

Opinion: Why businesses choose Douglas County

By Lee Bonner

I have been a proponent of bringing new businesses to Douglas County long before I ran for county commissioner. Since 2007, we have lost more than 3,000 jobs and we must bring them back. Our county has invested time and resources in economic development and our economic vitality plan, so it's crucial that we diversify our economy. To be honest, we should have started in the last decade; but, thanks to great leadership, we are headed in the right direction now.

With counties across the nation competing for jobs, we must ask: Why Douglas County? What makes Douglas a good fit and why should a business move here? We have challenges in not being a metropolitan area or a major transportation hub, but that may also be a strength.



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Let me start by comparing companies that everyone can recognize and evaluate how they operate strategically. Companies that bring something special. Not by simply copying another product, but actually making things better and more usable. Which companies are game changers? Which companies change the way we live?

It's much like comparing GE to Apple. To be fair, I admit I

worked for GE for years and love the company. However, when you compare the two models, they are much different. GE takes a product and makes it better and makes it available across the world. Apple creates products that literally change the way we live. By creating the iPod, they changed how we buy our music. Music stores are now dwindling because of Internet delivery. By the creation of the iPhone and iPad, they changed the way we use phones and computers. People are trying hard to duplicate what Apple has created using their own technology, but none can do it better. They created a following and a lifestyle in the products they design and manufacture. Don't get me wrong, GE is a great company, but even as big as they are they don't invent many new products; they primarily take existing products and make them better and then make them more accessible to the world. They have their place and they do it well.

So when I look at these examples, I ask myself, who is Douglas County? What type of community are we and what can we offer to companies that other counties cannot? Do we make them better? What is our strategic selling point? Are we reselling what other communities have? I believe if you compare our county to others, we have our place and it will not take away from other counties. We need a strong region for us all to succeed and all of our neighboring counties have their own strengths.

When it comes to the real strength of Douglas County, I believe we offer a lifestyle to people and new businesses moving to the area. Our community is unique; from the ranchers, the Washoe Tribe, and our Basque community, to the recreation areas of Lakes of Tahoe and Topaz. In addition to that, our citizens give back in many ways through local charitable and volunteer organizations. It's a part of our DNA and our county vision says it all, "A community to match the scenery."

When I moved here from Atlanta, I no longer had a two-hour, 10-mile commute. Our unique "rush minute" traffic allowed me

to gain some life back. I have free time to ride horses and be with friends; thus, my quality of life went up. Working for GE, we had one of the highest employee retention rates across the company. People want to live and work here, so there are many reasons to move to Douglas County. World-class technology, outstanding scenery, outdoor adventure, safe streets, but most of all we have the Douglas County lifestyle. A lifestyle built on quality of life, open spaces, wild horses, awesome trails, the best Tahoe skiing, bald eagle viewing at calving time, and some of the best people you will ever meet. If you are thinking of moving your business to Douglas County, that decision will change the way you live ... for the better. It's truly a lifestyle.

I hope to see you all at the many outdoor events across our community this summer. If you see me, please come say hello. You are all an important part of the Douglas County lifestyle.

Lee Bonner is chairman of the Douglas County Commission.