

[Manufacturing Leadership]

[Basic Export – Kelly Hall]

Intro: Welcome to manufacturing leadership, a podcast for young professionals in and out of the oil and gas industry. And now here's your host, [Energy WeldFab's](#) Michael Clements.

Michael C.: Hello listeners, welcome to another episode of manufacturing leadership, I'm your host [Michael Clements](#) , I'm excited to share we have an awesome show planned for you today. We have guest [Kelly Hall](#), how you doing today Kelly?

Kelly Hall: I'm great, thanks for asking me.

Michael C.: Yes ma'am. So really we'll go ahead and jump right into it, I just want to ask so what beer do you think Brett Kavanaugh really likes?

Kelly Hall: Of course.

Michael C.: Okay, I just was going to get a starter here. Hello listeners, welcome to another episode of manufacturing leadership, I'm your host Michael Clements and I'm excited to share that we have an awesome show planned for you today. Our guests began working with chambers in 1986; she led the Greenville Texas Chamber of Commerce and was director of the Claremore Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce.

She sits on the executive board of directors for the American Chamber of Commerce executives, Texas Chamber of Commerce executives and the board of directors for the Texas Association of Business. In addition to always being upbeat and providing opportunities for her friends and Chamber members, she is an active member of Longview Junior Achievement and the current sitting president and CEO of the Longview Chamber of Commerce. Welcome to the show Miss Kelly Hall.

Kelly Hall: Thank you Michael.

Michael C.: How are you doing today Miss Kelly?

Kelly Hall: I'm good; I'm just kind of anticipating some of your questions.

Michael C.: Well before we get started I just want to tell you thank you, something you probably don't hear enough, your pro-activeness to identify match individuals and companies with opportunities in the community, and ability to always be thinking of others is the reason why you're wonderful at what you do. I can speak firsthand from this from some of our interactions and some of the things I've been able to be a part of with the chamber, so just thank you for that.

Kelly Hall: Thanks.

Michael C.: We thought you'd be an excellent guest on the show today, and we're just going to discuss chambers of commerce and then also just get a little information about yourself and how you came into the position. So first question and this is this is a serious question, I'm sure all of our listeners are wanting but where do chambers get those giant scissors?

Kelly Hall: Well there's this website called Gotoribboncuttings.com.

Michael C.: Okay, so it's that easy.

Kelly Hall: It's really that easy, and we have vendors across the country that cut, it's just like in your industry and so when we go to our national conventions there's vendor set up at our trade shows that always have some I think really cool opportunities to jazz up the way we promote business and ribbon-cuttings are just, they can be a lot of fun or they can be boring and we choose to have fun with ribbon cuttings.

So we buy the big scissors and William a recorder who works with me he handles all of the ribbon cuttings, I mean he videos all of them and we push them out there on social media and it's great exposure for businesses.

Michael C.: Well the ribbon cuttings are a lot of fun, I've been a part of a couple of them and also had a business that was part of a ribbon cutting with the Longview Chamber, so yes I can second those are a lot of fun and those are some really big scissors.

Kelly Hall: Those are big and sharp.

Michael C.: And sharp. So Miss Kelly we'll start off just want to get a little background on yourself, you went to school in Oklahoma well maybe just start with your college education?

Kelly Hall: Sure, I have two bachelor's degrees, I have a BSBA in marketing, enjoyed that time in Oklahoma very much but I was raised in Oklahoma, was in the retail industry and during the 80s so to kind of let you know I'm getting up there. It was a hard time in Oklahoma during those years, the black Tuesday hit in October, the recession hit it was very dark times for a lot of businesses including where I was and I actually had the opportunity, once I left being a buyer for Rothschild's department store I had the opportunity to work for the first warehousing company in Oklahoma, we open some of the first outlet malls.

And I realized very quickly that side of retail was not for me, but I was put in a position where I met the only female president of a chamber and a good-sized chamber in Oklahoma, she took me under her wings and she said Kelly you tell me you've done Dale Carnegie since you were in high school, you have a teaching degree, you have a business degree, how did you get in retail is this where you see yourself and I said to be honest at this point I was a single mom and I did not know where I was going to see myself, and she said well you just hang with me and she mentored me, I had never had a business mentor until then. It was a great relationship, she walked me through the purpose of a chamber, you've seen one chamber you've seen one chamber because while we're in business to fight for business each chamber responds to their local community dynamics in a different way.

So she walked me through that process and I went to work for a very small chamber and Hennessey Oklahoma, its west of Guthrie and western Oklahoma south of Enid and that community literally took me in as if I were a pastor or something. They painted my house, they found me at home, they made sure my son and I had everything we needed to survive because it was a small community, and I fell in love with what a chamber could be and then my dream started to establish and convert into a vision. And then when I moved to Claremore I saw a different type of chamber, a chamber that was very tourist oriented because it was the home of Will Rogers, the JM Davis gun museum, I can still tell you everything there is to do in Claremore because it was a tourist community.

We had some manufacturing, nothing like what we have in our local community in Longview area, trade area and so that was a different community I get to go to Greenville and that was a blessing, I was there 14 years it is a phenomenal community, phenomenal business base and my vision really started to take place of what a chamber could be. So I guess you could say I grew up in the industry, and I realize now being in Longview I'm seeing so many of the visions because we have such a fabulous volunteer base, an investor base who want to go where we can take our trade area and so for us that can mean a lot of different things. But that's how I've got started in the industry and ended up in Longview 13 plus years ago.

Michael C.: So that's the path from Oklahoma to Longview right there, and sounds like you said you had a mentor along the way that really paved the way for you, is that someone that you

still lean on some of that teaching and some of the early stuff you learn, do you still lean on a lot of that?

Kelly Hall: You bet, and she connected me with the gentleman who I still, she's no longer with us but he definitely is and he's been with me throughout the 30 plus years in this career as far as a mentor and a friend and if it wasn't from Wanda I wouldn't have him.

Michael C.: And for some of our listeners out there that are aspiring to be leaders, maybe they're leaders without a mentor, how important can a mentorship be to a leader in their development?

Kelly Hall: No doubt and I guess that was taught to me through Dale Carnegie to be quite honest, in 1979 I had the opportunity to be the only senior high school class that had this opportunity, it was through Junior Achievement. And Junior Achievement and Dale Carnegie and I worked for son all company at the time, they made sure those companies made sure we had this opportunity and it was those business relationships that served as GA's in that program that really helped ground me to let me see you have to have mentors.

We're not in this alone and I'm a huge fan Simon Sinek and one of his books, he talks about together we're stronger and if we can't learn how to ask questions, if we think we're going to do it all by ourselves we're fooling ourselves because we're creating a lot of heartache. And it doesn't matter whether it's running your company or the company that I get to run, we represent over 50,000 employees so I need to make sure I have those mentors in place today that are still guiding me and helping me make good decisions on behalf of our business community.

Michael C.: I think that is wonderful advice and a wonderful way you've led by example through being a mentor to others, and also seeking out early on and then following what the mentor was telling you and really it sounds like you established some great principles and values through that. Well Miss Kelly it sounds like we have just the perfect person here today to get some more information on chambers of commerce and how they can help our leaders and their businesses out, and so let's just get a little background. What does a Chamber of Commerce do?

Kelly Hall: So chambers of commerce were formed for really one purpose, and that was to fight on behalf of business. And so whether it was the 1500s in France when the first chamber was formed because of an over regulatory system or whether it was the US and the late 1700s, to Longview Texas in 1916, we were formed to act as the voice of business, act on behalf of the business community and represent them with local, state and national leaders. Because we need to make sure we have an environment that allows businesses to live their dreams, and if we are over regulated, over taxed, over whatever it is I mean there's reasonableness

in all of those conversations, but we need to make sure that we're protecting the environment that you're in so that you can be prosperous and you can create jobs, because all of your employees depend on you.

Well, who do you depend on when it's time like next week we're leading a delegation of 17 to our Nationals capital, and while we know that the Congress is recess as of today, our congressman is staying there. We know senator Cornyn's going to be there because the hearings picked back up next week, but so we have our appointment set up and we have briefing set up with US chamber and other national agencies, we want to make sure we understand through their lens what's happening in this political realm.

And then we dial it back or peel the onion I guess really is a better way to say, how does that impact the Longview trade area and how do we make sure our voice is being heard, because often times I've heard our congressman I've heard Senator John Cornyn say if I didn't have the testimony from the chambers I really might not know what's going on in your community, because they represent such a large area. And think about even Senator Cornyn, our issues compared to El Paso how different they can look or Wichita Falls, we need to make sure he understands what's happening here so that as he's representing us he has the whole state in his mind, not just urban centers.

Michael C.: So as a local business it sounds like you're going to be fighting for my business whether I'm a member of the chamber or not, as long as I'm in your area.

Kelly Hall: Oh and that is a true statement and that's tough for us to deal with sometimes, because companies like yours Michael who invest in us that allow us to operate, because we don't receive government money we are funded by the local business community. And earlier you heard me mention when you've seen one chamber you've seen one chamber, because there are chambers who do receive government funding and as long as you're in alignment with what's best for your business community that can work in other communities and doesn't.

Here we don't have government money, I'm okay with that, we have a great relationship with City Hall, we have a great relationship with the county, great County judge and then we take it on to the state level. Well that's because we truly can say we represent 1,100 members and over 50,000 employees and we have your bests interest at heart and that too we're going to fight for, and what allows us to become more effective and to delve deeper into issues it's where we can hire those specialists to help walk with us and that's where your investment comes into play, is to make that happen.

Michael C.: So there's no reception of any tax dollars to a Chamber of Commerce, how are they funded?

Kelly Hall: So we pick up the phone and say Michael do you need a qualified workforce, well of course, in 15 years do you need a qualified workforce it's going to be my company yes and I want it for the future generations, we'll just walk you through a conversation on things. Did you know that your Chamber cares about the workforce and that's why we have a collective impact around education, we have twice a year we meet with our school superintendents, we're watching the test scores, we're on the campuses like we're elementary aligning different organizations to make sure we're all on the same path, working towards the same goals and objectives whether its program A, program B the bottom line is we've got to see the needle move, we need to be preparing kids to enter the workforce in 15 years.

If chamber wasn't doing this who would, why do we go to the state capital and we act on behalf of business, we want to make sure that school districts have the funds they need while being held accountable in a reasonable way that allows them to be successful so that we can get kids into the workforce, it's why we open the Academy. Did public money help with that? Yes, it did. Lee Carl came in, the chamber foundation led the way, partnered with the school district, taxpayer money but we couldn't do it by ourselves but together we're stronger, so if we can build these coalition's and the chamber leads the coalition then we can open doors like for the Academy that's training students to be prepared to enter the workforce, that's just a little piece of the pie of what the chamber does and if we didn't have staff to facilitate those discussions, build those collaborations, secure the funding and move the needle, you have to ask yourself who would be doing that today if it wasn't the chamber, that's why business invest.

Michael C.: Yes, and you invited me to be a part of an opportunity to sit in with a number of superintendents and others at the chamber here within the last year and get to hear just really how you all are working with the state and also with the school system, to be sure we're producing results and putting good people in the workforce tier whether they go to a university or go directly to the workforce out of high school which in our area a lot of kids go directly into the workforce right out of high school.

And so that's just one way the Chamber of Commerce helps, what are maybe some other ways, it sounds like you all helped identify opportunities for local businesses, I've been able to sit in on some other meetings, I've went down to the state capital and sat in there with some of the other local Chamber of Commerce and including yourself, thank you for the invitation to that.

Kelly Hall: You're welcome.

Michael C.: Also I got to meet the Secretary of State.

Kelly Hall: A couple of times.

Michael C.: A couple of times, so one thing our chamber is done I've been able to see firsthand is they're going to put your business in a position to be successful, I guess how do you identify, how are you able to match companies up with those opportunities?

Kelly Hall: It's all about relationship building, so we have numerous teams that really are our feet on the ground, because there's no way seven of us could service the 1,100 members effectively. I mean I just can't even imagine how that could look if we didn't have the volunteer pool that we did, and so I believe in listening and I ask a lot of questions and when I hear a company or a banker talk about a company and where their pain points are or where they would like to plug themselves into, I keep a list and when I see that opportunity I connect the dot and that's what I do I'm a dot connector. Because I can't do it all by myself, but I can lean on the expertise of others and make sure I'm connecting those dots wisely.

So I'll give you another example, your time is limited you've been able to go and do some things that other small businesses maybe just can't, they're like Kelly I can't even leave my place of business, so why would I be a member? And that's a great question to ask. Well most recent example is we just launched our association health care plan called healthy view of East Texas, we partnered with a United Health Care Kate was walking with us, we have about a 10-year relationship with them, unfortunately our association health plan died in 2014, past administration. We work with the US Chamber to fight to bring back Association plans into this country, that happened in July because of our long-standing relationship we had a mechanism in place, a co-op in place it allowed us to get in early, set up the association health care plan it's for 31 counties in East Texas, so it's bigger than Longview and that's why we called it healthy view of East Texas.

So small businesses have the opportunity to be quoted into this health plan, and then if they're a member of their local chamber they can participate in this product. They didn't have to join our chamber, they didn't have to leave their place of business but we're helping them find tools to be successful in their business and in our industry we work together. So chambers of commerce across East Texas now can work together to help small businesses have a cost-effective tool to provide affordable Health Care Insurance, led by the Longview chamber I mean that's what we do.

Michael C.: So this may end up being a silly question, but so not only do you find opportunities you're getting the workforce and identifying ways that the workforce can be trained or have more opportunities for the local businesses, you're also not only so opportunities workforce then you're also supplying these companies with tools and things that will create a better workforce, but also create a higher quality of living for that workforce, so all these things combined and like I said this may end up being just a silly question, but how important is a Chamber of Commerce to a city's economy?

Kelly Hall: Oh, I think it's an excellent question. I'll go back to we create the economic environment that allows individuals to live their dreams, create prosperity which in turn creates jobs, but perhaps more importantly it's the legacy that we're leaving behind for the next generation to follow us and I believe that we have a great responsibility there. So when it comes to the upcoming bond election and I know we're in a white oak so this doesn't have anything, I believe you live in along these city limits we believe in the bond election because there's no way our city can afford to do the improvements that we needed 10-15 years ago with the dollars that we have.

And so we were part of through our inner city trips encouraging our city to make sure we had a comprehensive plan, that happened in the spring of 2015, then the city took a leadership role and created two small area plans which we were part of we have people involved in that, and then we looked at okay so how is this going to be paid for, so the current mayor put together another task force to look at the small area plans, the comprehensive plans, creating that priority list and then how are we going to fund it and I think that was a really wise thing. Well because of the boundary lines between city government and private entities on getting bond elections passed, the chamber says yes we're going to stand up, we're going to believe in the bond election, we have a pact so we put power pack money into this pact to help push the bond election, we're going to make sure that we're doing videos with our chairman and city council members and community members at large to discuss why do we need a bond election to improve our parks, to improve our streets, to improve public safety, these are things that it's going to create a strong tomorrow for future generations and we have a responsibility to make that happen.

We have a responsibility to be transparent and have conversations and they're a two-way conversation, that's what chambers do, that's creating an economic environment for tomorrow and the next generation. And if the chamber didn't do it, who's going to step up and take the leadership role? You're doing these podcast around leadership I'm a huge John Maxwell fan, Mark Patterson fan, Patrick Lencioni fan, I'm an avid reader on leadership and management styles and I will tell you one of the question, one of the themes whether it's Ken Blanchard to whomever where have the leaders gone, because in this world that we live in and you and I we're laughing about the Cavanaugh situation it's no laughing matter, no matter what lens you're looking at it through.

But look at the congressman that's not going to run again that was willing to step up and cross the party line, because it was the right thing to do. He's not going to run again and on 60 minutes last night the gentleman asked him would you have done this if you were going to be running for your seat, and he said no.

Michael C.: And that's a problem.

Kelly Hall: And that's a problem. And so we need leaders and chambers of commerce we provide a leadership role for our community or we should provide that leadership role for our community, be that voice of business, make sure we're listening, aligning and guiding and walking a path together so that we are living this place in better shape than we found it.

And leadership is this tough thing because people don't like to take risks, they don't like to fail forward, they don't understand that being a leader saying no as well as saying yes and understanding the consequences to your yes or the consequences to your no, because there's going to be a sacrifice somewhere and leaders know that can be a lonely path, if the chamber wasn't that leader who would do that work.

Michael C.: So it sounds like you're just an extension of my company out there trying to fight and make my company, put my company in the best situation that it can to be successful, not only in East Texas but throughout the nation.

Kelly Hall: No doubt, and that's why I mean next week we're in DC, in February we'll work with Tyler and multiple communities in our area and lead the delegation to Austin, we will continue to testify in front of the EPA, in front of committees, we will continue to write letters and encourage our members to write letters on things that impact our business community for the good or the bad and make sure that our voice is heard, that's what leadership is, that's what a chamber does.

Michael C.: That's terrific and just to ask what really differentiates and you've given us some great background on chambers, but what really differentiates you all from other business organizations whether they're local or national or even lobbyist groups?

Kelly Hall: That's good, so huge advocate of rotary, Kiwanis they're social organizations and that's the key component they are a social club, they're a civic club. We are a business organization who was built to fight for business, to represent business. Now let's look at the restaurant association, so they do the same thing but it's only for that one industry cluster restaurants, we're acting on behalf of the entire business community.

So realtor associations, restaurants associations they have a very strong purpose and they need their industry clusters to align with them on those key things, my question is then what happens to the other 80% of the work, we all need to be together. The Restaurant Association and the chambers of commerce need to work hand-in-hand together on those things that impact that in industry cluster, so that it's not two separate voices coming at it from two separate directions, we need to ensure we're in alignment.

Michael C.: So you'd like to create unity between the organization's, the businesses and the needs of the area.

Kelly Hall: You bet.

Michael C.: That's leadership.

Kelly Hall: That's leadership.

Michael C.: How often do you find yourself having to maybe do things out of your realm or further businesses or like you were saying maybe not necessarily step across party aisles, but entertain other ideas and work with people within your own organization?

Kelly Hall: Oh gosh I'm trying to think which example would probably be the best, well I think the current bond election is a great one because there are people who have the right to vote no, they need to vote no if that's the way they believe, I just pray they vote and don't just use social media as a distraction from letting good work move forward. So when those situations arise, we need to be able to have a sensible conversation. So someone chose to get on my Facebook page that's fine, make some comments that's fine, I said hey let me go find out the answer so we can understand the why behind XYZ they and this person says we'll already know the why, but they don't want to tell that why because that's the facts.

I just say well go find out and get the best data we can to make the best possible decisions on behalf of the greatest number of people to move our community forward, because wouldn't it be sad if we didn't do things right and then in 20 years we're redoing something because we didn't do it right and we made a conscious decision, that's really tough.

Michael C.: Sounds like there are a lot of decisions and a lot of things that go back and forth between you all's members as well as with other organizations and brings me on to my next question, how is a chamber governed or they all govern the same way, is it different between different cities?

Kelly Hall: In our organization we have our Articles of Incorporation which outlines how we are to be formed, our bylaws we have a 15-person board, we have four ex-officio board members that also have a vote. Our board members are elected by our membership; they have to be a member in good standing. When I look at a board of director I'm looking at individuals who A have the capacity to influence change, whether that is through the access of their relationships or it's their financial resources.

I'm looking at their leadership capacity within their own organization, can they write a check or do they have to go get permission, because the reality is board members shouldn't have to go ask permission within their companies to make decisions, they should have the authority within their own company to make the decision so that when we're making a decision we know we're making it with the leadership of those companies, that's how we're

governed. The Board of Directors in turn hired me as the CEO over the corporation, and then I hire my staff. Most chambers are similarly structured like that, some a little bit different but most of us are structured very similarly.

Michael C.: Are all chambers incorporated as an entity?

Kelly Hall: Yes, with a 501C6.

Michael C.: It's really interesting, I've always wondered really what a chamber was it a part of the city, was its own freestanding entity, how did it really work.

Kelly Hall: We're a corporation.

Michael C.: Okay, wonderful. And do you all stand independent of one another or?

Kelly Hall: Yes sir.

Michael C.: Okay, so the Longview chamber is in no way connected to another local chamber or another city?

Kelly Hall: We partner but we're not connected.

Michael C.: Just like businesses that are trying to find opportunities and work together.

Kelly Hall: Correct. So another question if I were in your shoes that I would ask is, so you're a member of the State Chamber and in Texas that's called the Texas Association of business, we're also a member of the US Chamber of Commerce like a United Way or other organized, United Way is a great example, a portion of those moneys are going to corporate, very little maybe a percent.

Our moneys we are not required to send any money anywhere, we choose to join the US Chamber to have access and a seat at the table, we may not agree with some of their positions and that's okay, but we have a seat at a table and we can say hey we don't agree

with you on X Y Z on your policy on X, because this is the impact it's going to have on our trade area. But again they're representing a greater whole but we want to make sure we have that voice at that table, same way with our State Chamber.

Michael C.: Oh to just ask another little question here, as far as on the Texas and for the nation those Chamber of Commerce committee's, you've been appointed to a couple of those, correct?

Kelly Hall: Yes, so one of the ones that I guess I'm most proud of is with the US Chamber of Commerce, I serve as a member of their committee of 100 for chambers of commerce and I find that to be an honor and people say why do you do that, and again it's access to information, I got to meet the Secretary of the US Department of Labor last week, I think I was there last week I've traveled a lot lately. And not only did I get to meet him he called out Longview, he knew about Longview, he knew about our chamber that we were one of the leading chambers in this country to put together our association health plan, that's huge. That's what our vision is to be recognized as a resource and as influencer, when the secretary of the US Department of Labor knows about our work we are accomplishing the vision to our organization, that's huge so I'm very proud of that.

I also and this is a very green in this area I'm learning a lot, this last year I went on the state PAC board with the Texas Association of business, not the federal PAC but the state PAC. So I had the opportunity to interview candidates in a lot of different districts and hear both sides of why they're running, how they're campaigning, how they're funded, who's really supporting them in why and that was a real eye-opener for me and it got a little uncomfortable at times, but you know what that's how we learn is through those situations. So I'm looking forward to continuing on the state pat board, that's one thing I'm really excited about, that's an appointment too.

Michael C.: You stay busy don't you?

Kelly Hall: Yes, I love what I do, I just love being able, preachers get to create evangelist for faith right, I get to be the person helping be the evangelist to create excitement about our business community, and why would a business want to come to Longview and how is it going to thrive and look at the quality of life and look at the strong school systems and look at our fabulous health care system, and being able to tell Longview's story, I love being able to do that.

Michael C.: That's terrific, and really real quick I know you'll know this number, what is the population of Longview during the work day?

Kelly Hall: It doubles, so the latest US census numbers have us at almost eighty four thousand, so we double our daytime population. But as we draw from a 13 County area we're in a doughnut and a lot of the workforce will drive an hour to an hour and a half in to have a job, and this is where a lot of the jobs are.

Michael C.: That's a lot of people being impacted by the hard work that you're doing, that a lot of people just like I am I'm asking these questions out there what does a chamber do?

Kelly Hall: And another part of that coin is I'm amazed at how many people could drive in that live in other counties and their kids go to our public school systems because they have a job here, and so they drive in, take their kids to school, go to work, their kids are taken to Boys and Girls Club or wherever they're going after school and then they go home and they got an hour drive home, I'm amazed at how many people do that.

Michael C.: And all these things are positively impacting our community, our area and predominantly the Longview area especially during the day.

Kelly Hall: You bet.

Michael C.: So next question here, is there any type of legislative agenda, do you all have plans or do you all just walk into a meeting room and say you know what do we want to do this week, how does that look?

Kelly Hall: So this last board meeting was a lot of fun for me, I'm such a nerd. We had 13 policy task forces that looked at a variety of issue areas, so it may be healthcare, it may be energy, it may be water, it may be air whatever those different clusters are, and when I say water and air that was under the environmental piece, transportation. We had task forces that were led by company leaders and other business individuals all served on these variety of task force's, reviewed our existing public policy statements for the local, state and federal level and then we re-vet those every year.

So at the last board meeting we literally had Mark Robinson with AEP's Webco he's their external affairs director, Mark got up and visited with the board and walked the board through every section and we had some volunteers there as well, business leaders that said here are the policies that are not applicable anymore, here are emerging policies that we want you to take consideration of, here are the ones you've already vetted and then that board just went through a process. Re-vet, discard, consider, discuss, did all of the policies presented to the board pass no, because our role is not to take a specific lens, our role is to

take a broad lens that will allow us to advocate on behalf of our local business community as a collective body, not as Kelly Hall and my personal opinions.

So we have a nice body of work that will narrow down now when we go to DC on trade and tariffs, health care is going to continue to be up there, education is going to continue to be up there, Energy's going to continue to be up there, transportation is going to continue to be up there and we won't even take all of the policy statements from each of those areas, but we will drill down into what's happening now and what could happen in the spring, in the summer, what needs to be re-authorized, what impacts our local community we take written testimony with this in specific areas if necessary to demonstrate, here's an example who to talk to, their situation and the impact of your ruling if this happens. So we're very specific, we stay broad from a policy perspective, but when it gets to being at our nation's capital we're specific and we send those issues ahead of time. So I've already sent issues to congressman government's office, Chelsea and I we've been talking a lot lately, and then the same thing will happen with Cornyn this week we'll drill down because he has like 30 minutes with us where congressman Gohmert will probably spend an hour and then come back and give us a private tour of the Capital that night.

So we'll have more one-on-one time, so the breadth of information with the congressman will be much wider than with Cornyn, that'll be a more narrow focus. And unfortunately Cruz he doesn't have time to meet with us, so we won't be dealing with him but Cornyn always makes time for us and Longview Texas.

Michael C.: Terrific and I definitely can second that she has the ear of our politicians in our area and our state I've seen it first and Miss Kelly is just testament to how hard you've worked for our area. You know I don't really have a lot of chambers and presidents and CEOs to compare the job you've done too, but I tell you if I did the bar would be very high and especially based on how easy and how well you share this information, I know our listeners got to be getting an abundance of information today and probably learning a lot about chambers.

Kelly Hall: I hope that the chambers that your listeners are in is doing the same type of work we're doing, and the way we benchmark like many companies have the Baldrige rewards or Six Sigma whatever it is you guys are using for your standards and our industry we have accreditation, and it's very similar to the way hospitals have their accreditation systems or universities, chambers of commerce do as well. And the first thing is to encourage a chamber to become accredited, and then we just received in the last year our 5-star accreditation for the second time and we're in the top 1% of chambers in this country.

Michael C.: Congratulations.

Kelly Hall: Thank you, I mean we're benchmarking our body of work, our governance procedures against the rest of the country and I'm very proud of the work this organization does and that's a testament of the investors like yourself and it's a testament to the volunteers of the hard work that they put into it.

Michael C.: Well, being a resident of Longview and someone who moved here within the past decade, I've been able to see a lot of new things move into the area and it does seem like our economy even going through a three-year downturn in the oil and gas industry, it continued to grow and we kept seeing new and new things coming in. We saw old buildings being redone, new businesses coming in and I do believe that's a testament to how well our chamber and our economy is moving forward here in Longview.

Kelly Hall: Thank you.

Michael C.: So just a few questions here for maybe some aspiring members and people that are looking to join, is it just small business, is it just large business, who can join a Chamber of Commerce?

Kelly Hall: Any business can join a Chamber of Commerce, so the first thing I would do is just you shoot out an email to your local Chamber and you just email the president directly or whoever is on the website, we make our email addresses you can just email us from there and ask to visit and let's have a conversation and must make sure and see okay where are your priorities, our priorities are in redeveloping Longview, our priorities are education and workforce, our priority is to advocate on behalf of business, our priority is to build a culture of health in this community so we have a community that can go to work that's what we do.

It's reach, its collaboration is at the core of each one of those pillars of our corporation and if you believe in creating a viable business community that has a quality of life, that's going to allow your family to be successful and yourself or your employees, then I would encourage you to reach out to your local Chamber of Commerce because that's what we do, because we are fighting on your behalf to make sure we have a resilient community that's not just here for today, but for future generations.

Michael C.: For someone also an entrepreneur wanting to start a business or somebody who wants to go out on their own, do you all have information for them and also maybe some ways to get started in their business?

Kelly Hall: Oh we bet and we don't keep things close at the chest at our chamber you can go to our website and we have a portal called tool for business, so if you're looking to start a small business you can use our website and walk through the process on our website, it's a really great tool and it's free.

So people say well I'll go back, why do I need to be a member because if you're not a member these tools will not be available to help others walk alongside us and be successful to create this vibrant community that we have, so let's help each other be successful.

Michael C.: And if someone wants to start a small business and maybe they want to contact someone who's a member, is there a way to find other members, and is there a list?

Kelly Hall: You bet, so when you're on our website at LongviewChamber.com, that's real easy LongviewChamber.com you can click on membership and you can see a list of the members by category or by alphabetical name. Some of our businesses like to run specials and promote discounts and so you can click on special offers now, you can search by category like I mentioned and then just make sure you click all companies because if you were to click on trucking and maybe a trucking company popped up named PDQ or something, and then you'll see Michael Clements Jr's name you might not want to know Michael's name, you just want to know the company name, so the quickest way is just click all companies. But you can search by name, company name, by what companies do etc. it's a great tool.

Michael C.: So if you're in the area and you've just started a business this can be a great tool for other local businesses to also find you.

Kelly Hall: Oh you bet. And what I like is just with technology today you could MapQuest from our membership listing, you can email from the membership listing, you can call from our membership listing it's just an easy source and easy tool it's a way that we promote our investors.

Michael C.: And so for a business that's new to the area or considering relocating, now do you all proud to provide any relocating information for those companies?

Kelly Hall: You bet, so I'll use Christus Good Shepherd recently, their internal medicine group I think it was their recruiting Docs and they said we need a hundred and fifty relocation packets, you bet. There are meant for saying are you a member of the chamber this is a benefit to our members, and then we make sure we have them ready to go.

Michael C.: And if someone's business is a member of a Chamber of Commerce, does that also make that individual a member of the chamber?

Kelly Hall: You bet.

Michael C.: Terrific, and I know they answer this but I'm going to go ahead and ask, what kind of events do you all have besides the ribbon-cuttings with the big scissors?

Kelly Hall: I love it; well I guess you could say we're more into the programming side of things so we provide state of the cities coming up in November. There are people who would love to hear the mayor speak, so we do a luncheon called State of the City you can go to on our website on our programs it says Chamber events or Chamber programs or something, and click and see what all is available to access. Now there are some things that are closed that are only for members, there are some things that are available for both members and non-members, so we have state of the city coming up, we have business after-hours, we do business before hours those are great networking events. We have customers who have built their book of business by collecting business cards, not giving out business cards this is a networking tip this person taught me.

I built my book of business by collecting business cards and then knowing how to go back and build relationships with those individuals to grow my business I mean and all we did is provide the venue to connect the dots for people. The luncheons like I said state of the city we do a partners in Education luncheon, we do a business solutions conference, we have our healthy view summit coming up in February so we do four signature luncheons, we have an annual meeting, the former senior execs with chick-fil-a corporate has released a new book, she's coming and she'll be our speaker at our annual meeting. Of course our Chairman and 2019 is Chuck King who happens to be the franchise owner in this area.

Michael C.: Great guy as well.

Kelly Hall: Yes, with chick-fil-a so he connected those dots for us, but we provide venues with opportunities for learning, connecting and taking that information back to grow your business. And most of the things that we do we try to make them not just experiential but learning experiential, so that that return on investment may not be a tangible but it can become a tangible based on what you do with the information we provide.

Michael C.: So once again wonderful resources that the chamber is offering to its members and the companies of that area.

Kelly Hall: Yes. People said can I go to DC, I had a young lady over the weekend local realtor she's like I have been thinking about this and you're going next week if I can pull it off can I still go, I'm like come on because together we're stronger she provides a different lens within our community, so I think it's great that we have such a diverse group of people going next week.

Michael C.: One of the neater events I was able to attend was a couple of years ago and it was right after the change in administration's, and there was a gentleman who came in from the US Chamber of Commerce and just spoke and kind of told us what new we could possibly be seeing as far as legislation, as well as a few of the different things that they were going to be pushing on the agenda. We're big in oil and gas here so the EI was a really big topic during that meeting, there was a lot of questions, there was also a panel set up of different industries and industry leaders here.

So that was a really good event and there was a lot of information that was shared that now it's a couple of years later we've been actually able to see that was some of the stuff that they put into the works with this administration, and really at the end of the day for business owners and business leaders transparency from the government, transparency from your local government can be massive and how you plan and how you expect your business to go and how you're working your projections.

Michael C.: I love our advocacy work and I don't use the word love very often, but when it comes to advocacy work it is so important for our business community. And we do we bring in people from the US Chamber or from different national associations and then we bring it down at the state level and then we bring it down to the local level, so we provide all three lenses and how again those dots are connected and the things that we need to be aware of. Another thing that we've started doing is what we call our coffee conversations, and these we're doing on a more regular basis, the opioid epidemic we were hearing about that nationally and from a state level our state rep J. Dean he serves on a select taskforce for that and then the impact in our own community and we had a coffee conversation around that.

And representative Dean facilitated a great conversation with our chairman of the board Richard Manley, and we used our technology to bring in national speakers on our big screen and just sat around the room about 40 of us having this conversation. We do that with our members again to create clarity based on data and how it's impacting our local community, but it also allow these individuals who are touching these lives from a different association lens to have input and ask questions, and it will help us be stronger as a whole, the more that we can do like that it's just going to help us.

Michael C.: Yes, if you like to make decisions based on data and statistics they have a plethora of it. Just going through some of the meetings I have been involved in, some of the stuff I've had

the opportunity to attend I mean there is an abundance of information and it really helps to make decisions. And so I do know that you all are not making just blind decisions, you all are giving a wonderful amount of information, credible information.

So you help businesses make decisions that are critical to their employees, critical to their growth, critical to the economy all of those things off of critical information that maybe I wouldn't even be able to get or be able to look at if I didn't have access to that information or know where to go to have this.

Kelly Hall: Well I don't know if you read our most recent newsletter the Longview progress report the work around Bitcoin, and what's happening at the national level from a policy perspective, so we want to encourage our states not to work independently but create and not have this patchwork of policy, but we want to make sure that we're looking at Bitcoin from a federal lens so that it's a consistent playing field across the United States.

Bitcoin isn't going anywhere and then what's happening in Longview with Bitcoin right now, and so we had an expert write an article on that for us, to help us understand and then Suzanne is planning a coffee conversation around this, again because there are businesses looking at well what should I be looking at Bitcoin, what does bitcoin mean. FinTech is the next big thing out there with banks what is this technology doing in our space and how is it impacting the way we conduct business.

Michael C.: I'm glad you brought up Bitcoin too because that's just one of the newest industry trends and one of the newest things a lot of people don't know a whole lot about it, but how much do you see Bitcoin things like legalized marijuana, newer laws, newer industries how do you see all those impacting our economy especially here in Texas in the next decade?

Kelly Hall: It already is. So we have a choice, again are we going to be at the table where some of these conversations I'll just say they may go against your moral beliefs.

Michael C.: Legalized gambling is another one.

Kelly Hall: Right, I was in a board meeting this week about that, Friday I was in a board meeting where policy was being discussed about gambling and how that looks and legalizing bookies in our next session. Now that's a value, it's a value I don't know what else it's a value, so how do we have these conversations as a business community because it does impact the business community.

So it's having a seat at the table, it's looking through all the different lenses, not being quick to judge but being quick to listen and get the information and providing an environment where people can come together and have these healthy robust conversations and then

come together at the end of the side where are we going to stand as a business community, and then what are we going to arm Kelly with when she's at a Texas Association of business meeting, how are we as a local business community going to arm Kelly, so I can go fight and it's based on facts and figures not emotions, and then understanding what the potential consequences will be based on what's happened around the country, and it not be political it'd be based on data.

Michael C.: And that brings me to the next question here I have for you is, how do you see politics impacting our economy currently and then also going forward over the course the next few years to a decade?

Kelly Hall: I will say that I am glad that I live in the south where we have, we still have the freedoms to speak our mind the way we can, because there are states and especially areas of our country which has lost that ability because of the political fragmentation and the hate that is growing across this country. And I am glad that I live in the south and that I live in a community that chooses to love, that chooses to look through other lenses and it has a willingness to learn because it's going to become a very sad day when we become so hardened and our eyes are so scaled that we no longer can take in information, and it's our way or the highway.

And that's happening across this country that political fragmentation and yes we are feeling the ripple effect because we're seeing it happen across the media, we're hearing our kids talk about it when they come home from school and things that we would have never thought our kids would be talking about.

Michael C.: How do you feel the local and the national economy are doing based on your expectations?

Kelly Hall: The national economy is outperforming in many areas that a lot of people don't want to talk about, the national economy is underperforming and I just received the data on this as well. So there's a lot of good news happening, but there's some scary things happening and there's fewer companies opening today than there was 50 years ago. So when you look at the growth of population and you look at the growth of the number of new companies that are opening and the number of new jobs that are available, there's some trends that are occurring number one there's more jobs than there is people available, so I think we'll continue to see technology, it's going to have to.

We're going to have to create technology that will perform the jobs because we don't have the current people who are trained to do it, or just the sheer number of people. And then when we look at the number of new companies being started in this country those numbers are not pacing at the same rate and we have to ask ourselves why, is it because we have such an over regulated market in our country that's preventing the new birth of companies, is it because we've trained a workforce that it's not okay to fail, it's not okay to

lead, it's not okay we have to be popular, everybody has to like us, we have to win trophies I mean it's not a soapbox anymore, it's data can speak for itself.

And in June I had the opportunity to go to Israel on a trade mission, the US Chamber asked me to go and we saw startup nation, we went to their stock market, we went to Coca-Cola has started a startup business and where they literally put money into other businesses because they're looking at it as brand loyalty in 50 years. They're not getting equity in these companies and I looked at this small country which is smaller than our state that it's fostering and encouraging startup businesses in ways, we may be looking at it but not like they're looking at it as a country. Because we have an opportunity, we can change the numbers if we get on the same page and we align and we figure out where our priorities need to be.

Michael C.: I think that was a wonderful topic you brought up and your point was about businesses there's not as many starting is that there were 50 years ago, and I've heard that stat before and whenever I heard that I was like wow how can that be, because everywhere you turn there's a new entrepreneur, there's someone saying oh I started a business. And I think it's discouraging to some people because they're like oh my gosh I'm falling behind, I haven't gotten ahead, there's already somebody doing this. How misleading is that self-thought?

Kelly Hall: It's very misleading and I think that we have to deal with the fact that we must encourage risk-taking, we must encourage and celebrate failure but celebrate it because they're going to use that information to move forward and do something, just aspire to be something better or something different and use that don't stop.

Michael C.: You hear that entrepreneurs we need more risk takers, we need more risk takers.

Kelly Hall: And then we need company leadership to allow it through innovation, don't just set up a team and say yes we support innovation but we keep it in a cubby hole and we don't integrate it across all the different platforms into the company, because we're seeing that as well. We see companies buy into innovation but it's not being integrated into every piece of that company, because it might fail.

Michael C.: One of the things I was hearing about Amazon and why they've been so successful is, they literally look for an industry that they're not in and then they say how can we do it differently than they are, and then they go in and they mess your industry up and they start taking your customers, that's what they've seen repeatedly time and time again.

So I think that's encouraging though to someone who's saying I don't know if I can compete with the big boys, well maybe not do it the way they did it but that's what exactly what you're saying is innovation. And innovation isn't just a word it's a culture, it's something

that has to be bread in your organization and you have to live, sleep and breathe it and everybody has to be a part of that innovation.

Kelly Hall: Yes.

Michael C.: Well to close us out here what type of economy should businesses be planning for in 2019 at the local level here?

Kelly Hall: I think we're going to see probably about, I don't know one-and-a-half, 1.9 percent growth in our market, we're not going to see a lot of shift right now in our population, some slow growth population wise, cash flow is not flowing as robustly as we had hoped it would by now, people are very cautious still and I mean we can turn on it doesn't matter what you watch Fox, MSNBC, CNN it's discouraging and what we have to do is look past that and say we have a choice right here in Longview Texas on how we invest and how we move our community forward, and where do we see it being and don't let those national outcomes rule our state and local outcomes.

And I think that's why East Texas has been so resilient, we did experience a recession but it came when others were pulling out and so but we still didn't get as far down in that hole that so many communities did, and that's one of the things I love about East Texas is we are a get things done area, we're resilient, we're determined, we just get it done and I hope we never lose that spirit, that pride that we have is a get things done area. And it doesn't have to look like the rest of the United States, we can remain true to what our beliefs are and our values are and not allow others to dictate that for us and stay strong.

Michael C.: Well that's spoken by someone who truly cares about this area, who truly cares about our economy and truly cares about the business and the business leaders and all of the employees of all these businesses in the East Texas area. So Miss Kelly I just want to thank you today for this wonderful amount of information, some of your opinions and also some of the background and some of the in-depth knowledge you shared with us today, that was a tremendous and just getting to hear some of that for myself was really exciting.

Miss. Kelly I always knew you were working hard for us, I always knew that you were doing a lot and trying to like you said connect dots, but this really gave me a great background really into what really how you do it and why you're doing it, so thank you for that.

Kelly Hall: Oh thank you for asking.

Michael C.: Yes ma'am. Miss Kelly, what's your contact information if our listeners have any questions for you, email address, website?

Kelly Hall: You bet, so our website is Longviewchamber.com my personal email is the initial Khall@longviewtx.com Khall@Longviewtx.com. I've been told I have a draw being living in East Texas. our number is 903-237-4000 so 903-237-4000 and what I do most of the time is I push my phone to my cellphone I love technology, so if I'm not in a meeting I'm going to take the call personally. If I'm in a meeting it's going to go to voicemail, but I do return my phone calls personally, nobody else but me.

Michael C.: And I want to encourage our listeners out there to get involved with your Chamber of Commerce, if you live here in the area and you're listening and you're saying wow I don't have that type of relationship with Kelly, I promise reach out to her and get involved with the chamber because she is happy to build that relationship with you and see your company progress. Energy Weldfab was nominated and awarded in 2014 manufacturer of the year for the city of Longview and that was something that was tremendous for us, it really helped us, it was really something we use as a marketing tool but also something that bolstered not only our local amount of customers, but also our national level of customers.

Because they say hey if you're doing good in your city you're doing good in your area, a lot of times that reaches home with those people and say hey they want to see companies that are being supported by their local economies and by their local people, so that was a really neat thing that we were able to take part of and thank you again also for that and the chamber and your entire team here in Longview. Well listeners I hope you were able to get a lot out of our show today, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. If you have any questions for us we'd love to hear them, so shoot us your emails to Podcast@energyweldfab.com we're also on all the social media channels [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) so check us out there.

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