

**Volunteering at the Chamber keeps Van Remortel busy  
He helped launch CEO Roundtable program**

**People who make a difference  
Steve Van Remortel  
Partner, SM Advisors, LLC**

When Steve Van Remortel moved his business, SM Advisors, from Sheboygan to Green Bay in 2002, he knew that he wanted to be involved in the Chamber. Since then, he has taken on an increasingly active role as a volunteer at the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce. “Right now, my passion is to help business owners become successful. The Chamber of Commerce is the most effective volunteer organization where you can do that,” said Van Remortel.

For example, as the founding co-chair of the Chamber’s Roundtable Program, Van Remortel has been instrumental in putting together seven successful groups in the past two years.

“We did our first launch over a year ago, with three new roundtables, and one that was still out there from ten years ago when the program had first been started. This past year, we launched a fifth CEO Roundtable and two CFO Roundtables. From what we can tell, the response and the cohesiveness that those groups are building, and the value that the owners are getting out of the Roundtables, has been awesome,” said Van Remortel.

Each CEO Roundtable group consists of ten to twelve CEO’s, owners, general managers or people in charge of a local operation who have similar company sizes, have no competing interests, desire a similar meeting time and location; and represent a combination of service, professional, manufacturing and retail industries. Roundtable applicants must have a current membership with the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce. Interested applicants are asked to complete a CEO Roundtable Application/Profile to start the placement process. Applications are reviewed for potential Roundtable opportunities in both existing and new groups that may be forming. There is a \$100 annual fee per person.

Ray Kopish, vice president of member services for the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, says the new roundtable program is something that members were looking for and that it is filling a critical niche for the Chamber. “As coach and general manager of the CEO and CFO Roundtables, Steve has contributed so much time, leadership and passion to develop this forum. It would not be the ‘highly acclaimed’ program it is without his contributions,” commented Kopish.

With the success of the roundtable program, Kopish said the Chamber is anticipating setting up other types of groups, such as “second in command” groups of vice presidents or chief information officers.

Van Remortel says being in a Roundtable has been a great experience for him. “I’m really happy to be part of a Roundtable. You have twelve other business people, with whom you can talk in confidence. You get to help people and they help you back without anything being expected. It’s just a really cool environment. We’re building friendships, too. That’s why I wanted to co-chair the program, and why SM Advisors is the corporate sponsor.” He explains that he was first involved with roundtables in the Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce, where he is still a member.

Besides his work with the roundtables, Van Remortel’s other volunteer efforts at the Chamber include serving on the Chamber’s Board of Directors, on the Group Purchasing Board, and being a judge for the Manufacturer of the Year Awards. In the past he also participated in the mentor program for high school students.

Van Remortel believes that everyone should have a definite volunteer plan, and that you should ask yourself, "Where can I bring the greatest value?" He said it's also important to find a balance and try not to become overcommitted.

"Everybody has certain talents, and people should put their talents to the most effective use, both on the job and as a volunteer," he said. "People have to find the right spot where they fit as a volunteer. It's important to focus your time and talents."

As an example, Van Remortel's business, SM Advisors, is a business plan development and execution firm. Van Remortel said that a few years he helped his church with the writing of a strategic plan.

He believes that meeting people is the best thing about volunteering. "The coolest thing about volunteering is the people who I get to meet. When I'm working with a CEO Roundtable, I have ten or twelve entrepreneurial people who are passionate about what they do. I love to see that. It's not just a job; it's their passion. A majority of the companies at the Chamber are small to medium size. They're taking a risk, and that's exciting. So if I weren't volunteering, I'd miss out on that. And people motivate me, too. You see that you're not the only one out there."

Van Remortel is impressed with the work that the Chamber is doing. "Green Bay has a very vibrant and effective Chamber, and they're doing some phenomenal work. The members want to get things done and make a positive impact on this community," he said.

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