



Peter Wohl, vice president of Warren County EDC: Wears three economic development hats

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For the last few months Peter Wohl has been wearing three economic development hats: vice president of EDC, a premier economic development organization in burgeoning Warren County; executive director of the Adirondack Regional Business Incubator (ARBI); and president of the Warren County Local Development Corporation. Recently, with the appointment of a new executive director of the ARBI, Wohl relinquished that position to assume the role of chairman of the ARBI board of directors.

"I'm still wearing three hats - or more when I think about my other commitments," said Wohl. "However, stepping back from the day-to-day demands of running ARBI was always the plan, now my involvement in that project will be at the executive board level. It's the perfect time for this transition, too, as ARBI is now accepting applications for tenant and affiliate participants and stepping up its launch activities."

Wohl, who holds a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of California at Berkeley and a BS in Human Development and Social Policy from Northwestern, is also an adjunct professor at Adirondack Community College (ACC), teaching Principles of Business Management. "Even though it's not my main career, teaching is something I've always enjoyed," said Wohl, whose scholarly aptitude goes back to 1991 when he earned a fellowship in public affairs through the Coro Foundation. "I taught management courses and led career planning workshops at the University of Liberia while I was working there as a consultant. I am very pleased to be working with business students at ACC."

Taking on multiple leadership roles comes naturally to Wohl, who sits on the boards of the Adirondack Business and School Partnership, the Tech Valley Incubator Network, and the Business Incubator Association of New York State.

A native New Yorker with a love of travel and a desire to understand things from a world perspective, his early career started in New York City's office of management and budget and as a project manager in the governor's office of management and productivity in Albany. Later he worked in California, taking on an economic development role in the office of community development in Pinole and with KPMG Peat Marwick LLP in Sacramento before traveling to Africa in 1998.

Wohl's position as an in-house management consultant with Population Services International took him to Harare, Zimbabwe. He served as finance and administrative director for the organization and led several social welfare projects, including Professional Family Planning, an Insecticide Treated Mosquito Net (ITN) initiative, and a Condom Social Marketing program. Later, he founded Lone Star Consulting in Monrovia, Liberia, to provide management consulting and professional placement services to government and non-governmental organizations throughout Liberia.

"High-tech communications may be making the world a smaller place, but there's still nothing like

living and working outside the United States to broaden one's perspective," said Wohl. "My experiences abroad helped me understand the broad spectrum of public policy and its implications. Since then, I've sought professional opportunities that would utilize this knowledge."

Upon returning to the States, Wohl took a senior position with Arthur Andersen Consulting (San Francisco), heading up the firm's state and local government consulting practice in the Pacific region. In 2002, with his wife Kate and two sons, he relocated to Albany to be closer to their extended families, and Wohl became senior manager for Deloitte Consulting (Albany) responsible for the development of its New York state public sector management consulting practice.

Since joining EDC in 2005, Wohl has spearheaded the planned reconstruction and developed the program for the county's first business incubator, which will be housed in a long-disused factory building at 36 Elm St. in the downtown area. About this key EDC initiative, Wohl said, "This particular project exemplifies what I feel visionary development is all about. It's an opportunity to repurpose an eyesore while at the same time providing workspace for emerging, local businesses, which will eventually increase jobs and contribute to the local economy. In one single project we're advancing economic, community, and workforce development."

The innovative ARBI program is more than just the flexible rental space, shared services, and commercial grade voice/data resources typical of incubators. It offers a comprehensive program of technical assistance, educational programming, and management support to entrepreneurs that choose not to locate in the facility, as well as those that do. "We are in an enviable position here," said Wohl. "We are located in the heart of the state's rapidly expanding medical device cluster - just minutes up the road from AMD's proposed new home in Malta. I'm confident the ARBI will play an instrumental role in the region's high-tech initiatives."

Marketing Warren County's assets and facilitating infrastructure development may be Wohl's job, but it's also his passion. "I've been visiting the Lake George region for 20 years, and I always wanted it to be more than just one of my favorite vacation spots. Now, I am privileged to live in a region that's close to my heart, and I have an opportunity in my professional life to help bring about the positive changes I feel so strongly about."

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