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Tempo expands out of state, building on local growth



Jen Dirks of Tempo at the 2025 Women of Influence awards ceremony

KENNY YOO/MBJ



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Story Highlights

- Tempo launched its first out-of-state chapter in St. Louis with 40 members.
- The Milwaukee women's organization has tripled membership over the past decade.
- Tempo president Jennifer Dirks envisions expanding into three to five markets.

Just over 50 years after launching as Milwaukee's professional women's club, Tempo is expanding beyond the state, launching a chapter in St. Louis.

The expansion, which comes after about four years of planning, adds 40 members in St. Louis, pushing the organization's total membership to more than 850 executives.

The move comes after several years of growth for Tempo, with membership tripling over the past decade or so. That excitement about the organization from members pointed to something that could be valuable elsewhere, Tempo President and CEO Jennifer Dirks told the Business Journal.

"We knew we had created something special here in Milwaukee," she said. "We started to say, 'What can we do with what we've created?'"

St. Louis was selected for the first out-of-state chapter because of similarities between that city and Milwaukee, Dirks said, including the presence in both cities of companies like BDO and Husch Blackwell, which helped with recruiting the first cohort of members.

"Our members became the ambassadors," Dirks said.

The 40 women in the first St. Louis cohort represent 31 companies from a range of industries, including technology, law, higher education, financial services and more.

The hope is to get that number up to 50 or 75 members in the first year – compared with the goal of growing by 125 members a year in Milwaukee, a milestone Tempo “blows out of the water every year.”

In both Milwaukee and St. Louis, members are either invited to join by the organization or nominated by current members. Joining costs \$800 a year, which provides access to a range of programming and events.

While the goal is to provide professional development for the St. Louis executives, the expansion will also be a benefit for Milwaukee members, Dirks said, expanding their network. Already, she said, she’s seen connections form between members here and in St. Louis.

While the expansion is a big step for Tempo, it might not be the last one.

When it launches, Tempo St. Louis won’t have the Emerging Women Leaders group that Tempo Milwaukee began a decade ago – but that could be added once the new organization is more entrenched.

As for the future: St. Louis was one of three cities on the shortlist for expansion. Are the others – which Dirks wouldn’t name – still on the horizon?

“I think so,” said Dirks, who has a dream of expanding into three to five markets over the next decade. “I think there is a need. We’re going to start and see what St. Louis brings and evaluate that. We want it to be successful. We believe it will be, and that we then can begin assessing other markets.”