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## Regional Report: The Southeast

*Chief Executive's* newest Regional Report offers an in-depth look at the pros and cons of doing business in Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky and Mississippi.

Posted by: Warren Strugatch October 9, 2014

As the U.S. continues its stop-and-start economic recovery, the Southeast is doing rather well overall. Home to five of the nation's CEO-ranked Top-10 states and four of its Top-Five states, the region continues to bolster its appeal to relocating executives while retaining homegrown stars.

Thanks to a series of high-profile, incentive-laden manufacturing wins—Volkswagen, BMW and Airbus have either expanded or announced new plants—the Southeast is in the throes of reshaping American manufacturing. The region's automotive and aviation clusters mushroomed during the 2010s, pulling their multipliers along with them; professional service searches nearly always include Southeastern finalists. Favorable right-to-work laws, increasingly nimble government corporate recruiters, pro-business tax policies, generally mild climate and relatively low costs of living—these and other factors combine to form a business-friendly buffet designed to delight corner-office palates.

"The Southeast will always beat the Northeast and the West Coast in terms of 'executability.'"

"The Southeast will always beat the Northeast and the West Coast in terms of 'executability,'" says James Renzas, principal of The RSH Group location-strategy consultancy. The Southeastern states "get things done faster," says Renzas. "They have more land. There is more integration on the part of state and local economic development agencies. There, utilities are huge supporters of economic development."

Competition among states in the region has led to increasingly pro-business tax policies, faster permitting and more creative, flexible and aggressive incentive programs south of the Mason-Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi. "Clearly, public policy in the Southeast has created a really good business climate on the tax and regulatory sides," says Larry Gigerich, managing director of site selection firm Ginovus. "On the labor side, the fact that these are right-to-work states and that labor costs are more affordable are very important factors."

Increasing emphasis on job-training programs bolsters the region's appeal. "Many of the states have done wonderful jobs on the workforce-development side," continues Gigerich. "Georgia and the Carolinas are the top three states for job training and workforce development. They deliver the best job training and retraining for companies relocating or expanding in their states."

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