

Val Hale



Newest Head of GOED Upbeat About Utah's Economic Future and Life

Upbeat and positive is how Val Hale describes himself.

"But no, I wouldn't call myself an extrovert," he says. "I'm not the type of person who lights up the room." And yet, as the new executive director of the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development, he has a very extroverted job.

By Gail Newbold

Photo by Kevin Kiernan

"My schedule is booked from morning to night," says the father of three. "I'm meeting the coolest people, seeing the most amazing companies and going to fun meetings like the governor's cabinet meeting. I got to tour the new National Security Agency facility (in Utah) and introduce a movie and meet celebrities at the Sundance Film Festival. During the legislative session, I was often on Capitol Hill."

Enjoying His Pressure-filled Life

It's undoubtedly his positive outlook on life that allows him to enjoy a job others would find highly stressful. In fact, just before the press conference last July during which Gov. Gary Herbert announced Hale's appointment, he sat Hale down. "Utah is No. 1 in the nation in business and you need to keep us there," Herbert said in no uncertain terms.

Instead of withering under the pressure, Hale says he'd probably be bored if he didn't have a job like this. Early in his career he would have been more intimidated, he admits. But he learned plenty about working under fire during his 22 years in Brigham Young University's athletic department, where he eventually became the athletic director.

Keeping Utah at No. 1

"Without a doubt that was my most stressful job," he says. "Your whole career is dependent on 18-, 19- and 20-year-old kids playing well. It's a great job if they're winning and a lousy one if they're not." Other jobs held by Hale include two years as president and CEO of the Utah Valley Chamber of Commerce and seven years with Utah Valley University in various roles including vice president for university relations.

How likely it is that Hale will live up to Gov. Herbert's edict? "There are only a couple of things that could really mess us up," he says. "One is if our government officials change the formula that's been working so well for us — that's put our state at the top of the heap in having the best environment to start, grow and prosper a business. The other is if we can't adequately develop our workforce so we have enough qualified employees for businesses to grow. This latter is a national problem, not just a Utah problem."

If You're Not Having Fun, Something's Wrong

Given Hale's optimism and willingness to work hard, it's hard to imagine him not succeeding. "I love life, and I love coming to work every day," he says. "I really believe being surrounded by positive energy is the best way to do business, so through my career that's the way I've been. If you're not having fun, then something's wrong."

He's nearly finished writing a book on his philosophies on how to live a fulfilling life, soon to be published by Cedar Fort. "It goes back to a talk I heard in college by (then LDS Church President) Ezra Taft Benson who quoted this phrase: 'Happy is the man who's found his work, his worship and his wife and loves all three.'" 🌟