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SEPTEMBER 2023



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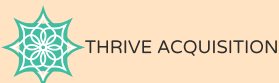
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### Dear **CONNECT** Readers,

Welcome to September! Now that the kids are back to school, perhaps you're enjoying more routine and structure in your work lives as well.

This month in **CONNECT**, we have more great business information for you, including an interesting feature on Trans-Matic, a homegrown Holland company that's still family owned after 55 years in business. West Michigan is a great place for companies to operate, as you'll see from the article highlighting several aspects of our thriving business environment.

Also, here's a shout out to all of our **CONNECT** sponsors who make this magazine possible each month. If you're a sponsor, remember to take full advantage of your access to our digital team who can help you publicize your business via Facebook, Google and our new Best Version Media sports website ([BVMSports.com](http://BVMSports.com)).

If you're not a sponsor yet, I'd love to sit down with you and share more about the various benefits and opportunities available to our sponsors, including the Expert Contributor program. Contact me today if you'd like to meet and learn more about our total package.

Until next month...

### Patrick Avery

Publisher



# Trans-Matic Manufacturing Company

## Locally Owned, Globally Focused

By Lucy Reynolds | Photos by Geoff Shirley/Next Creative Co.



Trans-Matic President and CEO P.J. Thompson

Founded in Holland, Michigan, in 1968, Trans-Matic Manufacturing Company is a producer of custom deep draw metal component parts in stainless steel, low carbon steel, aluminum, copper, brass and more. With production facilities around the globe, the company is a worldwide leader in precision metal stamping.

Trans-Matic was started by Pat Thompson when he was only 27 years old. He had been working at a similar company in Chicago, and he loved the deep draw component business. When that company was sold to a large corporation, however, Pat decided to strike out on his own. With entrepreneurial aspirations, he sold his house and limited assets and moved his wife and two young children from Chicago to Holland in order to establish his new business.

The first deep draw metal stamping company in West Michigan, Trans-Matic began with Pat's two presses and his simple goal of providing reliable metal stampings of the highest caliber across a diversified market. Early in the company's history, employee Ron Griffith split off from Trans-Matic to found Draw Form Corporation, and over the years, no fewer than five deep draw metal forming companies have developed in West Michigan, all derived from Trans-Matic. Decades later, Trans-Matic remains a family-owned, professionally run operation, with Pat's son P.J. now serving as president and CEO.

Today, with the proven mission of being a leading global supplier of essential precision deep drawn metal components and value-added solutions, Trans-Matic remains headquartered in Holland and owns two other facilities operating in Suzhou, China, and Monterrey, Mexico. The 238,000-square-foot production facility in Holland employs approximately 220 people in areas including prototyping, tool development and building, and manufacturing on 65 presses as well as program management, product launch, sales and marketing, and customer service. With a Value Add/Value Engineering (VA/VE) department, the company is



committed to continually finding new ways to improve quality, design and pricing for its customers.

Serving industries such as automotive, lawn equipment, lock and builder, plumbing, and HVAC, Trans-Matic's goal is to be a principle-based company that is "built to last," a value undergirded by their focus on being globally capable and competitive. Serving major industrial customers from North America to Europe to Asia, the company operates highly niched metal forming processes for unique and diverse customer needs. Foundational to their operations, the company's culture has been carefully established over the last 55 years, and it thrives in all three of their facilities as they recruit, train and retain highly skilled manufacturing and business personnel.

To serve the Asian market, the company expanded into China in 2006. A wholly owned foreign entity (WFOE) with approximately 180 employees, this 160,000-square-foot facility is home to 35 metal stamping presses. The company's latest expansion occurred in 2016 with the establishment of a 55,000-square-foot facility in Mexico employing approximately 55 people and supporting the North and South American regions with manufacturing on 25 presses.

Here in West Michigan, Trans-Matic and the Thompson family find that Holland is a terrific place to own and operate a business. "Despite true labor availability challenges, Holland and West Michigan have a solid 'mechanically inclined' workforce,"

➤ [Continued on page 6](#)



➤ *Continued from page 5*



P.J. explained, “The work ethic in our community is very good, and our city is well managed. All of this creates very favorable conditions for business.”

“In addition, it is highly satisfying to work in a company that provides a product that is truly vital to our customers’ needs,” P.J. continued, “as well as working with employees who are incredibly dedicated to their craft. Over the years, we have faced some of the most challenging situations in industry, and we are continually striving to be the best supplier to our customers.”

Growing up in and around a founder-owned business, P.J. is intimately familiar with all things Trans-Matic. He left West Michigan early in his career and lived in the southeast as well as traveling throughout the U.S. and abroad—which simply gave him a greater appreciation for West Michigan, and Holland, in particular. P.J. joined Trans-Matic 27 years ago, in 1996, and has had a rewarding experience with the company.

Actively involved in the Holland community, Trans-Matic has supported numerous community events over the years and has been a quiet donor to many nonprofits and charitable efforts throughout West Michigan. In addition, in the spirit of company culture, employees enjoy summer picnics, monthly employee celebrations such as luncheons and ice cream socials, an annual Christmas breakfast, employee wellness activities, a summer golf league, employee blood drives—and annual service recognition for continued success in the global marketplace.

***Headquartered in Holland, Michigan, Trans-Matic operates 24 hours a day, Monday through Friday—and frequently on Saturday. Learn more at [www.transmatic.com](http://www.transmatic.com).***



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# Thompson M-TEC Provides Up-to-Date Customized Training for Local Employers

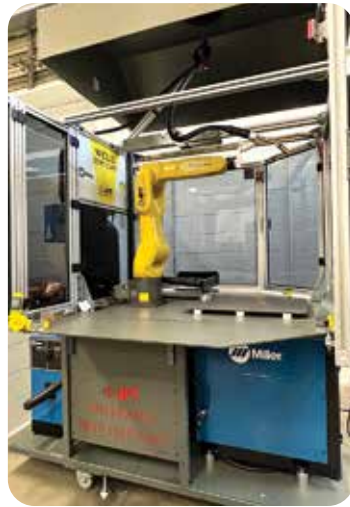
By Tonia Castillo, Director of Adult Training and Career Services for Thompson M-TEC

Thompson M-TEC in Holland, a service of Ottawa Area ISD, has more than 20 years of experience working with local employers to provide fast and up-to-date customized business training, leadership training and professional certifications along with education in health sciences, manufacturing, office and technology, and residential skilled trades.

For companies that are ready to take their business to the next level or upskill their employees, M-TEC should be your first call. M-TEC will spend time discovering your business needs and outline a proposal to meet them. Our highly trained and flexible instructors can teach at your facility or ours to maximize training services and save time and money. From AutoCad Essentials to Value Stream Mapping, M-TEC offers a wide variety of training.

M-TEC is proud to be the only adult training facility in Ottawa County to offer FANUC CERT HandlingPRO with an added certification in WeldPRO. These robotic weld cells allow M-TEC to offer a FANUC CERT curriculum that trains students to become skilled in both welding and robotic programming concurrently to earn a FANUC ARCTOOL Operation and Programming certification.

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M-TEC, too, including EPA 608 Technician Certification to prepare employees to start as a residential or commercial HVAC-R Technician.

New this fall, Thompson M-TEC will offer Emergency Medical Technician training to meet the growing need for first responders. Combining clinical and classroom training, this hands-on class will get students ready and certified to work in only four months.

With an eye on healthcare, M-TEC recently added a second Certified Nursing Assistant training facility at the West Michigan Works! location in the Shops at Westshore. For 15 years, M-TEC has been a leader in CNA training in Ottawa County and boasts a 95% completion rate for students. Classes are offered monthly and include clinical training within a 10-mile radius of Holland. In less than three weeks, students are

prepared to take the State of Michigan Licensing Test for the Competency Evaluated Nurse Aid certification. We also regularly offer Implicit Bias Training for the Healthcare Profession.

M-TEC has proven to be a reliable training resource for businesses. We invite you to call us today and see how we can work with you to take your business to the next level.

*Thompson M-TEC, a service of Ottawa Area ISD, provides customizable and flexible education and business training, career coaching and development, certification testing, and assessments to meet the needs of the business community and adult students. To learn more about Thompson M-TEC, visit [www.mtec.org](http://www.mtec.org).*



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# The Thriving Business Environment in West Michigan: A Hub of Growth and Opportunity

Submitted by Patrick Avery, Publisher

**W**est Michigan has emerged as a vibrant and dynamic business hub, boasting a flourishing economy and a favorable business environment. With its strategic location, skilled workforce and supportive infrastructure, the region has become a magnet for businesses seeking growth and opportunity. This article explores the thriving business environment currently shaping West Michigan and delves into the key factors contributing to its success.

## Robust Economy

West Michigan's economy has experienced remarkable growth and diversification in recent years. The region's diverse industries, including manufacturing, healthcare, technology and agribusiness, have all contributed to its economic strength. The presence of several Fortune 500 companies, innovative startups and a strong entrepreneurial spirit has fostered a culture of innovation and competitiveness.

## Skilled Workforce

One of the region's greatest assets is its highly skilled and educated workforce. West Michigan is home to renowned

educational institutions and vocational training centers that produce a steady stream of talented professionals. Employers benefit from a pool of skilled workers across various fields, enabling them to find the right talent to drive their businesses forward.

## Collaborative Ecosystem

Collaboration and partnerships are fundamental to West Michigan's business environment. The region nurtures a supportive ecosystem that encourages knowledge sharing, networking and collaboration among businesses, entrepreneurs and academia. Organizations such as business incubators, accelerators and industry associations provide resources, mentorship and funding opportunities to foster innovation and growth.

## Infrastructure and Connectivity

West Michigan boasts excellent infrastructure and connectivity, enabling businesses to thrive. The region is well-connected by a network of highways, railways and an international airport, facilitating the efficient movement of goods and services. Furthermore, investments in broadband connectivity have enhanced digital infrastructure, making West Michigan an attractive destination for technology-driven enterprises.

## Supportive Government Initiatives

The government plays a crucial role in creating a conducive business environment in West Michigan. Proactive policies, tax incentives and business-friendly regulations have attracted companies to set up operations in the region. Additionally, local economic development agencies offer assistance with site selection, workforce training and access to financing, empowering businesses to establish and expand their presence.

## Quality of Life

West Michigan's exceptional quality of life serves as a magnet for attracting and retaining talent. The region offers a mix of urban amenities and natural beauty, with vibrant cities, picturesque landscapes and access to the Great Lakes. Affordable housing, excellent healthcare facilities, top-notch educational institutions and a thriving arts and cultural scene contribute to a high standard of living for residents and employees.

West Michigan has established itself as a prime destination for businesses, fostering a dynamic and prosperous business environment. Its robust economy, skilled workforce, collaborative ecosystem, supportive infrastructure and quality of life combine to create a compelling value proposition. As the region continues to evolve and innovate, it will undoubtedly attract more entrepreneurs and businesses looking to capitalize on the abundant growth opportunities available. West Michigan stands as a shining example of a thriving business ecosystem, poised for continued success in the years to come.

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# QR Codes Working for You

By Mary Jane Schreur



They have been around, and people are using them. What am I talking about? QR Codes—Quick Response! It's time to integrate QR Codes with your printed material. Let's explore the numerous benefits of using QR codes in print and how they can build relationships with prospects and clients.

## Enhanced User Engagement

Picture this: You've got brochures, flyers, posters or mailers, and you want to make them even more exciting and interactive. That's where QR codes come in. With a simple scan on a smartphone, your audience is transported to a whole new world of multimedia content—captivating videos, stunning images and so much more! It's like adding a sprinkle of magic to your print materials, making them stand out, and captivating your readers like never before, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of your offerings.

## Trackable and Measurable

We know understanding the impact of your marketing efforts is crucial. QR codes allow you to track the reach of your print media like never before. You can effortlessly monitor the number of scans, their locations, and even get insights into your audience demographics. It's like having your very own marketing detective, guiding you toward data-driven decisions that lead to more effective campaigns and better results.

## Boost Those Conversion Rates

We believe in turning interest into action. QR codes act as little magic portals, seamlessly transporting your readers from the physical world to your online universe in an instant. Imagine someone browsing through your beautifully designed rack card or brochure and finding a direct link to purchase your amazing products online. It's like giving them a golden ticket to your virtual wonderland, increasing the likelihood of turning interest into sales.

So, are you ready to bring together the real and digital worlds in a fun and friendly way? With QR codes and print media, the possibilities are endless. Embrace the wonders of QR codes, and let's embark on an exciting and interactive print adventure together. Happy scanning!

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# Your reputation as an employer has never been more valuable

By John Preston, Small Business in Small Bites

I grew up on my grandfather's tobacco farm. For the most part, we were able to get the work done ourselves. However, once a year, we had to turn to outside labor to harvest the crop. To ensure there was plenty of help, we always planted one big tobacco field in sight of the highway. People would see that we needed help and stop in to get work. As I got older, fewer and fewer people would stop. Eventually, we had to turn to migrant workers to help. The world had changed.

Something similar is taking place in the world. They call it The Great Resignation. Millions of workers decided they didn't want to go back to the old lifestyles and careers they had pre-COVID. That leaves droves of jobs wide open without qualified candidates to fill them. If you are an employer, you can no longer approach human resources the same old ways. Simply posting jobs online and hanging a "Now Hiring" sign in the window will no longer cut it. There are three things you must do in this modern world to create a stable employment environment.

The first thing is to make sure the good folks you have stick around. You are in real trouble if you are still using the long outdated "my way or the highway"

management style. Employees have way too many options to put up with that. Your best employees are looking for these five things from their job:

1. **Compensation that allows them to meet their needs**
2. **Recognition and respect for the work they do**
3. **Fair treatment**
4. **A sense of autonomy**
5. **A chance to learn and grow**

Focus on meeting those needs. Keeping your current employees is a lot cheaper than finding and training newbies. Also, ensure that you are not creating an environment where new untrained employees have benefits and opportunities beyond your current crew. Hiring a bunch of unproven new folks and losing a handful of experienced employees is a losing proposition.

The second thing you must do is brand yourself as a "Good Place to Work." I always ask business owners, "If I lined up all your competitors, why would I pick you?" That same question applies to employers. If I'm looking for a job, why would I choose to work for you? If you are

upping your starting pay and using signing bonuses, you better have *the* highest pay with *the* biggest bonuses, because everyone else is doing the same thing. The best approach is to develop a workplace strategy that hits those five elements listed above. Then launch an ad campaign that lets the world know how awesome an employer you are. Perhaps even feature some of your satisfied employees in the ads. It's great for morale; plus, people are less likely to leave a job if they take pride in their workplace. This process takes time, and you must be patient while potential employees absorb the idea.

The third thing is to go after employees who are more likely to stay the course. Signing bonuses and other such gimmicks do get people to apply. However, they specifically target potential employees looking for a short-term gig. Once someone receives a large bonus for simply showing up, they will never be content with their regular wages. Focus your ads on how you provide a long-term opportunity that will serve all their employment needs, and then you will start to attract the people you want.

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# How to Increase Your Influence: 5 Key Strategies

By Tracy Brower, PhD



Increasing your influence at work is unquestionably a great idea—to advance your career, sell your ideas, improve your results and (surprise!) enhance your happiness.

And you need new strategies for influencing: Even if you were a pro at influencing in the past, the landscape of work has changed, and therefore, the process for persuading, relating and connecting has shifted as well.

## #1 – Commitment

One of the first ways to build strong relationships and increase your influence is through commitment to a relationship. According to research, true friendship takes between 60 and 200 hours to build. But even if you're not seeking a BFF, you'll need to be intentional about how you invest time. Stay in touch with your contacts. Invite them for coffee or lunch. Reach out and share articles you know will interest them.

You can also demonstrate commitment through your attention. When you're with someone, be fully present. Put away your devices and don't multitask. When you're truly present, you're demonstrating you value the person and your relationship with them.

## #2 – Consistency

Another part of building relationships and your influence is consistency. You'll want to commit to making the effort and investing

time, but also in making the investment *regularly*. Your influence will be greatest when you play the long game. Rather than a flash in the pan, you'll want to check in routinely.

## #3 – Curiosity

Curiosity is also a foundation for great relationships, and it's the basis for empathy as well. When you're curious, you're genuinely interested in someone else's point of view. And you're humble—knowing your opinion isn't the only one—and that others will have important perspectives based on their unique experiences. When you're curious, you're sending a message that you value other's views and that you're open to learning from them.

## #4 – Continuity

Continuity is also important to relationships and to influencing. This means constancy over time—repetition, cycles of contact and meaning that continue beyond a quick one-time contact.

Work is a great place to establish continuity of relationships for a few reasons. First, you get to know people over a period of months or years. In addition, work relationships tend to feature ebbs and flows—you see people on good days and bad, both when they're struggling and celebrating. And work also gives you the opportunity to interact both on tasks, such as working on a project together, as well as through relationships, like chatting when you see each other at the coffee machine.

## #5 – Collective

Another way to influence is through your teamwork with others. Statistically, people are more likely to be influenced by you when you're associated with someone they already know or when you've been recommended by someone they know. People are more likely to trust those whom their friends also trust. Given this, ask others to introduce you if you're seeking to build a new relationship. And nurture your network by doing the same for your contacts.

### Creating Perceived Proximity

Increase your influence with both intent and intentionality. Be genuine and authentic in building relationships—which will contribute to terrific influence and all the benefits that arise from it.

*Dr. Tracy Brower is a PhD sociologist studying work-life fulfillment and happiness. She is the author of *The Secrets to Happiness at Work and Bring Work to Life*. She is the vice president of workplace insights for Steelcase and a contributor to *Forbes* and *Fast Company*. Her work has been translated into 19 languages. You can find her at [tracybrower.com](http://tracybrower.com), LinkedIn, or any of the usual social channels.*



# September

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Thursday, September 7 HYP Tacos and Trivia

@Tulip City Brewstillery, 430 W 17th Street, Holland

First Thursday every month: Join Holland Young Professionals at Tulip City Brewstillery and unwind from 6-7pm, followed by team trivia from 7-9pm. Hang with some good friends, have fun and get to know new people—and then compete with them in trivia! Spice Boys Food Truck will be onsite with the best tacos in Holland. First drink is on HYP so make sure to check in and collect your drink voucher!  
Time: 6-9pm  
Cost: \$2/person  
www.behyp.org

## Thursday, September 7 West Coast Chamber Power Lunch

@Macatawa Golf Club, 4600 Macatawa Legends Blvd #1, Holland

Grab your business cards and expand your network! At this fun and structured networking program, attendees will have the opportunity to make new connections during three rounds of table networking and have the chance to win a door prize while enjoying lunch.  
Time: 11:30am-1pm  
Cost: \$35 (\$50 nonmembers)  
www.westcoastchamber.org

## Thursday, September 14 Business Exchange Luncheon

@Calvin University—Prince Conference Center, 1800 E Beltline Ave SE, Grand Rapids  
The Grand Rapids Chamber's most popular networking event provides members and future members with facilitated networking as well as an opportunity to leave the event with at least 14 new, quality leads. Facilitators walk attendees through conversations at one table during lunch and another after lunch. Expo tables and open networking are also offered.  
Time: 11:30am-1:30pm  
Cost: \$45 (\$60 nonmembers)  
www.grandrapids.org

## Wednesday, September 20 Wake Up West Coast

@Haworth Hotel, 225 College Ave, Holland  
Each "Wake Up West Coast" event features coffee and networking time followed by a delicious breakfast buffet and a featured guest speaker. This month, hear guest speaker Zach Mercurio speak about "The Power and Practice of Purposeful Leadership."  
Time: 7:30am  
Cost: \$35 (\$50 nonmembers)  
www.westcoastchamber.org

## Thursday, September 28 West Coast Chamber Annual Awards Celebration

@Holland Civic Center Place, 150 W 8th Street, Holland  
The West Coast Chamber invites you to join us as we recognize and celebrate the collective success of our business community. In addition to heavy hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, live entertainment and chamber updates, this joyous event will include the presentation of a number of awards to remarkable organizations that have made exceptional contributions to our community over the past year.  
Time: 6pm  
Cost: \$100 (\$125 nonmembers)  
www.westcoastchamber.org

## Saturday, September 30 Benjamin's Hope Annual Harvest Festival

@Benjamin's Hope, 15468 Riley Street, Holland  
Join Benjamin's Hope for this free all-abilities event to celebrate our West Michigan community. Enjoy hayrides, free food, live music, a helicopter landing on our campus, and so much more!  
Time: 3-6pm  
Cost: Free  
www.benjaminshope.net

*All event information was correct at the time of printing, yet event details are subject to change. Before attending, please check with event organizers for the most up-to-date information.*

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# Dress for Success

By Lucy Reynolds

For most of us, the years of wearing suits and formal business attire to the office every day are long past. While there may be mixed feelings about that reality, the question now is...exactly what should we wear to work these days?

First, of course, you have to consider the industry you're in and the company culture of your particular employer. Second, perhaps you've heard the maxim that you should always dress for the position above the one you have—or dress for the position you'd like to achieve next. In today's casual society, however, even that doesn't offer as much guidance as it used to.

Some employers still require uniforms or company-branded attire, and safety standards dictate the wardrobe of other workers, but for most general office employees, the rules of appropriate work attire have relaxed or practically disappeared in the last decade, especially post-COVID—and

particularly with so many employees working remotely part or all of the time. (Here's to dressing up the top half of your body in preparation for that important Zoom call!)

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) recommends that companies formulate specific written dress codes, complete with definitive "Don'ts" to avoid confusion. Even then, however, everything is open to interpretation. "The workplace has never been more diverse, so dress codes are viewed through the lenses of people of different ages, genders, ethnicities, economic standings and beliefs. Such differences can lead to conflicting opinions" ([www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/fashion-statement.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/fashion-statement.aspx)).

In most states, laws rightly prohibit applying different standards of attire to men and women, and companies must also accommodate special wardrobe requests for religious

reasons and for persons with disabilities. In certain settings, tattoos, piercings, nontraditional colors of dyed hair, and other "distracting" attire and accessories can be prohibited, but in that regard, issues of inclusion and diversity are important factors to be considered in the current social climate. Furthermore, in today's tight labor market, many employers don't want to make issues of attire into a sticking point for employing the right people for the jobs at hand.

That being said, an overwhelming majority of managers still report that an employee's attire can and will affect his or her chance of getting a promotion, according to OfficeTeam surveys. So, while personal style, creativity and individuality are admirable and respectable traits, there's

also something to be said for conformity within one's chosen profession and specific employer.

For most industries, it's still preferable to err on the side of more professional attire, and it's a best practice to always dress with respect for and deference to the preferred attire of one's customers and clients, whether you face them every day or only during scheduled meetings.

Bottom line: There's a lot to consider and few easy answers. With these myriad factors in mind, when you're standing in your closet in the morning trying to decide what to wear to work, use your most professional judgment and consider dressing up rather than down. You'll feel better about yourself when you dress for success...it's worth it.

Lucy Reynolds regularly speaks and writes about good manners through her business Excellence and Etiquette. Contact her at [lreynolds@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:lreynolds@bestversionmedia.com) for more information.



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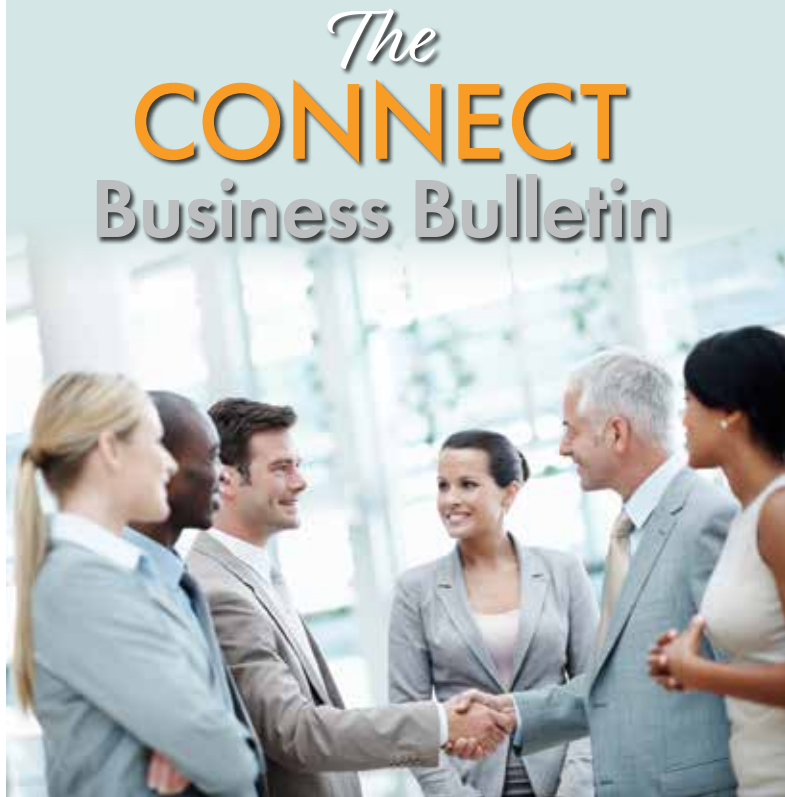
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