

# LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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## *Making an Impact* THE FOUNDATION AWARDS

Full coverage of the 2026 Lawrence Business Magazine  
Foundation Awards Celebration



# A Business for

This employee-owned financial advisory firm continues to grow both in and outside of Kansas several years after receiving a Foundation Award.

by Emily Mulligan, photos by Steven Hertzog

**Lawrence isn't a giant metropolis, but it seems to offer just about everything. So it's rare to find a business need that isn't being met.**

Yet, that is exactly the reason that SSC CPAs + Advisors has come to thrive and grow in Lawrence for the past three decades: they offered a service that local businesses needed. And they have not only become a cornerstone of the accounting profession in Lawrence but also the community as a whole.

As the name indicates, SSC CPAs + Advisors provides services beyond the scope of accounting and taxes—though they do excel at the full range of financials, accounts payable, payroll and tax preparation—for families and businesses. SSC also uses the accounting ledgers as a launching point to assess and advise businesses about their potential for growth and for succession plans in the future.

“So much in accounting is talking about what already happened, and you need to look at what you did,” Chief Strategy Officer Michele Hammann says. “But it's more important to look at what you're going to do. We offer forecasting and projections as decision tools.”

SSC won a *Lawrence Business Magazine* Foundation Award in 2017 be-

cause of the firm's growth in Douglas County, and now the company is growing in new ways—beyond the state lines. It has recently opened three offices in Oklahoma: Norman, Perry and Tulsa. The company's presence is also larger than ever in Kansas, with additional offices in Meriden, Overland Park and Salina. Hammann's father founded the company in Topeka in 1984 and expanded to Lawrence in 1996 thanks to a banker at Douglas County Bank who told him there weren't enough full-service accountants here. Topeka remains the company headquarters, but the Lawrence office is the same size, in people and in revenue. Hammann says they are looking at expansion in other states, as well.

Fifteen people work in the Lawrence office, including Chris Kohart, who folded his independent accounting firm into SSC in 2017 as part of the local growth. Firmwide, SSC has 105 employees.

The company is employee-owned, which is a unique structure for a firm of its size and helps explain why it has excellent employee retention.

“They earn more shares the longer they work here. We are run by a board of directors and answer to shareholders, which is all of us. Then we buy it back from them when they're ready to retire,” Hammann says.



# Business

Being able to help clients beyond preparing their taxes in March and April every year is also a large part of SSC's success. And Hammann says their consulting work and making projections is a large part of that, ensuring that the business maintains its value so it can transfer to employees down the road or be sold to a third party at maximum value.

"We talk to the management team. They need to know the revenue—they're responsible for helping to generate it. We pick things they can affect," she explains. "The clients who do best are committed to revisiting projections a couple times a year."

## Teaming Up

SSC also has formed a partnership with Merit Financial Advisors to offer wealth-management services.

When he was running his own practice, Kohart often interacted with SSC and Hammann about audits and shared business back and forth. He respected its status in the community and the way the company conducted itself. He had a meeting with Hammann for audit planning shortly after he found out one of his longer-term employees was moving away. The idea of

forming an even closer business collaboration came up in the conversation, and Kohart, of course, crunched the numbers on what that could mean for him.

"They had the infrastructure and knowledge and management in place. Having a team was a huge appeal to me. It was so invaluable to me, not carrying such a heavy mental load. The culture we have here is that it's a team effort," Kohart says.

Both Hammann and Kohart say their local coworkers enjoy living in Lawrence while being able to serve clients across the United States. Their employees can choose which office to work in, and both say that if employees start in Lawrence and then choose another office, they often return to the Lawrence office because they miss it here.

Kohart explains that part of the appeal is how much of an economic driver The University of Kansas is for all of the businesses and for the local lifestyle. That is just the beginning of the advantages of what makes Lawrence unique.

"Being in Lawrence and having access to the University, we have a really good internship program, and that gives us access to hiring younger staff," Hammann says.



*Michele Hammann – Chief Strategy Officer*



*Chris Kohart – Senior Manager*

Kohart has practiced accounting in Lawrence since 2000 and has raised his family here, so he continues to choose to live and work here.

“The proximity to Kansas City gives us the opportunity to get other experiences, but we also get to have the lifestyle in Lawrence that we want to have,” he says.

Working with other businesses has reinforced for Hammann how precarious it is to launch and sustain a business. She cites research that says nearly half of businesses don’t last past the five-year mark, so that’s why SSC has chosen to sponsor the Foundation Awards for many years.

“We love a good ribbon-cutting, but the truth is that opening day is the easy part. What deserves celebration is the slow, steady slog—showing up year after year, making payroll, serving clients well and doing the next right thing when no one is watching. The Foundation Awards recognize that work, and we are proud to stand behind it,” she says.

## Growing Together

Both Hammann and Kohart appreciate the unity of the business community in Lawrence. The Foundation Awards have a lot of familiar faces to them.

“When we got our awards, there were a whole bunch of our clients up there, too. It is really cool to see them still growing and still doing the work,” Hammann says. “There are not a lot of celebrations in business. You can take a minute to celebrate what you accomplished.”

This summer, Hammann is going to begin preaching what she practices, so to speak, with the release of her book, “Go Public in Private,” about how businesses can plan ahead by looking at their current balance sheets. The book shares how publicly traded companies maximize their own valuations and how other companies can apply those methods for themselves and do the same.

Though their work comes from many places, Hammann and Kohart say they never lose focus on the importance of Lawrence to their firm and work.

“We give back a lot,” Kohart says. “We stay invested here with a lot of volunteer work, people on many community boards, supporting local organizations and sponsorships. We never want to leave Lawrence. Lawrence has supported us.” ▲



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