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CASINO & HOTEL

*Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana to Open
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FROM THE PUBLISHER ▼

Collaboration, Consensus, and Command: A Leadership Blueprint



SPECHT

"I love it when a plan comes together."

— John "Hannibal" Smith, The A-Team

That iconic line came to mind last week while I facilitated a Design Sprint. Watching people from different backgrounds, education levels, and priorities come together to solve a complex problem reminded me of the strategic planning sessions I've experienced over the years.

Whether you're tackling big challenges or refining your organization's goals, success often comes down to three key leadership principles: Collaboration, Consensus, and Command.

1. COLLABORATION: ESTABLISHING VALUE

The first step in any strategic process is building collaboration. During the sprint, we began with icebreakers and problem context. Why? Because many participants had never met, let alone worked together.

Collaboration starts when team members understand two things:

The problem they're solving.

The value they bring to the table.

As a leader, it's your responsibility to make each person's value known to the group. When people feel valued and understand their role, true collaboration can take place.

2. CONSENSUS: FINDING COMMON GROUND

Once the team understood the problem and potential obstacles, something powerful happened—they began to see common solutions. This isn't guaranteed in every process. Egos, competing priorities, or unclear objectives can cloud progress.

Here's the key: Consensus is preferred, but it's not required.

Sometimes, the team will naturally align. Other times, you'll need to move forward despite disagreement. Either way, the process of discussion and shared input creates clarity and builds momentum.



Photo by Campaign Creators on Unsplash

3. COMMAND: THE ROLE OF THE DECIDER

In the Design Sprint, the group selected a "decider"—someone with the most knowledge about the problem. That person had the final say when consensus couldn't be reached.

Leadership often requires stepping into that decider seat. You listen, you gather input, but ultimately, you make the call. Why? Because:

Teams exist for a reason. They bring collective expertise.

Leaders exist for a reason. To guide the team forward when decisions need to be made.

Command doesn't diminish collaboration; it ensures progress.

KEEP THIS IN MIND

Whether you're leading a Design Sprint, a strategic planning session, or any collaborative effort, the balance of collaboration, consensus, and command is what drives results.

Value your team's input.

Guide them toward consensus.

Step up to decide when needed.

When you embrace these principles, your team can solve problems, build strategy, and move forward—no matter the challenge.

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BIZ.
PARTNERS:



These new Louisiana laws take effect in 2025

BY: ATHINA MORRIS, WWNO-FM
via *The Louisiana Illuminator*

Gas stations won't be able to sell hemp products anymore. Laid-off workers won't get as many unemployment benefits and Louisiana will have a new income tax rate when a slew of bills become law on Jan. 1, 2025.

State lawmakers passed dozens of laws this year during the regular legislative session, and three special sessions on redistricting and criminal justice and tax reform.

The laws will have an impact on voters, taxes, unemployment benefits and the hemp and seafood industries.

Here are some of the major new Louisiana laws that will go into effect in 2025.

ABSENTEE VOTING

Act 317 / SB218 puts more restrictions on absentee voting. Only immediate family members can submit mail-in ballots on a voter's behalf. No person, organization or entity can distribute absentee ballot forms to any voter who has not requested the application. Seniors and people with disabilities must reapply for absentee ballots every four years.

ANKLE MONITORING REGULATIONS

Act 746 / HB874 requires electronic monitoring service providers and manufacturers to register with law enforcement and submit monthly reports



on the defendants they monitor.

CAR INSURANCE DISCOUNTS FOR MILITARY

Act 173 / SB 337, expands the state's 25% auto insurance discount to include military reservists, retired military members, and certain veterans.

HEMP REGULATIONS

Act 752 / HB952, tightens regulations on the state's hemp industry. The law sets new serving size limits on THC products like gummies and seltzers, bans the sale of flower hemp products and also prohibits the sale of hemp-THC products to anyone under 21. Hemp products can no longer be sold at gas stations.

INCOME TAX

Act 5 / HB2, passed during the governor's special session on taxes, lowers Louisiana's corporate income tax rate from 7.5% to 5.5%. A flat 3% rate will be applied to individual income taxes.

NON-COMPETE AGREEMENTS FOR DOCTORS

Act 273 / SB165 limits non-compete clauses in physician contracts to a maximum of five years, depending on specialty. If the doctor ends the contract before the first five years are up, they could be barred from practicing medicine within their employer's parish and two neighboring parishes, for up to two years.

SEAFOOD LABELING

Act 148 / SB166 aims to improve transparency in the seafood industry. Restaurants, seafood markets, and grocers selling imported crawfish or shrimp are required to post disclaimers on menus or business entrances. Businesses are prohibited from making misleading claims about seafood being sourced from the U.S.

STATE EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

Under Act 655 / HB566, applicants will no longer have to hold a bachelor's degree or have

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Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana is almost 'LIVE'



An artist's rendering of Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana

Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana to Open February 13, 2025

BOSSIER CITY, LA – The Cordish Companies announced the highly anticipated grand opening of the new Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana, a \$270+ million luxury gaming and entertainment destination, set for Thursday, February 13, 2025, pending approval from the Louisiana Gaming Control Board.

Starting immediately, guests can make reservations for the luxury 12-story, 549-room Live! Hotel and purchase tickets for the inaugural entertainment lineup at the Event Center at Live!, which will host performances by nationally acclaimed artists, including Walker Hayes (Feb. 28), The Commodores (March 7), Matt Mathews (March 8), and Clint Black (March 29). Tickets are available at Louisiana.LiveCasinoHotel.com.

An Unmatched Entertainment Experience
John J. Chaszar, Executive Vice President and General Manager of Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana, expressed excitement about bringing a world-class entertainment venue to the region.

“We couldn’t be more thrilled to announce our grand opening date,” said Chaszar. “Live! offers an unparalleled experience, whether you’re a sports fan, foodie, gaming enthusiast, or just looking for a

memorable night out. It’s all under one roof.”

The Event Center at Live!, a 25,000-square-foot multi-use venue, will host concerts, comedy acts, and other high-profile events, making it the newest hub for entertainment in the Shreveport-Bossier area.

INAUGURAL ENTERTAINMENT LINEUP

The opening entertainment schedule features:

- Walker Hayes: February 28, 2025, 8:00 p.m. (Tickets starting at \$64.99)
- The Commodores: March 7, 2025, 8:00 p.m. (Tickets starting at \$59.50)
- Matt Mathews: March 8, 2025, 7:00 p.m. (Tickets starting at \$55.00)
- Clint Black: March 29, 2025, 7:00 p.m. (Tickets starting at \$60.00)

World-Class Amenities

Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana is designed to be a premier destination, offering:

- 47,000 square feet of gaming space, with more than 1,000 slots and electronic table games, over

40 live-action table games, and a dedicated High Limits Room.

- A luxury hotel with resort-style pool and fitness center.
- A 31-site RV park with full hookups.
- 30,000 square feet of dining and entertainment options, including:
 - Sports & Social®, a premier sports bar featuring an immersive game-watching experience and interactive arcade games.
 - PBR Cowboy Bar, offering high-energy country music, live entertainment, and a mechanical bull.
 - Luk Fu®, serving traditional Southeast Asian flavors with locally sourced ingredients.
 - The Prime Rib®, a fine dining experience featuring prime cuts and seafood specialties.
 - Ridotto Grand Café, serving Italian-inspired breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

MORE INFORMATION

For reservations, tickets, or additional details about Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana, visit Louisiana.LiveCasinoHotel.com.



NSU's Inferno Pitch at Northwestern State University was held on November 13, 2024, where EAP presented winners with cash prizes.

Paving the way to the Pelican Cup



WILLIAM ANDERSON
– EAP FINANCIAL ANALYST

In the world of business innovation, the journey from concept to success is both challenging and rewarding. For college students across Louisiana, this journey often begins at an information session introducing the dynamic pitch competitions hosted by the Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program (EAP) of BRF. For the past several years, EAP has sponsored these competitions not merely as academic exercises but as transformative experiences that mold students into confident entrepreneurs ready to compete on the statewide stage of the Pelican Cup and beyond.

We believe it is critical to invest in young people at the college level because these competitions ignite the entrepreneurial spirit in young leaders, encouraging them to see themselves not as job seekers but as job creators. In an area like North Louisiana, where innovation and economic diversification are critical to long-term growth, nurturing this mindset is essential. When students develop the confidence to turn ideas into businesses, they help build a more dynamic local economy. They create companies that solve real problems, attract investment, and provide meaningful jobs. These competitions don't just prepare students for the future—they shape the future of North Louisiana by fostering a culture of innovation and opportunity right here at home.



GSU finalists presented their entrepreneurial pitches to local community leaders in Grambling at the Golden Pitch in November 2024.

Throughout the academic year, EAP delivers a robust lineup of workshops and training sessions designed to equip students with the skills they need to succeed. From public speaking and persuasive communication to financial modeling and market research, these sessions are tailored to help students approach each deliverable with confidence. Full buy-in from university personnel, faculty, and mentors makes all the difference in helping students take their ideas to the next level. The process kicks off each August with students

diving headfirst into ideation. This phase challenges them to identify real-world problems and craft creative solutions, often inspired by their personal experiences or academic fields. From there, students distill their concepts into a one-page business plan known as the Lean Canvas. This tool maps out value propositions, customer segments, revenue streams, and cost structures in a concise, actionable format. Through workshops and mentorship provided by EAP, participants re-

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Participants in CDI Louisiana in 2024. | Photo Courtesy of the Bossier Chamber of Commerce

LEADING INTO 2025

Registration Open for Community Development Institute Central in Louisiana

Community leaders, elected officials, and business professionals seeking to drive positive change in their communities can now register for the 2025 Community Development Institute (CDI) Central, set to return to Louisiana next year.

Hosted at the Louisiana Tech Academic Success Center and sponsored by Louisiana Economic Development (LED), CDI Central offers a comprehensive training program designed to equip participants with the skills and strategies needed to foster community and economic development.

ABOUT CDI CENTRAL IN LOUISIANA

As a satellite site of CDI Central at the University of Central Arkansas, the Louisiana program condenses the traditional three-year curriculum into a single year, divided into three intensive training

sessions:

- February 18-21, 2025
- June 16-19, 2025
- September 29-October 3, 2025

Through engaging, interactive sessions and simulations, participants will gain practical insights from experts in community and economic development. Graduates of CDI Central also have the opportunity to pursue the Professional Community and Economic Developer (PCED) credential, elevating their expertise and impact in the field.

WHY ATTEND?

- CDI Central empowers participants to:
- Learn best practices from seasoned commu-

nity and economic development professionals.

- Develop strategies to build thriving communities with robust economies and improved quality of life.
- Expand their network through collaboration with diverse leaders and professionals.

HOW TO REGISTER

For more information and to secure your spot, visit the [Bossier Chamber of Commerce CDI Central webpage](#).

CDI Central in Louisiana is your gateway to becoming a transformative leader, driving progress and innovation in communities across the state. Don't miss the opportunity to be part of this impactful program.

BIZ BITS ▼

SHARE YOUR LEADERBOARD MOMENTS

BIZ Magazine, a leading business publication in Northwest Louisiana, is encouraging local businesses to share their successes through its 'Leaderboard' feature. This platform highlights notable achievements such as new hires, promotions, awards, and company milestones, aiming to celebrate and promote positive developments within the

regional business community.

Submissions to the Leaderboard are shared with business leaders across Northwest Louisiana through the BIZ Daily Report and may also appear in the print edition when applicable. The magazine strives to process and post submissions within three business days, ensuring timely dissemination of news. All entries are subject to approval and may be edited for clarity.

Businesses interested in featuring their accomplishments can submit their news through the [Leaderboard Submission page on the BIZ Magazine website](#). This initiative reflects BIZ Magazine's commitment to fostering a connected and informed business community in Northwest Louisiana.

BIZ MAGAZINE

Accredited Charity Seal Saves Donors from Homework

What is it that distinguishes an “accredited” charity from others?

An Accredited Charity is one that has met 20 national standards that look at compliance with widely-accepted expectations of nonprofits regarding their governance, effectiveness measures, finances, and integrity of their publications—on-line and otherwise. These are standards established by the Wise Giving Alliance, a sister affiliate of the Better Business Bureau. A qualified professional (notably, not an algorithm) completes the evaluation.

Why haven’t I heard of this before now?

In 2022, the Better Business Bureau serving Shreveport and the surrounding region decided to join with many other BBBs across the nation that have been conducting Charity Review programs. In doing that, the BBB Board of Directors made a community service commitment to assess the hundreds of nonprofits within its geographical footprint according to the 20 standards. The expense of conducting reviews is borne completely by the BBB, which means there is no cost to individual 501(c)3 organizations. Importantly, the BBB has been conducting charity reviews for almost 100 years.

I know that the Better Business Bureau grades businesses. Is this like that?

Unlike businesses, there is no grade rendered by the assessment. Rather, a nonprofit either qualifies as accredited, or if not, is informed as to the precise standards that remain to be achieved in time

for their next scheduled review.

How do I learn which charitable organizations are accredited?

Results of charity reviews are accessible at the Give.org website, as well as a publication that is produced three times annually, the Regional Wise Giving Guide.

When I give, should my first consideration go to nonprofits that are accredited?

At minimum, Accredited Charities should make your list of options. When you give to a nonprofit that is accredited, you can have great confidence that your contribution is merited. By “merited,” the implication is that an organization’s governance, their program effectiveness, their finances, and the integrity of their publications all matter to you, i.e., the generous person giving them consideration. A professional and scholar—one whose awareness and insight regarding the nonprofits of our region is especially extensive—has already examined that organization, and essentially has performed homework for you.

Think about it this way,. When you shop, how do you know when to feel good about trading your hard-earned money for a product or a service? And of course, your satisfaction with the product or service pivots on how much it exceeds, meets, or falls short of your expectations.

Charitable donations are different. We do not get to enjoy that degree of insight when it comes to your donations, though, do we? There is no first-hand feedback loop. There is no product or service personally received. And, typically, there is no

specific expectation for any specific outcome.

How, then, can you reasonably conclude your contribution made a genuine difference for an effective charity and those whose lives it claims to attempt to improve? How can you legitimately hold trust that your generosity has not been wasted on a nonprofit organization that—whether intentionally (scam) or unintentionally (ineffectiveness)—fails to deliver on the promises it pledges?

Accreditation is a function of research by a well-regarded independent authority, and the output provides generous individuals quick and cogent insight into trustworthiness among nonprofits. National nonprofit organizations are assessed by professionals affiliated with the BBB’s sister organization located in Washington, DC, the Wise Giving Alliance. Area nonprofits, as discussed above, are assessed by the Charity Review Director affiliated with the BBB office located in Shreveport.

Should I avoid contributing to nonprofits that are not accredited?

That is not necessarily the case. Rather, when one gives to one that is not yet accredited, it’s highly recommended that you learn why it is not, and do whatever homework necessary to gain your confidence. As stated above, charity review in our area only began about two years ago. Accordingly, there absolutely can be valid reasons why a given organization has not yet achieved that distinction.

GREG THOMPSON | CHARITY REVIEW DIRECTOR
BBB SERVING NORTHEAST & CENTRAL
LOUISIANA & THE ARK-LA-TEX

LAWS

Continued from Page 4

more than three years of relevant experience unless the position is senior-level or requires specialized knowledge.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Currently, unemployed individuals qualify for up to 26 weeks of government benefits, but under Act 412 / HB119, they’ll only be eligible for up to 20 weeks. The exact duration depends on the unemployment rate, with the maximum set at 20 weeks if the rate reaches 8.5%. If it dips below 5%, workers will only qualify for up to 12 weeks of benefits.

VOTING

Act 500 / SB436, requires you to provide proof of citizenship when registering to vote. The Secretary of State’s Office will determine what documentation will be required to

show proof of citizenship.

Other laws set to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2025.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Act 664 / HB906: Makes revisions to the Campaign Finance Disclosure Act.

COMMERCIAL REGULATIONS

Act 656 / HB577: Prohibits social media companies from collecting data to use for targeted advertising to minors.

ELECTIONS

Act 550 / HB221: Provides relative to recall petitions.

ETHICS

Act 282 / SB30: Provides relative to annual financial disclosure statements by certain elected officials and public servants.

INSURANCE

Act 9 / HB611: Provides relative to homeowners’ insurance and termination of certain policies.

Act 173 / SB 337: Provides for a premium discount for certain military personnel.

Act 175 / SB 345: Provides for an extension for premiums due for homeowners’ policies.

LICENSING

Act 786 / HB679: Provides relative

to auctioneers.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Act 693 / HB376: Provides relative to the regulation of medical marijuana.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

Act 516 / SB332: Repeals the Occupational Licensing Review Commission. This eliminates the commission which supervised licensing boards.

STATE FUNDS

Act 723 / HB 786: Provides for the transfer, deposit, and use of monies among state funds.

PELICAN CUP

Continued from Page 6

fine their ideas, gaining clarity on the core aspects of their ventures.

A standout feature of the program is its emphasis on financial literacy. Students are guided through detailed financial analyses—an essential step that transforms their businesses from abstract concepts into viable enterprises. Armed with these insights, they move on to crafting compelling pitch decks. These presentations are not just slideshows; they are storytelling vehicles designed to captivate judges and potential investors. The pitch deck phase is where creativity meets precision, and it's often where students' entrepreneurial grit truly shines.

This year's competitions showcased bold, forward-thinking ideas tackling a range of high-level challenges. A prominent trend was the focus on preventive health and holistic wellness, with students identifying gaps in the modern healthcare system and proposing solutions that could benefit us all. Artificial Intelligence also emerged as a dominant theme, offering innovative ways to

streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and solve complex problems. Beyond these, students explored concepts in recycling, online marketing, data-driven research, financial literacy tools, and businesses aimed at strengthening community development—demonstrating both creativity and a deep understanding of real-world needs.

The local pitch competitions culminate in high-energy events at each participating institution—Northwestern State University, Louisiana State University Shreveport, Grambling State University, and Centenary College. Judges, often drawn from the local business community, evaluate students' presentations based on creativity, feasibility, and potential impact. For the winners, these competitions are more than just moments of recognition; they are stepping stones to the prestigious Pelican Cup at the University of Louisiana Monroe.

The Pelican Cup finishes with an awards banquet on April 10, and represents the pinnacle of university-level entrepreneurial competition in Louisiana. With higher stakes,

significant cash prizes, and exposure to a broader audience, it's a true test of the skills and resilience honed at the local level. Ultimately, EAP's goal extends beyond winning competitions—it's about building businesses that launch and thrive in North Louisiana. By connecting students with resources, mentors, and a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem, BRF's EAP is cultivating the next generation of business leaders. The results speak for themselves: past participants have secured funding, created jobs, and made tangible impacts in their communities.

As the next cohort of students embarks on this journey, the message is clear: the road to the Pelican Cup is paved with opportunity, hard work, and unwavering support. For those willing to take the first step, the rewards extend far beyond prize money. They gain the skills, connections, and confidence to turn their ideas into reality—driving innovation and economic growth in Louisiana for years to come.

As we look to the future, it's clear that programs like those offered by EAP and J A are essential in cultivat-

ing a new generation of entrepreneurs. By providing the necessary resources, mentorship, and opportunities to young people, we are not only preparing them for personal success but also ensuring the continued prosperity and growth of our community. The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Northwest Louisiana, and with continued support, it will only grow stronger. The future of our region—and indeed, our world—will be shaped by these young entrepreneurs who dare to think differently and challenge the status quo.

The EAP is made up of a team of financial analysts committed to helping launch startups in North Louisiana. The EAP team helps young companies in many different respects. If you have an idea for a startup company or an invention and are looking for help to launch, look no further than Shreveport's own EAP. Visit eapla.com to learn about upcoming workshops and events. Learn more about Launch Network at launchnetworkla.com.



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