



welsh&associates

Stay connected to the region's top executive search firm.

## NEWSWORTHY

### From the Team

We were thrilled at the end of 2016 when the Small Business Association of Michigan (SBAM) approached our president Sheri Welsh about heading up the organization's latest task force. It's not only an honor for us, but it gives us an opportunity to lend our expertise to this important initiative.

The task force, which officially launched at the beginning of 2017, is looking primarily at policy recommendations it can take to the state and federal government to make it easier for small businesses to operate and to grow. At the end of the project the task force will compile a report: SBAM will draw its recommendations from those findings.

In the meantime, the task force gives Sheri a chance to meet with small businesses from around the region and across the state to discuss our favorite topic: Talent. The task force is also meeting with various organizations whose job it is to support small business. That includes agencies that develop and train our state's labor force and organizations that connect employees to employment opportunities. We're very excited about what Sheri has learned already, and we're looking forward to sharing updates and information with you throughout this process.

As a small business ourselves, we're deeply passionate about supporting other small businesses through our work. If you'd like to talk about how talent challenges are affecting your company, please call us.

*The Welsh & Associates Team*

Your ideal candidate is just a click away:  
<http://welshandassociates.net/employers.html>







## SBAM's Talent Taskforce

What keeps small business owners up at night? According to Tony Stamas, Vice President of Government Relations for the Small Business Association of Michigan (SBAM), the answer is talent.

"On the one hand, this is a positive reflection of Michigan's strong economy," Stamas says. "But it is still a big challenge. Small business owners say they worry about finding talent, about finding the right people with the right skillset, and they worry about keeping them."

Stamas and his colleagues regularly travel throughout Michigan to engage with small business owners to better understand the business dynamics they face. When the topic of talent emerged as a growing concern — consistently voiced at nearly every interaction by someone from the small business community — SBAM moved quickly to learn more about the problem and identify potential solutions. They created a Talent Task Force with members drawn from the small business community, and they asked W&A President Sheri Welsh to lead the effort.

"Sheri brings a great deal of expertise to the conversation around talent," Stamas explains. "And she's been deeply involved with the Southwest Michigan business community for many years. Her name quickly rose to the top as someone we wanted to help us lead this effort."

Also on the task force are about 15 other small business owners. The group meets regularly with public and private organizations working on labor

force issues to examine all aspects of talent challenges and potential solutions.

"As a group, we met with Michigan Works, which connects people looking for work with employment opportunities," Stamas explains. "We met with the Michigan Talent Investment Agency twice. They have a system that's merging talent with employers. We met with the Governor's office, which has been vocal about addressing this topic. And we spoke to the Michigan Community College Association. They play a role in communities by training people to have the right skillset for that region."

Stamas says regional differences among employers is one of the more interesting issues that's emerged for the group. While it is not surprising that Traverse City may have different training and talent needs from Kalamazoo, he explains, the challenge of the Talent Task Force will be to identify common policy recommendations that address these differences.

SBAM has three priorities, Stamas says. "The first is advocacy. We fight for small businesses regarding public policy issues." The report produced by the Talent Task Force will include specific policy recommendations, he adds. "SBAM also helps small businesses by using our collective purchasing power with different programs and offerings for small businesses. Finally, we help our members grow."

To learn more, visit [www.sbam.org](http://www.sbam.org). Tony Stamas can be reached at [tony.stamas@sbam.org](mailto:tony.stamas@sbam.org) or by calling (800) 362-5461. You may also call Sheri Welsh at Welsh & Associates at (269) 488-8836.

*A small business is defined as **500 or fewer employees**. In Michigan, firms with 100 or fewer employees make up the lion's share of small business employers. In 2013 — the latest data available — **companies with 250 to 499 employees grew at the fastest clip** among all small businesses, adding nearly **12,000 jobs**. Michigan small businesses employ **more than half of the private workforce** and make up nearly 90% of Michigan's exporters. Just under 26,000 of these businesses are members of the Small Business Association of Michigan.*

— Small Business Association Office of Advocacy,  
Michigan Small Business Profile, 2016.







## Competing for Talent as a Small Business

If you're a small business and you think you can't compete for Millennial talent, think again. By the very nature of how small businesses operate, they are an ideal place for many young professionals to find what they value most. Nimble, entrepreneurial environments with lots of opportunities to wear multiple hats and have an immediate and direct impact on the business.

According to the 2015 Deloitte Millennial Survey, "90% of Millennials think being an entrepreneur means having a certain mindset rather than starting a company." This approach is often ideally suited to the needs of small businesses. What's more, many Millennials think so, too. In a survey of 2015 graduates, [FastCompany](#) reported that just 15% of new grads were seeking large company employers. And a [Millennial Branding](#) study found that 45% choose flexibility over pay—which may be another way small businesses can compete against bigger businesses.

How do you compete with the deep recruiting resources of the big name corporate brands? Like the early bird, get there first. Connect with young talent while they're still in school. That same [FastCompany](#) article found that 72% of 2015 grads had a formal college-work experience—internships, apprenticeships or co-op employment. These are also a great way to evaluate potential employees without making a long-term commitment. They'll give you a jump on training, and they can get young talent excited early about opportunities with your company or in your industry.

A recent review of reader engagement with [KzoomConnect](#) found that internships were among the most clicked-on links within our online blog—so we know there is interest right here in our region. And Southwest Michigan is flush with colleges, universities and certificate-issuing training centers from which to draw students.

Beyond the work opportunities themselves, you can build your company's brand among students by connecting with their faculty or training staff. Offer to guest lecture. Share case studies. Or open your facility to a class tour. Students today are savvy enough to know that they have to come out of school ready to apply their knowledge to real-world work. If you help them do so, they'll remember you.

## Meet Our Team

Anne Charette joined W&A in March as a designated "utility player." She brings with her a broad set of skills that enable her to step into almost any task or project. This skillset, combined with a willingness to help out when and where she's needed, makes her an invaluable asset to our team.

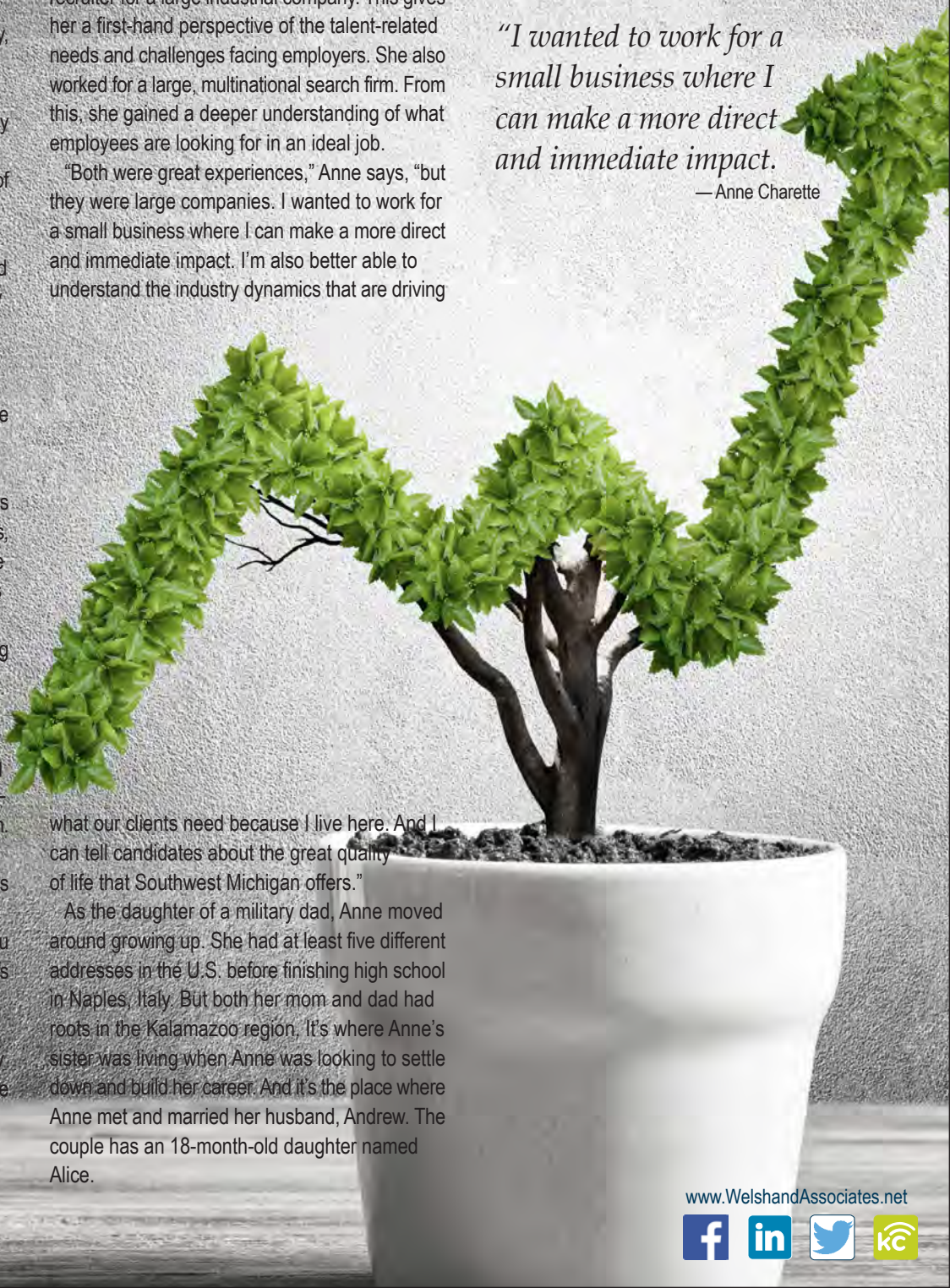
Anne's experience includes work as an internal recruiter for a large industrial company. This gives her a first-hand perspective of the talent-related needs and challenges facing employers. She also worked for a large, multinational search firm. From this, she gained a deeper understanding of what employees are looking for in an ideal job.

"Both were great experiences," Anne says, "but they were large companies. I wanted to work for a small business where I can make a more direct and immediate impact. I'm also better able to understand the industry dynamics that are driving



*"I wanted to work for a small business where I can make a more direct and immediate impact."*

— Anne Charette



what our clients need because I live here. And I can tell candidates about the great quality of life that Southwest Michigan offers."

As the daughter of a military dad, Anne moved around growing up. She had at least five different addresses in the U.S. before finishing high school in Naples, Italy. But both her mom and dad had roots in the Kalamazoo region. It's where Anne's sister was living when Anne was looking to settle down and build her career. And it's the place where Anne met and married her husband, Andrew. The couple has an 18-month-old daughter named Alice.