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Justin: Thank you very much, and welcome back to This Just In radio show on HIMSS radio, here at the HIMSS 16 annual conference in Las Vegas. We're live from the HIMSS Expo Center, the Sands Expo Center here in Las Vegas, and thank you very much again, for everybody here in person joining us and certainly online. Very excited about my next two guests, usually we have one, but now we have two. You guys have so much to offer and I'm very excited about this topic, because Georgia is my home state. So, Hala Modellmog and Tom Croteau joining us. Hala's from Metro Atlanta Chamber, you're the CEO. You've been there about a year now? Year and a half?

Hala: Two years.

Justin: Two years now? Time flies. And Tom, you were with Georgia Department of Economic Development, and you work with Chris Carr I believe, over there?

Tom: That's right.

Justin: Fantastic. Chris and I, I think we've now been friends now for almost 20 years. One of my first friends when I moved down to Atlanta from Boston, so great to have you both. So let's talk a little bit about...because I mean, first of all, you are the only state, Georgia's the only state to actually have a booth here at HIMSS, and this is many, many years. This is David Hartnet's brain child from many moons ago.

But do you know how long that's been? I don't know if it's been five years or six years or seven years? How long has it been? Seven years, that the state of Georgia, and the city of Atlanta and the Metro Atlanta Chamber, has been investing in having a booth here at HIMSS, so that's just fantastic, and I appreciate and applaud you guys. But what would you have to say about that?

Tom: Well this is a great show obviously and this is where all the leaders of the industry are, and Georgia has more than 225 HIT, health IT companies now. So it would be crazy for us not to be here, and we have the opportunity to showcase some of the smaller companies who maybe wouldn't have an opportunity to come and have a booth themselves, and they have a space under the Georgia pavilion with us.

Hala: Yeah, one thing that I just learned being out here, is that HIMSS actually started in Atlanta, Georgia, 1961 at Georgia Tech. And of course, Georgia Tech is one of our greatest assets, and then as Tom said, 225 HIT companies, and that represents almost 30,000 employees in Georgia. So we are very proud to have a booth here.

Justin: Yeah, no, and not only... I mean you guys, the work that both your offices have done and certainly with Dave's leadership as well, we are Atlanta and Georgia, Health IT capital of America.

Hala: Absolutely, absolutely. And we brag about that quite a bit, and one of the reasons, I think, that we can say that is not only the volume of companies we have, but because we're so heavy into FinTech, mobility and cybersecurity, and then you add the Health IT there, the way all of those technologies work together and become even more interdependent is one of the things that I think makes us a very special place for Health IT companies. Would you agree, Tom?

Tom: Yeah, that's right. I mean, we really say that we're at the intersection, the intersection of all those industries that really are so important to each other, from a talent perspective, from the perspective of the fiber infrastructure that they rely on, and really from a standpoint of critical mass.

Justin: Yeah, so that was my followup, is just what brings this magnet? I mean, where did all these companies... I mean, I remember because I was with McKesson, our HB company back in the day, that's kind of what my start was and I started a couple companies in the Atlanta area. But what is that magnet that brings people to Atlanta, to Georgia, to create these companies and help IT specifically?

Hala: Well, I think there are several things, but I will mention because I think Tom eluded to it, is that we have...we're in the top five in the nation with more broadband and fiber, and Atlanta sits right in the crosshairs of the Northwest and...not Northwest. North, South, and East, West groups of the things coming through Atlanta. So people know we have that, and then again, when you go back to all the other technologies, they're really strong, and you go back to Georgia Tech, and just the things that have grown up there, I think it really is a magnet for almost any kind of technology company, but certainly Health IT.

Tom: I think you also have a value chain in Georgia, where you can do everything from research and development, to product development, clinical research, and manufacturing all in one place, and when you look at some of the infrastructure to support that, you've got the CDC that's headquartered in Atlanta. You now actually have the US Army Cyber Command Center...

Justin: Oh, I didn't know that.

Tom: ...that is headquartered in Georgia. And 115 cyber security companies. You've got this great fiber network, so you have a lot of things that are working

together, and then you throw in places like Emory University, and Georgia Tech, and the talent that's coming out of those places, and that's really what we're seeing. A lot of innovation as well.

Justin: Yeah, so that was kind of my next question, and you eluded to it, but what position do the universities play, or the role that universities play, because I mean when I'm thinking about building my companies and hiring, I certainly reach out to all the university systems in Georgia to feed my own needs. But is that what you would...is that a great strategy, or what do you guys think?

Tom: I mean, in economic development these days, we see that more than ever. We see companies that are not only interested in being close to the universities for the pipeline of talent, but they want to be there for the culture. The culture of innovation. The want to be part of the college campus now, just not close to it, and we see that with Georgia Tech. We see it with Emory, with Morehouse School of Medicine, even with Augusta University, the former medical college of Georgia, and UGA. So there's a lot of that synergy that's going on.

Justin: So what are some of the incentives, because this is strong and obviously I talk to Chris a lot about attracting more companies to Georgia, and certainly Atlanta. What are some of the incentives that we offer in Georgia that nobody else offers, or what are some of the main incentives? Free in the city or the state? I'd love to know.

Tom: Yeah, we offer some, I think very intriguing incentives that have to do with providing, not only tax credits to companies, but we've got incentives that really are geared for companies that pay...that have higher payrolls, to be able to turn some of those credits into cash that they can then funnel to their operations, and that's really unique. Traditionally, with government and economic development circles, you have resources that can only go into assets. Georgia actually has resources that can go into your working capital without strings attached. And that becomes very powerful for companies that are trying to grow.

Hala: Yeah, with Georgia being rated the number one place to do business for the last three years, and we're certainly going for that fourth year, I like to point out, when we're comparing various markets that we actually compete with at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, we look at the tax space certainly in all of the markets that we compete with, but we also look at the pension obligations. Because some of the markets sound pretty good on the surface, but if you have not kept up with your pension obligations the way Georgia and Atlanta has, you can get caught down the road. So we try to make sure that we cover all the bases when we're trying to attract companies.

And the other thing I would add is that one of the things that we do at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, and the state of Georgia certainly does, is something that we call aftercare, which is when a company makes that decision to move to Atlanta or to Georgia, and they decide they're going to expand, we make sure that we are there for them, introducing them to customers, making sure they have what they need. They get their certificates, they get the training, we've got a great educated workforce initiative going on at the state and at the chamber and around, and those kinds of things are sometimes intangibles, but we do a really good job of that.

Justin: Now that's fantastic. So what are some of your goals for being here this year, in HIMSS 16 in Las Vegas?

Hala: Well, we talked about this this morning. We said, "What would success look like today?" And what we decided is that it would look like we would be talking to companies who were ready to expand in Georgia, or move to Georgia, and just to really make sure that our relationships are strong, and I can say with all enthusiasm, we haven't had one unsuccessful meeting today. Everybody has been very welcoming, and frankly, it's good to be at an event like this, because you can just remind people of what we have to offer, and sometimes we all are just doing our jobs, but to be able to sit across the table from some of the CEOs we have today has been really special. I have to do a shoutout to AirWatch by VMware, because Alan Devery has been such a great friend to Atlanta and Georgia.

Justin: We were with Ingenius Med's Hart Williford this morning, a small company growing exponentially. It's just incredible, and then you got Share Care, Jeff Arnold is a rock star from the Atlanta, Georgia area, so we really...

Tom: Tee Green from Greenway.

Hala: Tee Green, we had a great meeting with Tee Green.

Tom: This morning.

Hala: He is on fire.

Justin: I think I met with him right before you guys met with him.

Hala: Yeah, so we...I'd say it's been great. What about you, Tom?

Tom: Yeah, absolutely, and then there's McKesson, and the Health Board, All Scripts, Navicare, so many here for us to interact with and to foster those relationships. But also, we want to brand Atlanta and Georgia to the Health IT industry.

Justin: No, I agree, and first of all, you guys have done a great job fostering it, bringing the opportunity. What you do for small companies, and the pavilion that you offer here is just invaluable. For a very low cost, comparable to what other people spend to come to a national conference like this with 40,000 people, 99% of companies can't afford to do it, but you make it affordable for them. So I always have one or two investments always in your pavilion, and I appreciate what the department has done for that, and he fosters that, and he's carried me every single year.

So I appreciate wholeheartedly what you guys do. And the early days, I was an early executive at HBO and Company, then we merged with McKesson, and then I was an early executive at Greenway, so all these companies that you guys mentioned have been certainly key parts of my background and my past, and gave me phenomenal opportunities.

So, again, I appreciate what you guys do, and how you foster that innovation. You foster us as executives. You foster a fertile community for us to do business, so I want to say thank you, and certainly say thank you on air for all that you guys do.

Tom: Well thank you for giving us the opportunity to be here with you.

Justin: You got it. So thank you very much for joining the show today, Hala and Tom, and you guys have a great rest of the conference, and if you need any assistance while you're here, please reach out. I'd love to help out.

Tom: Thanks so much.

Justin: All right, take care. Bye guys.