairs and advocacy for the Midwest Region, and now close-up the last three years as president of the Minnesota Chamber.

Blazar worked to grow the state’s economy in small ways and in big ways. He did it whether on the job or off the job. He did it every day. He may no longer be sitting behind his desk at the Minnesota Chamber, but I’m confident he will continue to work every day for the betterment of all Minnesotans.

I’m sure I speak for the entire Minnesota Chamber Federation when I say, “Bill, job well done.”

**Doug Loon is president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce –** [**www.mnchamber.com**](http://www.mnchamber.com)**.**