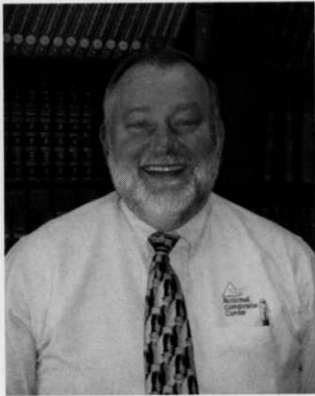


An interview with Lou Luedtke



Lou Luedtke

Lou Luedtke is President and CEO of the National Composite Center and Vice President of the Engineers Club Board of Governors

• How did you come to the Engineers Club?

Lou: I got here in 1999, and at the Air Force Museum I saw the history that few people outside the region know about. Then the Miami Valley Economic Development Coalition had an event at the Engineers Club. I thought the Club was one of the best-preserved facilities of any around in terms of having an active organization trying to preserve and reinforce the history of innovation.

But I didn't join right away because I thought it would take too much of my time, I didn't get downtown enough and I didn't see the value for me. It wasn't until 2003 when all the activities were taking place downtown that I started to get the appreciation of coming downtown from Kettering, where I work, and, from Bellbrook, where I live. I also was a volunteer for the 2003 Centennial of Invented Flight, and its operation headquarters was at the Club, so I got to see how the Club was run.

I thought there was a bigger part of what we could do as a family if we participated in activities downtown. I signed up the National Composite Center as a corporate member with three of us. Even then we didn't come very frequently - mostly to annual events and some activities. I saw the richness of what was here - the structure, the photographs of Orville Wright, Kettering and Deeds. The back-story makes it fun to bring people down here. But I didn't see the real value of using it much for the business.

• When did you see a value?

Lou: When I got my first bill for the minimum and owed for unused meals, I thought, "This is stupid - let's take our clients downtown." It wasn't long before the minimum wasn't an issue any more, because it takes only a couple of times a month and there are enough business opportunities to bring people down. We're in the engineering and innovation profession.

I realized that when I brought business guests down here I had extra personal time with them because they wanted to learn about what was here and wanted a tour. Sharing a bit of the history is kind of an icebreaker, a way of passing some knowledge and history. The professional people I met with appreciated that - something they got for free; I wasn't just selling them something.

So we started using the club pretty regularly from a business standpoint. The value we see today in it is that we have to do more to help Dayton's manufacturing community re-grow. So part of what we can do in that is help reintroduce so many

of these new engineering-related manufacturing companies - that's the space we're in - about the value of meeting and gathering here at the Engineers Club and networking.

I go to a Barn Gang meeting and sitting next to us is a senior engineer from the University of Dayton Research Institute, one who had worked for the Composite Center ten years ago. He's retired. Where else would I meet him? So we are finding that from a business standpoint this has more value than we had ever dreamed.

The Club offers that same opportunity for other professionals if they want to participate and use it in that way.

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