



**DENNIS HOUSTON**

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**NORFOLK AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
PRESIDENT and CEO

NorfolkAreaChamber.com  
June 2009 – Present

The Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce is one of the leading business organizations in the state of Nebraska. Norfolk was named the 2<sup>nd</sup> Best Place in America for Jobs and one of the 100 Best Places to Live by CNN and Money Magazine. Norfolk serves as a business and retail hub for 125,000 residents of Northeast Nebraska. The American Chamber of Commerce Executives named the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce the 2013 U.S. Chamber of the Year at its recent national convention. The American Chamber of Commerce Executives named the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce the U.S. Chamber of the Year Runner-Up in 2011.

#### Responsibilities and accomplishments

- Led the Norfolk Area Chamber to be named the 2013 U.S. Chamber of the Year at its recent national convention – this national recognition was achieved with a new staff with less than four years of chamber experience
- Proudly served as the Chamber CEO to become the “2<sup>nd</sup> Best Chamber in the Nation” at the 2011 Chamber of Commerce of the Year Awards – this mission was accomplished with an entirely new staff in my second year in Norfolk
- Created the Grow Norfolk community growth initiative which has been highly acclaimed by Nebraska Governor Heineman and the Omaha World-Herald as the model for the entire state
- Co-founded the NorfolkNow community marketing initiative with our economic and visitors bureau partners
- Facilitated a new economic development community partnership between the chamber, city and county
- Created the Norfolk Area Pipeline Task Force to bring 750 new jobs and \$10 million investment into the region – proactively travelled to South Dakota to make this project become a reality
- Reinvented the Chamber as the foremost community development organization
- Successfully led a complete business turnaround for the Chamber by proactively completing a new strategic direction for the organization resulting a new level of community collaboration
- Grew membership by 14% during the great recession to an all time high of 677 members
- Served as the “Yes on Jobs” Campaign Manager to pass new economic development legislation
- Totally revamped Leadership Norfolk, increasing participation by 300%
- Managed a capital campaign to raise \$2,000,000 to construct a new Chamber and Visitor Center
- Member attendance at the Annual Banquet improved by 300%
- Developed the Norfolk Area Green Council as the first community green initiative in Nebraska
- Instituted a new Norfolk Area “Buy Local” Initiative
- Developed excellent relationships and partnerships with local and regional media
- Managed the expansion and growth of Norfolk Area Recruiters to bring young families home

## **LEADERSHIP ROLES**

### **NATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

- National Chair – American Chamber of Commerce Executives – Hometown Chambers Council
- Facilitator – American Chamber of Commerce Executives – Chamber ROI Roundtable
- National Chair – Chambers Doing More for Moore – Moore, Oklahoma Tornado Relief
- Commencement Speaker – 2013 U.S. Chamber Institute – University of Arizona

### **STATE LEADERSHIP**

- Board of Directors – Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Executives
- Co-Founder – Northeast Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Coalition
- Chairman – 2010 Nebraska State Chamber of Commerce Conference
- Member – Nebraska Economic Developers Association
- Member – 2012 Nebraska Economic Developers Association State Conference Committee

### **CHAMBER LEADERSHIP**

- President and CEO – Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce
- Board of Directors – Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Member – Nebraska State Chamber of Commerce
- Member - Midwest Association of Chamber Executives
- Member – U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Member – United States Chamber of Commerce Winter Institute – Tucson, Arizona
- Founder - Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Business on the Green
- Board member - Chamber of Commerce Executive Council
- Founder - Chamber Business Owners Group
- Advisor - "Buy the Big O' Show" business-to-business trade show

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP**

- Board of Directors - Greater Norfolk Economic Development Foundation
- Campaign Manager – Yes on Jobs Economic Development Ballot Initiative
- President – Norfolk Economic Development Action Council
- Presenter and Panelist – 2011 Platte Institute Economic Development Conference
- Co-Founder – Northeast Nebraska Expressway Coalition
- Interim Director – Norfolk Area Recruiters
- Chairman – Norfolk Workforce Development Task Force
- Chairman – Norfolk Buy Local Campaign
- Member – Norfolk Economic Development Resource Team
- Board Member - Nebraska State Chamber Economic Development Council
- Member - Nebraska Economic Developers Association Legislative Committee

### **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

- Board Member – Norfolk Riverfront Development Project
- Co-Chair – Norfolk Area Housing Task Force
- Co-Chair – Norfolk Area Career Academy Task Force
- Member – Norfolk Downtown Housing Task Force
- Board of Directors – Norfolk Arts Center
- Board of Directors – River Point Arts Festival
- Executive Committee – Northeast Nebraska Humane Society
- Chairman – Old Fashioned Christmas Festival
- Member – Norfolk Noon Kiwanis
- Project Chairman - The Broom Man Fundraising Campaign
- Project Chairman - Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort – Omaha Evacuees
- Project Co-Chair - Dunlap Senior Citizen Center Fundraising Campaign
- Campaign Speaker - "Build it Omaha" Community Campaign – Omaha Convention Center
- President - Pacific Meadows Homeowners Association Board of Directors
- Founder - Music in the Park Summer Concert Series
- Board Member and Treasurer - Dunlap Chamber of Commerce
- Founding Member - Board of Directors, Harrison County Crime Stoppers
- Ambassador - University of Nebraska at Omaha Ambassador Program
- Orientation Advisor - University of Nebraska at Omaha
- Campaign Chairman - United Way of the Midlands Campaign, University of Nebraska at Omaha

### **BUSINESS ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP**

- Board of Directors - American Marketing Association

- Member - Public Relations Society of America
- Founding Member - AIA Marketing Committee
- Vice-Chairman - AIA International Advisory Council

**EDUCATION**

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA OMAHA  
Business Administration - Marketing

U.S. CHAMBER INSTITUTE GRADUATE  
University of Arizona – Tucson, AZ  
IOM – Institute of Organizational Management Degree

PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL  
MAS, Master Advertising Specialist

**ACADEMIC HONORS**

United States Congressional Scholar  
University Ambassador Scholar  
Who's Who in America