



## 2023 - How to Create an Effective BRE Program for your Community

### Business Retention and Expansion...

BRE is more than just the structure for the annual, on-site BRE visit with companies.

BRE is a multifaceted program that should be unique to your community.

Every customer touchpoint deepens (or weakens) your relationship with existing, local companies. And let's not forget contacts that are about to start companies!

#### **Purpose**

The majority of job and economic growth comes from the local employer base. The owners and executives of these companies are VIP's in your economic development network. It's in the community's best interest to keep these companies happy and growing.

A vibrant local economy naturally attracts new companies and is fertile ground for start up businesses founded by entrepreneurs. As your community's population and average incomes rise, your community magnetism increases, creating more "pull". This leads to business attraction magnetism as well.

Key elements of BRE programs may include

- **Annual Visits with Key Accounts**
- **Assistance - Tickets, Cases, Support Services**
- **Job board**
- **Promote local business**
- **Buy Local Programs - programs designed to keep trade activities "in the community"**
- **Education, Training, Events, Networking**
- **Business Incubation / Accelerator Programs**
- **Programs to Foster Innovation**
- **Workforce Development, Training, Education**
- **Community Development Initiatives**
- **Talent Attraction**



## Annual Visits

Annual Visit, ideally on-site, with your most important companies. Look for companies with:

- The most employees / largest local employers
- High growth potential - look for opportunities to help these companies growth
- High risk potential - how can your team minimize their risks so they can stabilize and then grow?
- Lots of buying products and services from outside the region - there may be opportunities to get introductions to their suppliers and bring the supplier (and new jobs) to your community

### Action Items:

- Do you have a CRM database that can profile and “tag” companies in this way? Do you have a list of companies targeted to receive an annual visit?
- Are you able to easily schedule annual visits? If this is a challenge, we should explore the reasons why this is true.
- Set a goal for the number of annual visits.
- Market your services on the website, newsletters and on social media.
- Share local business wins - celebrate local business success.
- Monitor local business news and share this.
- Get business owners excited about doing business in your community. Make them feel connected and important (they are your VIP’s after all).
- Do you have a comprehensive list and a profile of companies in your area with more than 10 FTEs? If you need to know how to get this list for free, we can help.
  - **Email me:** [tomw@convergence-crm.com](mailto:tomw@convergence-crm.com)
  - **Subject line:** How do I get a free list of all companies/contacts in my community?
- Focus on Quality of Visit first, data capture 2nd.
- Focus on relationship building. Your BRE team should be made up of friendly “people-people”. Become the “go-to person” in your community that business executives can turn to in the areas where your team can help.
- Put a CRM system in place to track visits, engagement and the contact / company profiles
- Determine what your key data points are - what are the most important pieces of data for you to capture on every visit?
  - This allows you to create consistent reports
  - Your **local utility provider** may also want you to capture reports that help you, the utility company and the company(s).
  - Your **State / Province’s economic development team** may also have a set of data that they’d like you to capture as well. If you must report to the state, this is how you can get to consistent, state-wide reporting.
  - If you are or if you work with a **regional economic development group**, make sure to standardize on these data points as well.
  - Avoid the use of a Shared CRM database with outside organizations - this can lead to a leak of confidential data and it’s not worth the risk.

## Annual meeting tips

Use a [website landing page like this one](#) to help people understand what a BRE visit is and why they would want to book the meeting with you.

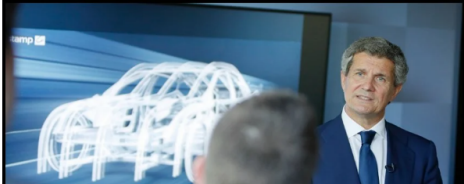

### HOW WE HELPED GESTAMP INC.

AND WHY YOU WANT TO SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH US...

**TIME INVESTMENT: 2.5 HOURS**

- Hire 3 new machine techs and an Accounts Payable Clerk
- Received a training grant for \$17,500
  - Introduced them to [www.capacity.io](#) - a venture capital firm and they just raised \$2,000,000 to launch a new product and expand

\*Convergence Disclaimer: this is a fictional representation of what might happen



**LET'S SEE HOW WE CAN HELP YOU.**

If you're looking to grow and improve your business, we can help.

It starts with a meeting where we get to know you. We'll look for

Capture a few main points of data before the meeting via a form or survey.

At the very least, ask this question but don't leave it open ended.

**You must adjust this for your organization.**

(CUSTOMIZE) WHAT AREAS OF ASSISTANCE ARE YOU INTERESTED IN?\*

We assist our local companies in the following areas. Please indicate what areas of assistance we should discuss.

- Grants
- Loan
- Expansion Assistance
- Business Consulting
- Talent Attraction - Hiring
- Workforce Training
- Business Incentive Programs

Make scheduling the meeting easy.

Think about why someone should meet with you. Communicate the value. **Answer these questions:**

1. why should a company business owner spend 1 hour of time with you.



2. What do your business contacts get out of this experience?
3. If you owned the company, would you book a BRE meeting?

**Don't use the term BRE meeting with company contacts.** They don't know what that means.

**Suggestion:** Create a new type of meeting that your entire team always uses, try "Business Success meeting".

**Suggestion:** Consider creating a theme or marketing theme for your annual BRE meetings.

Do you see the difference? If you owned the company, would you schedule a Business Success Meeting or a BRE meeting? I think we all know the answer.

If you show up for a Business Success meeting with a long list of questions that you need for internal analysis and evaluation; the answers are only valuable to only 1 person in the meeting - you. And that is exactly what we want to avoid. **Principle #1 - Be Helpful!**

Ask questions that are helpful to the business owner / executive. Explain why you'd like to uncover and why (what's in in for them to share their info and ideas with you).

*"Let's talk about your workforce. What we're looking for here are ways to help you find and hire the right people. Based on your answers, we'll come up with an action plan to help here"....*

Try to phrase every question in a way that helps your VIP buy in to you as a trusted advisor.  
Learn to pause and listen.

Listening is the most important skill you must develop!  
The purposeful pause is key!

Here are some Helpful Resources to Improve your Listening Skills.

- [Wharton Course - free.](#)
- [Best Resource - Steven D. Crawford](#)
- [TedTalk](#)

Phrases to use...

- "interesting... tell me more"
- "Oh?.....(yep, that's it, the other side will reply with more information



## “Assists”

Economic developers have a lot of ways to help local companies. But, do you know who is largely unaware of what you can do? **Answer:** your local businesses. (Sorry, but it’s true).

So, you have to be in position in order to help.  
And helping others builds relationships.  
Helping companies contributes to your economy.

### What you can do...

- Get a CRM** that tracks any and all assistance provided to companies.

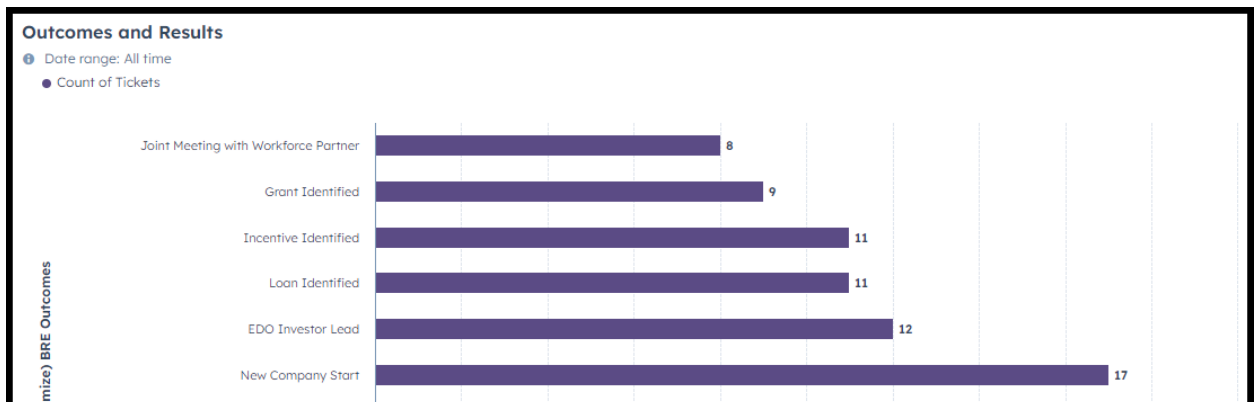
You can track the categories of assistance provided and you track the time.  
But what you really want to track and report on is the outcome or the results you delivered.  
You want to see all assistance provided to every company, in every sector, and in the aggregate. You’ll spot trends and identify new ways in which to help your companies.

- Improve your team’s internal awareness of how your company can help local businesses.**

- List the services that you provide to local companies
- Use this google document (click here to get access free)

List all Services Provided to Local Companies	Who can use these services	What problems do we solve with this service?	Does our market know that we provide this?
	This is "the audience" or target market		Rank 1-10
Job Board	Any company that is or wants to hire workers locally	Employers have trouble finding enough local works that "fit the bill"	
We can help find private investors	companies in need of capital		
Identify government loan programs			
Introduction to SBA for....			
Introduce to local college for....			
Introduce to SBDC for....			

- Track outcomes and results..** You’ll have to define the reportable outcomes. We have a model for this and we help you think through it.





After you've provided assistance, think about using a survey to create your [Net Promoter Score](#).

- Net Promoter Score - here is a NPS [formula](#)
- Free - [customer service metrics calculator](#) (google sheets)

## Industry Roundtable Meetings

Here's a list of steps that can be taken to create an effective industry roundtable meeting:

1. Define the purpose and goals of the meeting: Clearly outline the objective of the meeting and what specific outcomes are expected.
2. Invite relevant stakeholders: Identify key players in the industry who should be invited to participate, and make sure they represent a cross-section of viewpoints and perspectives.
3. Plan the agenda: Determine the topics that need to be discussed, allocate time for each topic, and assign a facilitator for each segment of the meeting.
4. Preparation and research: Ensure that all participants are adequately prepared for the meeting by providing them with relevant background information and data.
5. Encourage open discussion: Create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere where all participants feel free to share their thoughts and ideas.
6. Facilitate active participation: Encourage active participation from all attendees by asking questions, encouraging dialogue, and creating opportunities for small group discussions.
7. Document the meeting: Record the key points and decisions made during the meeting, and ensure that these are shared with all participants in a timely manner.
8. Follow up on action items: After the meeting, follow up on any action items that were agreed upon and ensure that they are completed in a timely and effective manner.
9. Evaluate the meeting: After the meeting, take the time to evaluate its effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement for future roundtable meetings.
10. Report outcomes: Provide a report of the meeting outcomes to relevant stakeholders and communicate the next steps to be taken.

## Community Walk-BRE Blitz

- **Advantages**
  - You can capture data quickly so the data is "fresh"
  - Provides a human touch
  - Allows you to reach a lot of businesses quickly
- **Disadvantages**
  - Volunteers are not as effective
  - You will get less data



#### **Insights and Tools**

- Limit the amount of questions to ask 5-10 questions
- Use a website form that the volunteer completes via cell phone or tablet
- Segment the list of companies to visit by number of employees (1-10 employees), business sector (retail) or geography (downtown)
- Forms should auto-populate your CRM to record the visit and generate results associated with the contact and company.
- Train your volunteers and have them practice the interview with you.

## **Job Board**

Keeping up with open jobs is hard. Some EDO's have used an integration to indeed.com It's terrible. Everytime.

Company job postings from various websites update the job board on your website.

\*We have an automated job board and this can provide you with an income stream as well.



## Promote local business

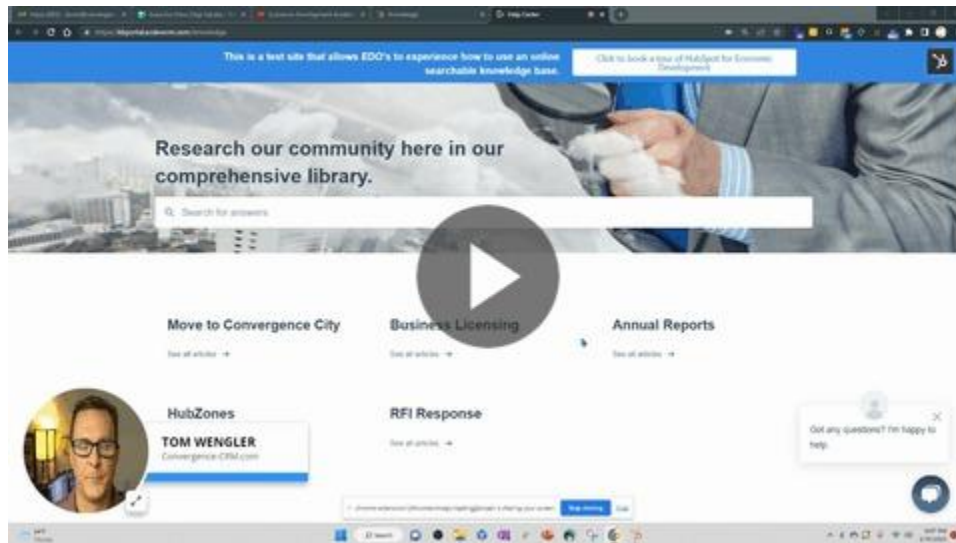
This is all about Marketing. Newsletters, social media, your website and landing pages. Talk about your local business. This is a great way to build local relationships.

Here are a few innovative ideas.

### For Industry - foster local trade (buying and selling in your community)

Watch this video for 1 idea / use case.

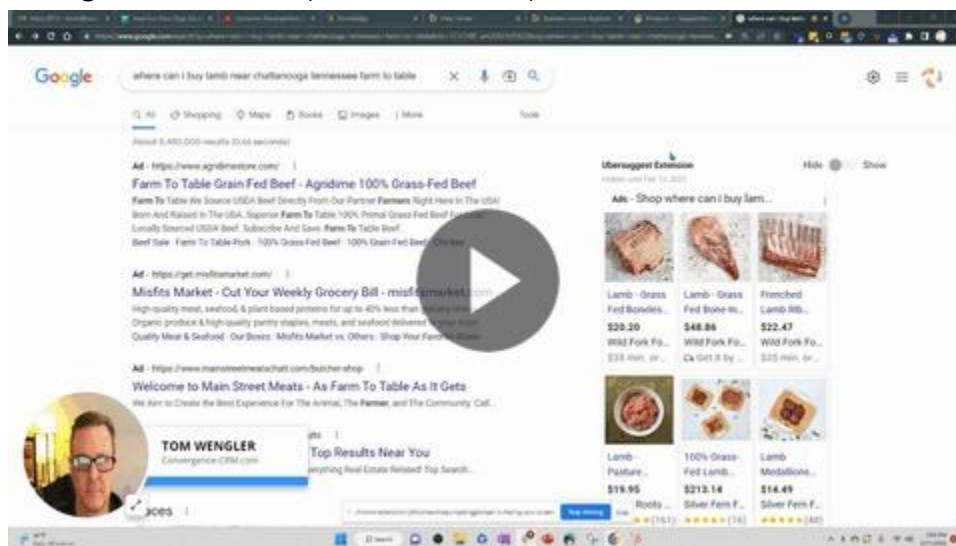
The idea here is to connect the local supply chain to keep transactions flowing within the community.



### Buy Local at the Industrial Level

2nd Use Case..

### For Ag: Farm to Table (boost local trade)



### Farm to Table - connect local farms to berry buyers

### Convergence, LLC





## Use Online Surveys..

**When?** As needed.

### Use Case

Send to all companies in the community to identify trends and also to identify companies that are either At Risk or with High Growth Potential. If you get a hit on either, consider moving to an in-person Business Success Meeting.

## Events, Workshops and Programs

As a result of working with local business leaders, ask about their topics of interest for programs like this. Create a running list in your CRM. Review the results and then, create a course.

- Create an online course with thinkific - check our our online courses [here](#)
- Hire someone to create a course
- Book a professional speaker
- Market the event, track attendees, get feedback every event
- Ask for reviews and testimonials
- Promote - Press Releases
- Run a contest to drive interest
- Be Creative



## Programs for Innovation and Entrepreneurs

[Co.Starters](#) - buy and run this program in your community. This works!

A banner image showing a brick wall with a hanging basket of pink flowers in the foreground. In the background, a storefront window is visible with a sign that reads 'NIEDELS BAKERY & CAFE'. The text 'CO.STARTERS' is in the top left corner.

CO.STARTERS

# Unlock the potential of people and place

We equip you with proven programs and tools to grow thriving business communities.

[Read About Our Work](#) [Schedule a Call](#)

**Resources:**

**BRE - educational video for company owners / executives**



We'd suggest a few changes here but, this is a great animated video about what a BRE Program is. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jx6JD7N1DCA>

\*We can help you create and get visibility of a video like this one.

Get on a TV show or create on (LinkedIn Live). Example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFNw-zZsbg4>



Video from a rural community doing 1x1 visits and industry roundtables.

<https://youtu.be/f2NXY3iGud8>



Some people don't like Incentives

Be careful how you communicate.

9,400,000 Views on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bl19RoR7lc>



## Author's note:

[Tom Wengler](#) has worked with over 100 Economic Development organizations in the last 4 years, and over 200 EDO's since 2010, this guide is based on the best practices and ideas we've seen in the market. We're happy to discuss your BRE program, ideas and vision. My company is uniquely qualified to bring your vision to fruition.