



Rodrick, what is Ascendant Global? Why was the company formed?

Ascendant Global (AG) is a boutique economic development consultancy. The company was formed out of a recognition that there is no specialized consultancy that has emerged as a clear leader across economic development topics. Increasingly, I was being called on as a colleague by other economic developers, think tanks, and politicians outside of my local region to bring perspective to the issues that they faced. At some point, I realized that there was a market need for a firm that brings depth of knowledge across numerous economic development topics. Most economic development consulting firms have very niche expertise or are generalists with limited depth. I wanted to bring world class leadership and expertise to provide our clients with comprehensive solutions that move beyond the fluff.

We firmly believe that the global economy is undergoing a significant transition as evidenced by technological disruption forging new industries and displacing established ones, domestic demographic shifts impacting the US' global competitive position and local communities' quality of life, and global demographic shifts impacting loci of power and demand. We specialize in solving tough issues which require deep thinking and a complex understanding of where local economies meet global challenges. Furthermore, we recognize that while state and federal policy sets the table for competition, the microeconomic activity at the local and regional level really determine how people fare over time. We exploit our understanding of the national and global landscape to craft practical solutions at the state, regional and local level which are sustainable, politically viable, actionable and results-oriented.



What is the ultimate mission of Ascendant Global?

The ultimate mission of AG is to help economies position themselves to be as strong as they can be in terms of jobs, investment, and quality of life. Every market has its own path. We work with local leadership to design a path that aligns with the values, aspirations, and realistic options for growth and sustainability.

Where is Ascendant Global located? Do you have any other locations in the U.S?

We're headquartered in Detroit Michigan, but have staff in Atlanta, Washington DC, New Orleans and Medellin, Colombia.

Can you briefly outline the multiple services you provide at Ascendant Global?

Our work tends to fall into six core categories: economic competitiveness, disaster recovery & economic resilience, economic inclusion, corporate growth, real estate and placemaking and organizational development. These broad buckets capture the gamut of our work ranging from setting up a workforce development strategy for at-risk youth in a southern urban city to designing a strategic plan for an old industrial midwestern city that has lost significant population and business over the last 50 years. More detail on our services are outlined below:

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

This practice specializes in providing pointed analyses to develop industry clusters, developing overarching economic strategies based on data, best practices and community goals, and examining and redacting specific policies and incentives to assess their impacts on economic growth. Specific examples of this work include industry analyses, incentive and other policy analysis and strategic plan development.



DISASTER RECOVERY & ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Whether manmade or force majeure, disasters happen, upset communities, and destroy lives. AG has worked with numerous communities to rebuild neighborhoods, identify sources for infrastructure development, and restore jobs. We assist communities with comprehensive workshops to prepare for natural disaster and build resilience, help them chart a path forward after disaster strikes, or even support in strategy to development to manage consent decrees.

We do not make decisions about what the future of a community should be, but rather work with leaders, in concert, to chart a path forward that helps them achieve their goals. We are experienced in real estate development, managing consent decrees, financing public-use infrastructure, and rebranding communities to regain population and business growth.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION

As economies grow those most apt to reap the benefits are those whom are best prepared financially, educationally, and with the best access to information. Historically, this has meant that low income communities and people of color are the last to participate in the full spectrum of economic opportunities growing markets offer.

This practice helps communities grapple with these challenges, develop thoughtful approaches and concrete programs to ensure that families and communities can access jobs, gain wealth, and grow into a middle-class lifestyle. This work encompasses small business strategies and workforce development.



CORPORATE GROWTH

This practice is a tactical group which focuses on connecting regions, cities, and communities to private sector businesses that represent investment and new job creating potential. This work is much of the traditional economic development practice and includes: business attraction, business retention and expansion, ecosystem development (sectoral strategies, innovation districts, etc.), market positioning and FDI & Trade.



REAL ESTATE AND PLACEMAKING

Spaces determine what goes where and how. Real estate realities tend to play a significant role in determining almost any corporate expansion decision. It is also one of the most commonly touted measures to express the strength or decline of a local market. That's for good reason. Spaces and places are huge determinants of the capacity of a market to absorb diverse types of investment. A community's real estate profile often portrays and conveys the essence of that community's interests, values, and soul. Ascendant helps communities understand their development potential and provides informed perspective to help communities effectively unlock latent value and achieve their desired development goals. Our real estate efforts include commercial district assessments, neighborhood and community development, retail, market analyses, and land use and planning.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Communities around the globe recognize economic development as the key to addressing many social and economic challenges including poverty, unemployment, lifestyle amenities, and the list goes on. Ascendant Global is experienced and understands what makes economic development organizations function, how to leverage them to garner specific results, and governance models that will best fit a community's needs. We work with EDOs, governments, communities, and boards to refine their work and optimize performance. We support organizations through organizational analysis, organization setup, economic development board development, metrics and benchmarking, and economic development training. We also assist private sector companies involved in economic development define and refine their strategies.



Rodrick Miller with Soledad O'Brien

Rodrick what enables you to have a great ability to analyse markets and help regions nationally & Internationally understand how to scale there economies?

My effectiveness in crafting market strategies is a byproduct of experience, engagement in multidisciplinary circles, and training.

I've been in the economic development industry for nearly 15 years in a variety of roles with high performing organizations in numerous markets. Beyond the 2 roles where I served as CEO for economic development organizations in major urban markets (Detroit and New Orleans), I've led strategy for a large southwestern market, have served as the lead business developer in attracting foreign companies for a statewide collaboration, and have crafted diverse economic inclusion programs in markets with significant pockets of poverty and alienation. In other words, my experience doing this work has been a tremendous teacher. The experience has been in diverse geographies and strands of economic development and has taught me how to provide analyses that are comprehensive and offer markets recommendations that are strategic with program, policy, and tactical levers. These recommendations not only recognize the need for immediate successes, but also should stand the test of time.

I'm also very aggressive in ensuring that my approach to analysis is informed by more than the economic development community. I sit on the Federal Reserve Board's Community Advisory Council, am active with the Council on Foreign Relations, and engage regularly with other think tanks and universities. Beyond that, I have an undergraduate degree in international business from St. Augustine's University, a graduate diploma in Finance from El Tecnológico de Monterrey which I completed as a Fulbright Scholar, and a Masters of Public Policy degree from Harvard University where I was a fellow of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and the International Institute for Public Policy.

How do you plan to deliver economic growth solutions that work?

Most importantly, we listen. We listen to our clients to understand not only their stated concerns, but the values that lie behind them. We recognize that each community is unique; so, we want to really understand the history, policies, and practices that have led to where that community is in its current economic cycle. We do not shy away from difficult issues such as reputation or realities of corruption, racial tensions, or poor business practices which are often contributors to or can exacerbate negative economic realities. Rather, we try to secure an honest understanding of current realities and serve as a partner in crafting solutions that are actionable, politically palpable, result-oriented and sustainable.

We aim to be consistent in approaching market analyses in a way which captures the root causes of market imbalances. In many cases, communities tend to identify symptoms of a bigger problem and ask consultants to address those issues. One can address symptoms, but the fixes in those cases are likely short term and other negative symptoms tend to sprout up to replace the others. Most times there are fundamental policy problems, a lack of the right types of assets, or other competitiveness issues which hinder a market's ability to grow. Hence, we approach these analyses with the goal of understanding the suite of causes that have led to the market issues and focus on prioritizing those challenges. Those challenges are prioritized based on complexity, resources needed to properly fix the issue and time needed to yield results. This approach is a fundamental tenet of the way AG works – no community is an island, so solutions must, both, fix internal challenges and position communities to compete globally.



Rodrick Miller with Congressman Cedric Richmond of Louisiana's 2nd District

Rodrick briefly outline how your workforce leverages global experiences to ensure long-term results and success?

Our workforce is comprised of an eclectic mix of professionals with diverse experiences throughout the US and internationally. Luis Hernandez Albuquerque, managing director for Latin America, has over 25 years of experience in finance, VC/PE, and innovation and entrepreneurship in the US, Europe, and Asia. Dr. Tiffiani Miller has worked on issues of public health and economic development as the former head of food safety for the state of Florida and as advisor to several foreign governors. Courtney Pogue, who leads our real estate efforts has experience in senior roles in the metro Atlanta area, Chicago, and Washington, DC. Meanwhile, Alice Allen, in New Orleans has worked as an economic developer and urban planner in the Boston area as well as New Orleans. Those are just a few of our team members, but each member of our team brings a diversity of experiences locally, nationally, and in many cases internationally. Our approach to the work is one in which we frame each engagement thoughtfully and craft solutions with input from multiple team members to make sure that the outcome covers the needed bases.

We help markets win in the global economy.

ASCENDANT GLOBAL
DETROIT • ATLANTA • NEW ORLEANS • D.C. • MEDELLIN

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