

Throughout his 38 year chamber of commerce career working in four different cities—Greenville and Spartanburg, South Carolina; Mobile, Alabama; and Jacksonville, Florida--Wally Lee had the good fortune of getting to know hundreds of executives and professionals relocating from other communities. These included people from cities throughout the United States as well as many people and their families moving to the United States from abroad.

Consistent with research that demonstrates that moving from one city to another is among an individual's five most stressful experiences, Wally observed a recurring ingredient in these relocating professionals: anxiety. This anxiety, common to both the professionals and their trailing families, often lasted for two or three years. In most cases, the families worked through their anxiety and, after a period of time, made friends, found homes and churches and generally became happily ensconced in their new home town.

In a few other cases, however, the transitions ended badly resulting in such things as divorces and the employer's loss of the relocated professional because he or she failed to adapt to the new community. However, even with the successful transitions, loss of productivity and tense personal lives generally prevailed for a number of months.

As Wally reflected on his years as a chamber executive, he began to realize the negative impacts of moving from one city to another seemed to accelerate with the increasing complexity of life and work that had occurred during his almost 40 year career. He also noticed that when he was able to personally spend time with people new to the community—executives and professionals being recruited or transferred by Chamber member companies—a noticeably speedier community assimilation occurred and, with it, there were fewer negative relocation effects.

Why did his involvement seem to have such an efficacious effect on the people with whom he worked? Wally concluded that his serving as an honest broker of information, or trusted advisor, about the professionals' new community played a powerfully significant role. When Wally had assisted people with such issues as where to live, what physician to use, the quality of schools and the myriad other matters involved in relocating, peoples' anxieties diminished. Taking into consideration what he had learned about the relocating people by personally getting to know them, Wally was able to provide them with curated advice that addressed their unique needs and interests.

When Wally announced his retirement as CEO of the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, Anna Valent, his Vice President of Operations, immediately suggested he create a business officially offering the service that he had unofficially and intuitively provided for so long. Amazingly, Anna learned, no one offered such a comprehensive service. There were many companies that offered pieces of the service but no company offered a full concierge program.

And, thus, the LeeValent Group was born. A human resources enhancement company whose mission it is to help its client companies recruit and retain top talent and assist its client families effectively connect to the community