

Q&A with Mark Klipsch, co-chairman St. Louis/Bi-State Area Chapter of SCORE

IBJ: It sounds like some big things are happening in the SCORE chapter in our area. The chapters that were active in Belleville and Godfrey have now been blended into a bi-state chapter?

Klipsch: Correct. Belleville and Godfrey were branches of what was



Klipsch

known as the Southwest Illinois chapter. The SWIL Chapter was merged into the St. Louis Chapter in April 2018.

IBJ: What does it mean for SCORE's

representation in the Southwestern Illinois market?

Klipsch: Fortunately, many of the great SCORE mentors elected to stay onboard and they are continuing to serve the Metro East business community. But, it's a big territory and we are actively looking to find additional volunteers willing to share their business knowledge and success with other business owners.

IBJ: SCORE started out as the Service Corps of Retired Executives. Now, it's just SCORE and it's no longer just retired people who are business mentors. A lot of them have full-time jobs.

Klipsch: We've really worked hard in the last several years to expand our roles beyond just retired folks. One of the biggest reasons is the perception. In today's world, technology changes fast, and there are guys on our roster that have been out of the day-to-day business world for 10+ years. Well, you know there's a lot that's changed in 10 years. A lot of (retirees) have fundamental business skills that haven't changed in two thousand years — and they still have a wealth of knowledge to share in that respect. But when it comes to some of the more recent

technology areas, there is a perception if you're still in the workforce or retired more recently, you're more relevant. Our goal is to provide a wide variety of resources in the form of mentors and subject matter experts so that business owners can get the right help.

IBJ: What sorts of volunteer numbers are you dealing with here?

Klipsch: Our chapter in total, including those that we have on the Illinois side of the river, total about 80. It fluctuates. I've been part of the organization for just over five years. Turnover in that same five years is about 20 to 30 percent year to year. We have a couple of people whose volunteer role is primarily recruiting new volunteers.

IBJ: What's the scope of your territory?

Klipsch: The SCORE St. Louis Bi-State Region chapter serves Eastern Missouri and Southwestern Illinois. In Illinois, we go all the way north to Quincy and all the way (southeast) to Indiana, if you don't include Springfield or Decatur because there is a chapter there. In Missouri, we cover South to Cape Girardeau, North to Hannibal, and West to Columbia. There are three other chapters that cover the rest of the state — Kansas City, Springfield and Lake of the Ozarks.

IBJ: Tell us about the events you hold to build awareness.

Klipsch: We do a workshop series on a variety of business topics — from finance to accounting to marketing to technology. We do six workshops every month, on the first Saturday of the month and generally the second and fourth Mondays, depending on holidays.

Of those six workshops, one is all day on a Saturday — How to Start and Manage a Business, where we cover the 50,000-foot view of a number of business topics. The other five workshops are all three-hour workshops that allow us to get deeper into the weeds on areas that we cover in the all-day workshop.

IBJ: How are the workshops handled?

Klipsch: We offer workshops that are facilitated by subject matter experts, some of whom are SCORE volunteers.

I myself do marketing workshops. I've been a marketing and business development consultant for 37 years. One of the workshops I facilitate offers general marketing principles, but then I also do some very specific subjects like price strategy, direct mail and LinkedIn marketing.

We also have volunteers who teach QuickBooks classes, legal classes, finance classes, business plan classes.

We've got a wealth of resources in the way of subject matter experts on our bench and the bench across the country.

IBJ: Where do these workshops take place?

Klipsch: Currently, we host all of our workshops at Fontbonne University (in St. Louis), which is a very central location in the territory we serve. This is our third year at Fontbonne. We have done things in other areas and we found we were just spreading out people in different areas. By concentrating it all at Fontbonne, some of the people in outlying areas have to come a little farther from home, but we're able to deliver the workshops far more efficiently.

IBJ: How do people stay aware of what's going on in your group?

Klipsch: That's a challenge, too. From the marketing side a lot is done through word of mouth. We've got an email list of over 6,000 addresses to promote all of our workshops. We recently launched a monthly print newsletter that is distributed to workshop attendees, our clients, at local chambers of commerce, and when we our speaker's present to groups in the area. The newsletter takes the place of brochures. There's no reason to give someone a brochure beyond the first meeting. Our professionally produced newsletter provides real local business success stories, great content, and a listing

of all the upcoming workshops for the next two months.

I'm also in the middle of rolling out a Zoom video platform. We will be able to simulcast meetings and workshops, record training and do face-to-face mentoring. Every one of our mentors will have the ability to do video mentoring come this summer. It will be one more way we have of helping our people reach business owners in a way that's convenient to both parties.

IBJ: In your five years with SCORE, what have been the most popular topics?

Klipsch: Most of the people that come to SCORE request help with financial-related questions or marketing-related questions. These are consistently our top two areas. But there are also people seeking our guidance in starting, growing, and exiting both for-profit and non-profit enterprises.

IBJ: For anyone who wants to reach your organization, how do they do it?

Klipsch: We have one number for the entire metro area. That is (866) 726-7340 (866-SCORE-40).

When someone calls, they'll have the option to request a mentor or reach a particular branch office. Their voicemail is then directed by email to the person who is best able to handle that call and can respond quickly.

The main email address is email_score@stlscore.org.

IBJ: Who are the leaders of the St. Louis Chapter?

Klipsch: I am co-chairman of the chapter (from Eureka, Mo.). Tina O'Toole (of Brentwood) is the other co-chair. Rick Toman (St. Charles County) and Pam Gilbert (of Webster Groves) are the two co-vice chairs. There are about 10 of us that make up the executive team. Greg Taylor (of Edwardsville) is our secretary, Stuart Epstein (of Olivette) is our treasurer, and six additional volunteers who make up the entire leadership team.

IBJ Business News

Port's investment will serve cargo interests in region

The St. Louis Regional Freightway, which represents freights interests throughout the bi-state area, and the Port of Savannah, Ga., are forging a partnership to create a new

connection between the St. Louis region and the largest single-terminal container facility in the western hemisphere.

The Port of Savannah is investing \$3 billion to increase its containerized cargo capacity from 5 to 8 million TEUs (20-foot equivalent units) by 2028. The investment

will accelerate the efforts of the nation's third busiest container gateway to better ships goods to and from the interior of the United States.

The growing Port of Savannah has identified the St. Louis region as a key import/export market to which containers

can consistently be distributed at a lower cost for shippers.

An important component of the Port of Savannah's development plan is a new \$220 million rail terminal that will be the largest on-terminal rail facility in North America by 2020.

Paving the way to a healthier region, one mile at a time.

mcttrails.org