

John A. Groh

President/CEO, Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau effective July 6, 2009
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Professional Accomplishments of Note

Rockford Chamber of Commerce

- Annual membership retention rate improved from 76% in 2006 to 80% in 2007 and 86% in 2008.
- Member satisfaction increased year-over-year (2007/2008): 7% increase in members saying “we benefit from membership” and 5% increase in members saying “membership is good for business.”
- Launched new initiatives including:
 - Forty Leaders Under 40, a program recognizing emerging community leaders.
 - Candidate School, a six-week program that trained 26 individuals interested in seeking public office.
 - Ignite, a five-county group designed to help young professionals connect to each other and the community as part of a strategy to attract/retain young professionals to the region.
- Oversaw redevelopment and redesign of:
 - *The Voice* (the Chamber’s monthly newspaper), leading to an 8% increase in members saying it was “above average” or “one of the best.” Received national award of excellence.
 - Electronic publications (website, e-newsletters) and annual print publications. Increased member familiarity and favorability ratings 5% + year-over-year for each category (2007/2008).

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

- Ensured RACVB organizational continuity following retirement of the CVB’s founding President/CEO; zero staff-level turnover within 12 months, balanced budget, productive marketing and sales programs.
- Co-lead successful development of new regional “Rockford. Real. Original” brand.
- Directed CVB marketing/PR for Rockford Art Museum’s Vallien glass exhibition, increasing museum attendance 75% in three months.
- Directed marketing/PR/exhibit opening for Jane at Burpee Museum, garnering 27 million worldwide media impressions and a 45% increase in attendance in six months.
- Developed, with CEO, statewide coalition (Visitors Mean Jobs) that led to restoring \$25 million in proposed funding cuts to Illinois Bureau of Tourism/Illinois CVBs.

Professional Experience

July 6, 2009

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

President/CEO

- Provide strategic direction, guidance and managerial oversight to all functional areas supporting the mission of the RACVB, including sales and marketing, internal and external communication and product development.

August 2007 to June 30, 2009

Rockford Chamber of Commerce:

Executive Vice President: *October 2008 – present*

Senior Vice President, Marketing & Public Affairs: *August 2007 – September 2008*

- Oversee development and execution of all Chamber events and programs (more than 50 per year). Includes educational seminars and conferences, monthly luncheons, major annual events such as chamber annual dinner, two golf outings and regional business expo. Guests counts range from 25 to 2,000 attendees
- Direct marketing and communications program for 2nd largest Chamber in Illinois, 1,600 members
- Manage and coach team of five FTE employees and retained contractors. Recruited director to run start-up young professionals group
- Oversee publication, production and editorial direction of monthly *B2B* newspaper, the *Voice* and additional print and electronic publications
- Oversee member retention/service programs (improved annual retention from 76% to 86%)
- Lead annual strategic planning process for staff, advise CEO during board of directors planning retreats
- Develop and implement annual government relations programs – including developing first-ever candidate training school and hosting political candidate forums/debates, etc.

June 1999 – August 2007

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Executive Vice President: *February 2006 – August 2007*

- Directed leisure and group marketing efforts; oversaw external marketing/advertising programs, public relations activities, e-marketing/web-based programs
- Responsible for product-development initiatives in conjunction with CEO (i.e., Sportscore Two, Jane, Vallien exhibit, Cultural Corridor), political affairs (lead staff member on Springfield & DC lobbying coalitions), stakeholder communication, community relations and local media relations
- Ensured board/organizational policy and budget compliance (\$2.9 million annual budget), positive employee morale, staff productivity and sales results achievement
- Directed (with executive team) organizational short- and long-term planning processes
- Ensured seamless transition and organizational continuity during CEO transition (summer/fall 2006)
- Managed and coached team of up to eight FTE employees and multiple retained contractors. Involved in all aspects of HR management including coaching, mentoring, disciplining, hiring, termination, and compensation and benefit analysis

Director of Public Affairs: *November 2002 – February 2006*

- Developed annual marketing plan for leisure and group markets and directed implementation
- Oversaw bureau policy-setting/compliance, strategic initiative implementation, agency budget adherence and advancement of product-development initiatives as member of agency's executive team
- Established and maintained media relations as RACVB spokesperson, developed annual PR plan
- Led bureau and local visitor-industry, political-advocacy efforts with local, state and federal officials, managed state and federal lobbying coalitions and contract lobbyists
- Managed communications team with six full-time, part-time and contracted professionals

International Sales Manager: October 2000 – August 2007

- Wrote application/plan, managed budget and oversaw reporting functions for annual state grant
- Designed and implemented tourism sales and marketing strategies for Scandinavia, Germany and U.K.
- Cultivated relationships with U.S. and foreign travel operators, tour operators and media outlets
- Directed work of international sales and public relations contractors in Sweden, Germany and U.K.
- Networked with tourism agencies in Illinois & Midwest to develop collaborative sales/marketing programs

Communications Manager: June 1999 – November 2002

- Developed and oversaw implementation of annual communication/marketing plan
- Oversaw production of collateral materials and publications

Education & Certifications

- Executive Masters in Business Administration, Northern Illinois University – College of Business, 2010
- Certified Destination Management Professional certificate program, Destination Marketing Association International/Purdue University, in process
- Bachelor of Arts, Human Communications major, Political Science minor, Bethel University, St. Paul, MN
- Diploma, Rockford East High School

Internships

- Washington, D.C. leadership press office of Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House
- Rockford Health System Public Relations
- Bethel University Office of Communications and Marketing

Selected Community & Industry Involvement

- Attracting & Retaining Talent to the Rockford Area Steering Committee, August 2006 – present
- Riverfront Museum Park for the Arts & Sciences Board of Governors (1st Vice Chair), Oct. 2006 – present
- Next Rockford Strategy Team (Board of Directors), April 2007 – present
- Bethel University, St. Paul, MN, National Alumni Association Board of Directors, October 2004 – present
- Sister Cities Commission, City of Rockford (Secretary), April 2007 – present, mayoral appointment
- Rockford Area Arts Council Board of Directors, April 2000 – January 2005, April 2006 – present
- Upper Midwest Association of CVBs Board of Directors, September 2005 – August 2007
- Friends of the Parks Referendum Steering Committee, 2003
- Citizens for Public Safety Referendum Steering Committee, 2002
- Tiger Woods Jr. Golf Clinic & Exhibition Steering Committee, 2000, 2001
- Swedish Historical Society of Rockford Board of Directors, April 2008 – June 2009
- River District Association Board of Directors, January 2001 – June 2009

Speeches & Conference Presentations

- Missouri Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Annual Conference Presenter, June 2006, "Will They Come if You Build It? Mold-breaking Partnerships That Drive Results" and "Visitors Mean Jobs: Legislative Agenda Setting & Advocacy"
- Pennsylvania Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Annual Conference Presenter, 2005 "Visitors Mean Jobs: Preparing & Executing Legislative Advocacy Programs at the Local and State Level"
- Upper Midwest Convention & Visitors Bureau Association, Fall Conference Presenter, 2005 "Visitors Mean Jobs: Preparing & Executing Legislative Advocacy Programs"
- Travel Industry Association, ESTO Conference Presenter, 2004, "Tourism IS Economic Development"
- TEAM Illinois Summit presenter, 2003 "Non-traditional Partnerships That Work and Will Work for You"

Personal

Born and raised in Rockford, Illinois. Wife, Kaylene, works at Savant Capital Management, Inc. Interests include reading political biographies, spending time outdoors and eating at off-the-beaten-path restaurants. The Grohs have two sons, enjoy taking weekend trips, walking in their neighborhood with their sons and Ozzy - their American Bulldog, and attending concerts.

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