



As the World Churns – Notes from Colleen's Desk, July 6, 2023

Happy Birthday SOREDI!

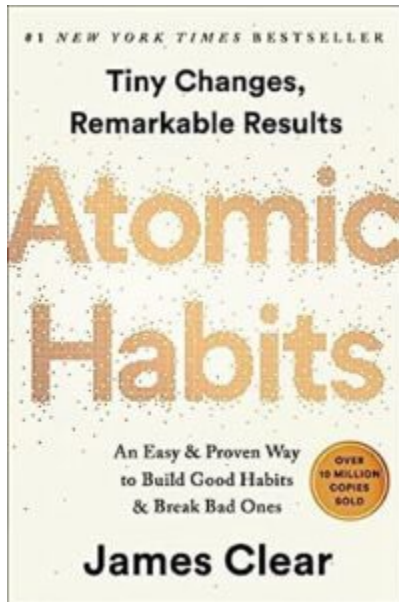
We are now entering our 36th year of business as we turn over into a new fiscal year. I am thus reminiscent of what I was personally doing at 37 and all the various churn of events since then. I graduated from Southern Oregon University that summer, and later in November accepted my first position as Project Manager with SOREDI.

Ironically, I had also inherited 37 community and economic development projects all over the region that were already in motion. My tummy was likely churning a tad as I was head-down reading through every contract, and responsible to the Regional Investment Board. That board (different from the SOREDI Board of Directors) was one of several such boards within the State of Oregon, tasked with soliciting grant applications and allocating funds for worthy community-based projects.

For example, our Regional Investment Board helped fund the skate park in Jacksonville, the Wolf Creek Library, the Cascade Pool in White City, various infrastructure, and workforce training efforts through RCC and OMEP, and more. Unfortunately, the Oregon Legislature sunset that program around 2009. It was an effective program that also provided ongoing capacity to each of the regions. Sadly, such is often the case with great programs – they get axed, perhaps in part due to the churn in the Oregon Legislature.

Speaking of churn, my initial position at SOREDI was only two months after the terrorist attack on our nation, centered on the World Trade Center. The world churned again with the 2008 great recession, and yet again with a devastating pandemic in 2020, and the consequential “great resignation” which every business struggles with today.

Over time we have recovered and healed as best we can, yet the world continues to churn. And SOREDI churns a bit as we review effective programs of the past that assisted our business community. We now are reviewing all and prioritizing what makes best sense to bring back, pass



to another partner, or bury. Everything from Tech Tours to SOREDI Quest to the annual Manufacturing Summit is on our mind.

And as we churn new ideas and old, we are also cognizant that we need to focus on streamlining a few internal systems to assure best outcomes. We are taking to heart this idea “... spend more time focusing on the habits that precede the results,” as penned by James Clear in Atomic Habits.

With our new fiscal year now in motion, **we are grateful to note that SOREDI is strong and continues to do great work for the entire region.** Our membership – both private and public – makes it possible every day for this nimble 5-person professional staff to be responsive to businesses who are seeking to launch, relocate and prosper in Southern Oregon regardless of the economic climate.

Economic development has been our job since 1987, thanks to a handful of forward-thinking businessmen and women who passionately advocated for a collaborative, unified vision for Southern Oregon. They approached our founding fathers – the cities of Medford and Grants Pass, and both Jackson and Josephine County – to convey the urgency for this region to drop the notion that we could all thrive independent of one another. Economic developers, regardless of location, still periodically battle today the outdated ideology that somehow any community, anywhere, can independently attract new businesses without acknowledgement of the neighbor only a few miles away.

Those passionate advocates back in 1987 asked for the creation of a non-profit regional entity that would understand and promote the benefits and advantages of every community and how they complemented one another for the good of all – businesses, citizens, and local governments. Our region, as grand as it may seem, is relatively small in the grand scheme of things. And to churn yet again an old adage, “Together Everyone Accomplishes More.”

In 2020, with the completion of our updated 5-year strategy, we clearly honored our upbringing in that 30-something year old regional collaboration and named our strategic comprehensive regional economic development road map accordingly – **One Rogue Valley**. We are rather serious about it.

Our region is one workforce labor shed. We predominately share the same water shed and enjoy the same recreational benefits (and threats) of our forests, and the one and only wild and scenic Rogue River, the very namesake of our region. Moreover, we rely on the same critical transportation corridor of Interstate 5 to move goods to and from all our communities beyond our borders, returning economic vitality to the region.

In 2020, 5.8 % of the workforce population that lived in Jackson County (about 4,150 people), worked for companies based in Josephine County. And about 20.4% of the workforce population

that lived in Josephine County, about 5,087 people, worked for companies based in Jackson County. Maybe you have noticed the churn of cars going to and fro on the freeway, and elsewhere every morning and evening. It turns out that only 79% of Jackson County workers and 58.6% of Josephine County workers are employed within their respective counties.

As we enter our 37th year of serving fifteen One Rogue Valley jurisdictions, we are still focused on the original charter, making connections with businesses and partners, helping companies prosper here in Southern Oregon and demonstrating tangible One Rogue Valley outcomes, even as the world churns.

There has been a bit of churn here in the agency, too, particularly in the last few months as we operated at less than full capacity. We reported last week that our newest team member, Jaymes Tadlock, is now on staff as Business Development Manager – read more here: [Welcome to the SOREDI Team : Jaymes Tadlock - SOREDI](#). Terrill Roper was promoted to Business Development Loan Manager in May. With Carrie Bohl's relocation to Southern Oregon in October, now serving as our Communications and Business Support Manager, and Rosie roaming the halls as greeter and security guard, we are feeling a bit more energized and ready to take on, well, the churn.

Within the past few months, SOREDI has **advocated for the extension of various incentives with the Oregon Legislature** – particularly the Enterprise Zone, which provides property tax abatement to new and **existing** eligible companies making new capital investments and creating new jobs. SOREDI has served as the enterprise zone manager for 4 different zones since 1998. **The outcome of this critical incentive: 13,923 jobs created and retained, and \$602.3 million in new capital investments – in Southern Oregon.** We call that economic churn with primary jobs! We are pleased to report and grateful to our legislators for extending this incentive through 2032.

We are wildly serious about business development, so it probably is no surprise that the entire staff took an entire day last week for an epic field trip! We were thrilled to witness a little churn on Crater Lake, created by Columbia Helicopters, as they placed three new 55-passenger tour boats on the lake, crafted with precision and great care by Katanacraft. You can read a bit more about our field trip here - [REGIONAL News: Fly, Fly, Fly the Boats! - SOREDI](#) and read about the Grants Pass company that created them here - [Hellgate Jetboats & Katanacraft - SOREDI](#).

Until next time, churn on!

Colleen Padilla, Executive Director