

KERTAX MAKING A DIFFERENCE: DISRUPTING THE STATUS QUO WHILE GAINING RESPECT

THE SITUATION

In the late 1990's, several companies virtually disappeared from the ranks of America's most successful and profitable companies, primarily due to the inability or refusal to adapt to the changing world of technology. Others have failed because the culture of maintaining the status quo dominated the need for vision and innovation. Companies that thrived, however, have likely had leaders who were innovators—those who question, observe, network and experiment. These skills have since been named “Disruptive Leadership.” The definition of disruption is to cause (something) to be unable to continue in the usual way; to interrupt the normal progress or activity of (something).

KERTAX'S RESPONSE

Since 2005, KernTax has taken a different path to improve results for its members. Kerntax collaborates with governmental organizations and other nonprofits to create partnerships. Using the principles of Disruptive Leadership and creating meaningful partnerships, Kerntax has been very successful in promoting significant change in Kern County.

Successful partnerships include:

- **County of Kern.** Since 2005, KernTax has worked closely with County Supervisors to represent taxpayer interests. Board members monitor KernTax's positions on issues and value KernTax's advice and counsel. County Department Heads regularly call KernTax to provide information and solicit KernTax's position on current issues.
- **Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office.** Working with Dr. Frazier, Dr. Barlow, and the Fiscal Review Team, the Office developed the “Debt Tool,” a 210-page guide to explain the ins and outs of school facility financing to school districts.
- **Pacific Gas and Electric Company.** In 2010, KernTax addressed the Board of Supervisors regarding the unfair and punitive five-tier rate system PG&E was using for E-1 customers from 2000-2010. Kern County residents were hit the hardest by this inverted block-tier system. PG&E has worked diligently to provide current, accurate information and advice to KernTax for succeeding at the CPUC.

- **School Districts in Kern County.** KernTax has directly worked with county school districts regarding municipal finance. This effort has resulted in Kern County taxpayers having future school bond obligations reduced by \$2 billion.
- **Kern County Employees Retirement Association.** Michael Turnipseed, KernTax's Executive Director, served on the KCERA Board from 2011-2016. The Board:
 - hired an entirely new leadership team
 - modified investment portfolios to address changing investment opportunities
 - reviewed and improved portfolio management practices.

KernTax's successes are based on reliable community partners:

- **Non-Profit Partners** – Bakersfield Association of Realtors; Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce; Kern County Cattlemen's Association; Kern Citizens for Sustainable Government; Home Builders Association of Kern County.
- **Workforce Task Force Partners** – Bakersfield Association of Realtors; Bakersfield College; the City of Bakersfield; County of Kern; California State University, Bakersfield; Kern Economic Development Corporation; Kern High School District; Kern County Superintendent of Schools; Taft College and especially Supervisor Leticia Perez.
- **1+1+2 Game Changer** – KHSD/BC Dual Enrollment. Partners. Supervisor Leticia Perez, the County of Kern; Dr. Sonya Christian, Bakersfield College and Dr. Bryon Schaefer, Kern High School District.

THE RESULTS

KernTax, whose motto is “Facts through Research,” is one of the most respected and relevant organizations in Kern County. The KernTax Board is well informed and provides a significant level of assistance to the group.