

Danville – A World Class Organization? By whose definition?

By: Mr. Stephen G. Wright

world-class (wûrld'klās') adj.

1. Ranking among the foremost in the world; of an international standard of excellence; of the highest order: a world-class figure skater.
2. Great, as in importance, concern, or notoriety.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language,
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“Organizations that are recognized as the best for at least one critical business process and are held as models for other organizations”

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<http://www.ragan.com/Media/MediaManager/RRB5.pdf>

So, there you have it – two definitions of “World Class” from two different sources. My questions are:

- 1) Who was it that decided Danville merited a classification as a world class organization?
- 2) By what standard has Danville achieved that status?
- 3) Did ANYONE do their homework before being so dense as to use that phrase without understanding the implications and responsibility of representing your city as being world class?

Since 1985 I have been an educator in colleges and universities. Since 1992 my experience includes educating and consulting in Russia, Moldova, Bulgaria, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Presently, I am in the final stage of a Ph.D. in International Business, concentrating on organizational behavior. I believe these are reasonable credentials to at least recognize a world class operation when I see one.

Based upon the two definitions given does Danville measure up? Are you held out as a model to cities around the world for any one critical business and / or civic process? You will most likely tell me about your great success at rejuvenating the city and the region in the wake of the Dan River Fabric “situation”.

A world class organization does not mislead itself about progress – it concentrates on strategic plans – current, short-term and long-term. In the year I have been here I have not learned what your plans may be. You may say – it is not your business! Why should I question if Danville is or is not world class? Because – a world class organization makes sure that all its members are aware of what world class means, how you will utilize that in relation to your goals and that all members know what to do to promote their world class organization. So, do the good citizens of Danville know what you are doing, how you are doing it and what the projected results should be...and in what time frame? Based

simply upon the people I have talked to so far, no one is in tune with your motto! In what ways have the movers and shakers of Danville communicated to its citizens, long-term as well as new, its vision of this community as a world class organization? I have not seen it in the brochures that I have seen, nor has anyone asked how my wife and I could assist making this motto a living representation of our community – I just keep seeing this ubiquitous motto on water towers, police cars etc. etc.

Being world class is an international business league that you have not demonstrated you are prepared for. Getting Swedwood here is not an example of world class league business – more a case of you have what they need and it can be had easy ('cause you're desperate to get people working).

Hmmm, wonder what will happen when a "buy American" mentality finally puts two and two together and figures out they are working to make more profit for foreigners? As for the anticipated high enthusiasm, motivated workforce? Keep an eye on the turnover / retention ratio after a few years of business. That will tell you if Swedwood did their workforce psychology homework and cross-cultural due diligence regarding their corporate work ethic in relation to a disaffected U.S. workforce.

Still want to say "world class"? –

- 1) How many of the leadership in this community have any idea (without showing to them the definition above first) what world class really means? (give them a quiz using the definition – let us see what they know)
- 2) How many people responsible for the creation of international and global business interest in the region have solid exposure in those environments? (by the way, international business and global business are not the same thing) Vacations do not count in the definition of overseas experience! I mean people with living and working international business field expertise, over one year, in multiple culture environments.

Be more realistic and get the citizens motivated towards something they CAN buy into! If you said "Danville – Community of Faith" or "Danville – City of Determination", most people here might buy into that and get behind initiatives to move forward and not spin your wheels. A nice slogan is okay, but it is the action put into making the slogan a living part of the community thinking that really matters!

Reasoned and responsible responses welcome at: sgwglobal@yahoo.com
