

Deyo strikes right chord with music industry

By David Williams
Contact
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Dean Deyo plays drums in a local rock and roll band, but that's not how he got the gig as president of the Memphis Music Foundation.

The nonprofit foundation hired Deyo the former corporate executive -- retired after 25 years as CEO of Time Warner in the Mid-South -- and Deyo the community mover and shaker. He's currently chairman of the nonprofit Leadership Academy and a board member of the Tennessee Film, Entertainment and Music Commission.

"I know these people in town. I've lived here 27-plus years," said Deyo, 56. "I have peer relationships with the CEOs of the corporations. I know the mayors and politicians. I've done fund-raising for numerous organizations in town. And so at least that part of it, I can jump in feet first and get going on day one."

The foundation, in a national search said to have drawn dozens of applicants, sought economic development and fund-raising experience. Foundation officials said that's what was needed to achieve the organization's goal of re-establishing the Memphis music industry, creating jobs and attracting new businesses.

Or, as foundation board chairman Phil Trenary said when Deyo was announced Tuesday, "We're not much in need of a drummer right now. ... Our primary mission is economic development in the music industry."

The foundation wouldn't say how much Deyo will be paid, but Trenary said, "The amount of leadership, integrity and capability we're getting, relative to the salary we'll be paying, is just an incredible bargain."

Memphis and Shelby County Film & Television commissioner Linn Sittler said she's gotten to know Deyo from his membership on the state commission.

"I think he's a great guy," she said. "He obviously has the career experience and success, so that he should do well at a very challenging job."

Deyo starts work in mid-December. He replaces Rey Flemings, who resigned in September, joining Justin Timberlake's organization as the hometown pop star works to relaunch Stax Records.

Trenary said the foundation has completed its "facilitator" role on the Stax relaunch, and will be focusing on such projects as the proposed Sam Phillips Center, a resource for local musicians expected to be located at the University of Memphis.

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Dean Deyo

Age: 56

Birthplace: Chicago

New position: President, nonprofit Memphis Music Foundation

Business background: Former CEO of Time Warner in the Mid-South; retired in 2005 after 25 years. He's also chairman of the nonprofit Leadership Academy.

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