



RETHINKING  
*shop & trade*  
CLASSES

TODD SOMMERFELD, Executive Chairman, Kreg Tool



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## A VIEW FROM THE TOP



**David Zrostlik**

*ABI Chair*

*Stellar Industries, Garner*

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## ABI educates members from the Boardroom to the Statehouse

Some years ago, at the direction of the ABI board of directors, the association significantly stepped up the number of programs and events it holds each year. The goal with these added programs was to give ABI members increased opportunities to interact with each other and to ensure that ABI members had the latest information about issues that could help them grow their businesses.

That is why, in any given month somewhere around Iowa, you will see ABI programs being held. Public policy events, Foundation programs, technical seminars, peer groups and the Connecting Statewide Leaders series are all examples of these programs. I hope you and your employees go often to the ABI webpage at [www.iowaabi.org](http://www.iowaabi.org) and click on the Events button to find the latest event being held near you.

One resource that has been a key asset in development of the increased informational and educational events is the ABI Advisory Council. As you know, the council

is comprised of ABI member companies and firms that offer terrific expertise in a variety of disciplines. You can find a listing of council members near the end of each month's edition of Business Record Iowa.

The point is that high-value educational and informative events are being produced by ABI year-round. And speaking of education, this edition of Business Record Iowa is all about "back-to-school." I hope you find it interesting.

As a final note, this month's annual policy committee meetings have record attendance registered and excellent speakers. They are a key part of the policy development process, which ensures that ABI members set an aggressive policy agenda for our organization each year. The process, which involves hundreds of members, is a chief reason for ABI's decades-long public policy success. On behalf of the board, thank you to you and your employees for your participation in the policy process in particular and for the association in general.

## TOP TIPS

### Empower Your Employees To Be Health Care Smart

Did you know that employees who feel well-educated on their health benefits are more likely to regard their company as a good place to work? In fact, according to a recent study from the Employee Benefit Research Institute, this is true regardless of what's actually included in the benefits package. That's pretty amazing when you think about it.

Your company invests in both its people and its health plan, so here are a few tips to help increase the return on your investment and help employees get the most from their health benefits:

**Talk early and often.** Talk to your employees about their health benefits throughout the year, not only when it's time for open enrollment. A steady stream of dialogue throughout the year on topics from the value of the benefits you offer to general education on how those benefits work will ultimately empower your employees to be smarter health care consumers.

**Remember one size doesn't fit all.** Your employees are unique people with individual preferences and needs. Don't assume that a single flyer or email about their benefits is going to suffice. Provide a variety of communication pieces, including printed materials, videos, articles and lunch and learns on your company's intranet to encourage your employees to take control of their health care dollars.

**Listen up.** Do you know what your employees actually think of their health benefits? Have you asked them? Encourage your employees to give regular feedback. Taking the time to listen now can pay dividends when it comes to company culture and employee retention.

If you need educational resources, reach out to your health insurance carrier. By offering your employees more insights into how their benefits work and why, you can give them the power to be smart, informed health care consumers.



**Dave Daniel**

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## ◀ EVENT REWIND



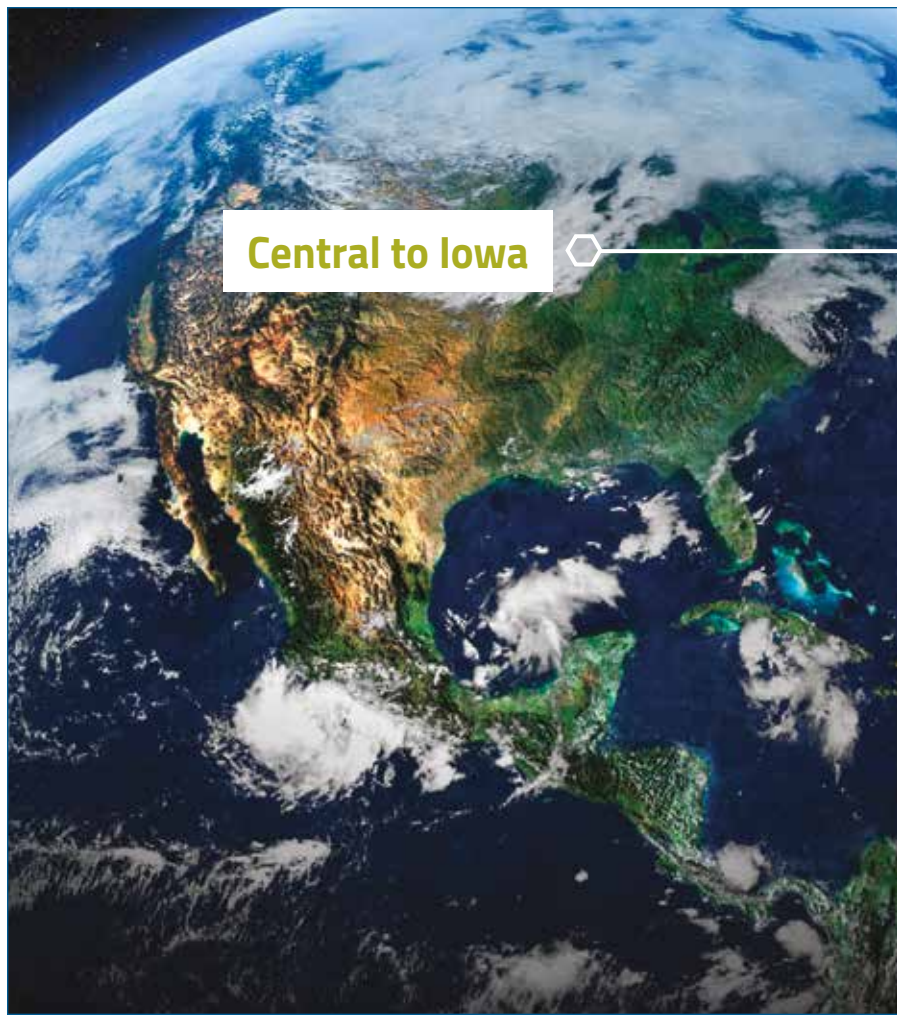
# Business Horizons

June 25-29 | Pella

More than 70 students from 45 Iowa high schools came together June 25-29 to take part in the five-day entrepreneurial experience that is Business Horizons, a program of the ABI Foundation. Students kicked off their action-packed week by creating a product with a team, and were tasked to navigate the world of business and entrepreneurship throughout the week with a variety of challenges and competitions. Students heard from expert speakers, visited local businesses and learned about themselves as team members and leaders. Learn more at [BusinessHorizonsIowa.com](http://BusinessHorizonsIowa.com) or visit [BusinessHorizonsMedia.com](http://BusinessHorizonsMedia.com) to see more from the week. See more photos on Page 6B.







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◀ EVENT REWIND

# Business Horizons







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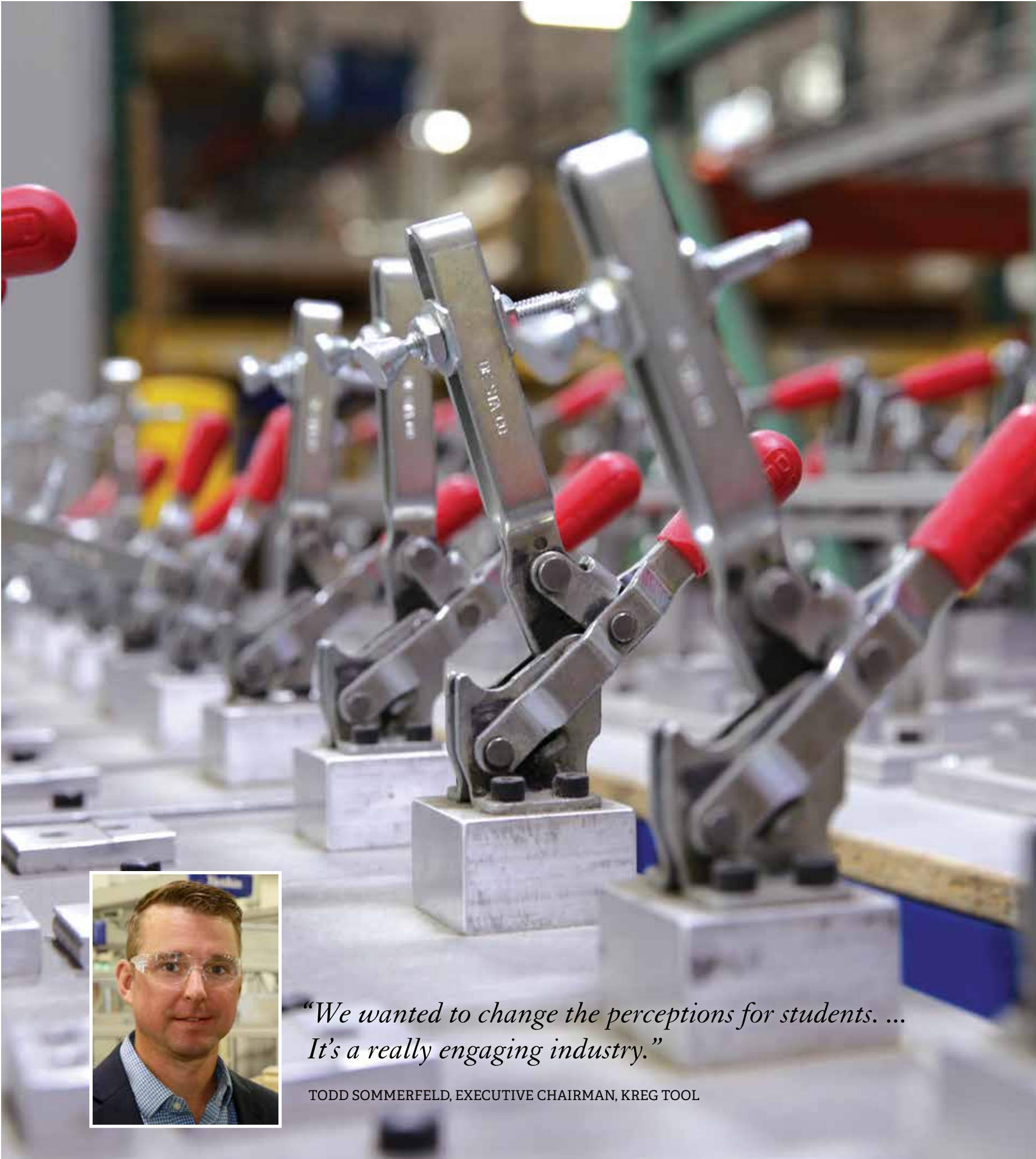
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*“We wanted to change the perceptions for students. ...  
It’s a really engaging industry.”*

TODD SOMMERFELD, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, KREG TOOL





# RETHINKING *shop & trade* CLASSES

## TAKING INDUSTRIAL ARTS INTO THE FUTURE

When the welding class at West Delaware needed updated equipment, the business community came through in a big way, donating more than \$50,000 worth of welders.

And when Johnston High School opens its new building this fall, shop students will have new equipment courtesy of Iowa businesses.

It's partnerships such as these that have updated Iowa's shop and industrial arts classes in many school districts across the state and given students the equipment to develop the skills they need to become the next generation of skilled workers.

Efforts to educate students and expose them to different careers associated with the trades and manufacturing have paid dividends in the state. Advanced manufacturing enrollment increased 14 percent from 2014 to 2015 in Iowa's community colleges, said Alex Monaghan, the program coordinator for Elevate Advanced Manufacturing, a statewide marketing initiative to promote careers and educational pathways into advanced manufacturing.

Much of this is a result of the efforts to change the image of manufacturing. Elevate Iowa works to change the perception





## A CUSTOM PUBLICATION FOR ABI



of manufacturing careers and address misconceptions related to the work environment, safety and wages. Elevate works with students in grades kindergarten through 12, as well as teachers and parents. One aspect of this includes work-based learning programs for high school students where they can visit manufacturing facilities and learn firsthand about the industry.

"It'll give them an idea of what the program is all about, and then go to the community college and get their degree," Monaghan said. "It's helping to fill the skill gap by starting them at a younger age and seeing what else is out there. A lot of people aren't familiar with the industry and aren't familiar with what is on the floor of a manufacturer."

Business owners reached out to Seth Harms in the early 2000s during his first year

of teaching welding class at West Delaware. They needed more skilled workers to fill jobs at their manufacturing plants and wanted to know if Harms and the school would teach a continuing education class through Northeast Iowa Community College in Calmar.

The result was a trifecta partnership among the business community, West Delaware High School and NICC. Harms now teaches a couple of night classes a week for adults who are displaced from their jobs, underemployed or unemployed. Students at West Delaware also can obtain 11 credits toward the NICC welding certificate diploma program.

"A lot of my students get hired right out of high school that decide to go into welding," Harms said.

West Delaware students have access to more than a dozen multi-process welders and some of the newest welding technology. Some of the school's equipment also was donated from NICC.

"We started from what you would conceive as a normal high school shop class to a pretty skilled welding program," Harms said.

Welding class attendance has more than doubled, but some of that is a result of a shorter program – nine weeks versus 18. Students also have access to business people through collaborative efforts in which businesses help in the shop class a couple of times a week.

## Rocket Manufacturing

Iowa high schools are constantly encouraging students to think about their futures, but Rock Valley has taken it a step further with its student-run business, Rocket Manufacturing.

Rocket Manufacturing started when a local manufacturing company approached the school with the idea. The company had heard of a school in Wisconsin that started a student-run manufacturing business and wanted to start something similar in northwest Iowa.

Now, Rocket Manufacturing is working with local businesses and the community. The students help on real projects with these business. They get paid for their work, while also gaining experience in the field. Students have to apply for a position on the team. They must create a portfolio and go through an interview process.

What really makes Rocket Manufacturing unique is that they are expanding beyond just manufacturing. They have added a communication team and will soon be adding a sales team to expand their business beyond Rock Valley. They want everyone to get the most out of working with Rocket Manufacturing by offering everything that goes into running a business.

The success of the students has shown through their community and the businesses they work with, which has included refurbishing community-used equipment and helping manufacturers draft project ideas.

*"We asked employers what they look for in an employee, and they came and said that they could teach anyone the technical skills, but it's hard to train someone on soft skills such as communication."*

CHAD JANZEN, PRINCIPAL, ROCK VALLEY

They have done a lot preparing these students for their future and have a lot of support from the community.

"We are very blessed what the business owners have brought to the program. It is an equal partnership between the business owners and the students," Janzen said.

## EDUCATION OPTIONS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL EXPAND

Educators and business leaders discovered they needed to provide those who were out of work or unemployed, as well as high school students, other options beyond attendance at a college or university.

Community colleges began to look at what job areas needed workers and the skills those workers needed to fulfill the jobs. This was one of the reasons NICC created its Career Pathway Certificates. Most can be completed in less than 12 months and provide students with job skills and hands-on training for entry-level jobs or with education they can transfer to a degree or diploma program.

"We now have more pathways in place with the intention that every student in high school should have some career or technical exposure," said Kathleen Nacos-Burds, the vice president of learning and student success at NICC.





## Durant High School Industrial Arts

NICC has more than 46 career pathway certificates or courses for which the student can receive credits. Students, regardless of age, have the option to go straight to work, continue their education for a degree or transfer to a four-year college. This has given people who were out of the workforce an opportunity to gain new skills and seek new employment. About 50 percent of NICC's enrollment is concurrent enrollment of students who are in high school and taking NICC courses or programs.

As opportunities expanded, so has student interest: 840 students attended Career Pathways in 2016, compared with 585 in 2012.

"It's the hands-on being able to get to learn that trade, but also getting them out and being able to show them the great opportunities that are out there," said Wendy Mihm-Herold, vice president of business and community solutions. "It's totally changed their attitude because now they know what is available."

Tim Rouse, the Industrial Arts Program instructor at Durant High School, has been teaching students about industrial arts – architecture, construction and engineering – careers for 17 years. In that time he has created multiple courses that start with a basic understanding about the industrial arts and advance to more specific art geared courses. The ACE program is a series of the architecture, construction and engineering courses that Rouse has molded into the successful program it is today. ACE offers students the opportunity to design homes, build scale models, learn the basics in welding, and much more. Students leave the ACE program with job offers, apprenticeship opportunities and the option to further their education at two-year and four-year colleges.

With technology changing so fast, Rouse wants people to know that this isn't the old woodshop class anymore. Students are required to have a better understanding in math and science. This has also changed the industrial arts from a vocational program to career-focused program, Rouse said.

Rouse also recently teamed up with Kirkwood Community College to set up an ACE mentoring program. Students work with professionals who are currently employed in ACE-related careers. They are given hands-on experience to see what career paths they want to continue to pursue, while gaining experience working on bigger projects.

Part of the process has been identifying skill sets for job areas that need workers, and then working with educators and others to find students interested in those careers, Nacos-Burds said.

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"We're working to do career coaching and career counseling," she said. "We're trying to empower counselors in our high schools to look at skill sets and where (the student wants) to be and what pleases (him or her)."

It's important youth have skills that will serve them for a lifetime and prepare them for careers they may not have even considered, Nacos-Burds said.

Partnerships among workforce development, economic development leaders, educators, business people and more have been vital to developing the career pathways and the skill sets associated with them, Mihm-Herold said.

"It's a unified approach for how we build the human capital in the community," she said.

## PARTNERSHIPS VITAL TO FUTURE INTEREST IN MANUFACTURING

There is more support from the business community for the welding program at West Delaware than Harms can even utilize, he said.

West Delaware Superintendent Kristen Rickey and Harms met with members of the business community several years ago when the school needed to update its welding equipment. The business leaders asked Harms what he needed. He explained he would like seven welders that would cost about \$49,000. By the end of the meeting, the equipment had been donated to the school.

"This is so important to the community, and they have so much respect for what Seth does and so much support for our students," Rickey said. "Just saying to the community: 'We need \$50,000 worth of the welders,' and we had them by the end of the meeting."

Kreg Tool Co. in Huxley is a strong supporter of efforts that enhance academic and technical learning.

Recently, the company donated a router and router table for Johnston High School's new industrial arts area. The request fit with the company's Kreg Cares program and its area of giving toward education. The company supports causes that further academic or technical learning, said Melany Stonewall, the company's strategic communications manager.

The company also donated about \$60,000 in equipment to Ballard High School's industrial arts program a couple of years ago that includes woodworking equipment and a 3-dimensional printer.

"We did that over a few years to help launch the vision and reignite the program," Todd Sommerfeld, the executive chairman of Kreg Tool, said. "When people reach out to us to enhance a program at the high school, we typically respond."

The company also has worked with high schools in Oregon and Denver to improve equipment and classroom curriculum.

Kreg is now working with seven school districts through the Story County Active Learning Experience (SCALE) to launch a program for high school students to work with various companies in a partnership to receive real-life skills and work experience.

Sommerfeld said he supports partnerships between business and education because he thinks working in the trades creates

*Pella High School Career Academy*

Pella High School students completed nearly 5,000 college credits last school year, thanks in large part to courses offered through the school district's two-year-old Career Academy.

*"It really has been a great experience for students because they could be entering college with enough credits that they're already midway through their sophomore year."*

ERIC NELSON, PRINCIPAL, PELLA HIGH SCHOOL

The Career Academy works with local employers in Marion County to determine what courses to provide to students.

"We try to look at our community needs and try to provide them the proper future employees for that venture," Nelson said.

The school offers certified nursing assistant (CNA) training to help local health care providers in need of workers. Students who learn welding can pursue careers at local companies such as Vermeer and Pella Corp.

Last year, 25 students completed their welding certification and can go straight to working for \$18 to \$20 an hour, Nelson said.

The programs have evolved over the years to offer students more hands-on experience and opportunities that will provide a better idea of what their careers could be like once they graduate.

"In construction trades, for instance, you used to build a cabinet, now students are working with Habitat for Humanity to build houses," Nelson said. "Family and consumer sciences isn't about preparing a meal for your family, it's about preparing you to enter the culinary arts field."



a sense of accomplishment when one sees what they have created. His company's focus is on creating this same sense for its customers, but it needs the workers to do that.

"Because of selling into the trades and working with manufacturing, we see a real lack of focus and effort on education around the trades," he said. "We feel a core responsibility to go and highlight that and really market the value of trades and the value of manufacturing and shed a different light on it."

## PROGRAMS AIM TO EDUCATE TEACHERS, STUDENTS

Sommerfeld and Kreg also have been supporters of Elevate Iowa. He was a member of the steering committee, and his company has opened its doors to parents and students to learn more about a manufacturing facility.

"We wanted to change the perceptions for students, but even more importantly, for the parents," he said. "Those things make a

big impact as people leave here. It's really engaging industry to open their doors and invite people in, and give them a realistic view of what's going on."

This is part of Elevate's Manufacturing Day in October. Manufacturers in Iowa's 99 counties host tours to educate students, parents and teachers, and to show them what a manufacturing facility looks like.

Elevate's efforts also happen inside the classroom. It introduced eduFACTOR this school year. These online videos help teachers educate their students about the manufacturing industry and show it in action. The videos use real-life manufacturers and show how they use technology and resources to make the careers relevant to students and their parents.

Through a collaboration with the Iowa Newspaper Association and teacher Alecia Rahn-Blakeslee, Elevate developed a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) curriculum that meet Iowa core re-

quirements. It is available through its website [www.elevateiowa.com](http://www.elevateiowa.com) and gives educators examples for how to bring advanced manufacturing skills and lessons into the classroom. In the past four years, the curriculum has been distributed to more than 70,000 educators, parents and community members, Monaghan said.

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*"I'm covered with disability insurance through work."*

You're fortunate, but make sure you have enough coverage and that it works for you.

*"I can rely on savings."*

That's one strategy, but being too sick or hurt to work likely isn't what you're saving for. Wouldn't you rather not have to dip into those savings if the unexpected happens?

*"I'd rather spend my money on other things. Disability insurance just costs too much."*

We get that. It's not fun to spend money on insurance. But you'll thank yourself down the road if you need it. Plus, a policy can be customized to fit your needs and budget. In many cases, it can cost less than a daily cup of premium coffee.

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- Are you close to retirement?
- Do you have enough cash savings and liquid assets to last several years?

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## BY THE NUMBERS



**70%**

The goal the state of Iowa has established for the percentage of residents with education or training beyond a high school diploma.

**42%**

Percentage of Iowa's population (ages 25 to 64) with an associate degree or higher.

**127,700**

Number of Iowa residents who will need to earn postsecondary degrees and other credentials by 2025 for the state to reach its goal.

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Iowa's rank in the U.S. for residents (ages 25 to 64) with an associate degree or higher.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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**AUGUST 16****Workplace & Product Safety Public Policy Meeting**

ABI Office | 400 E. Court Ave., Suite 100 | Des Moines

**AUGUST 17****Environment Public Policy Meeting**

ABI Office | 400 E. Court Ave., Suite 100 | Des Moines

**AUGUST 21****Tax Public Policy Meeting**

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**AUGUST 22****Employment and Workforce Public Policy Meeting**

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**AUGUST 28****Executive Open**Des Moines Golf and Country Club | 1600 Jordan Creek Parkway  
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## CAPITOL BUSINESS

**BACK TO SCHOOL: ABI  
PUBLIC POLICY EDITION****Nicole Crain***Senior Vice President,  
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As children in Iowa get ready to head back to school, ABI members are also hard at work educating each other on recommendations for the association's legislative priorities in 2018. One priority that will take more than ABI to address is that of workforce. ABI has been very active the last several years and has led with workforce as the association's No. 1 priority. We expect workforce to top the list again this year. As we look at workforce, two critical components of a qualified workforce are education and training.

The Iowa Legislature has taken steps by increasing state general fund dollars that support K-12 education along with passing legislation that supports post-secondary training programs. The Legislature has also passed laws encouraging career and technical education (CTE) offerings in schools and making it easier for individuals with real world experience to teach CTE classes. Those initiatives have all been steps in the right direction. However, money alone is not the solution to Iowa's workforce challenges. We must have collaboration across all industry sectors. The Future Ready Iowa Alliance, which is co-chaired by Gov. Kim Reynolds, is a great step in getting all parties to the table and having a conversation about what needs to happen.

As the Future Ready Iowa taskforce puts together their legislative initiatives, ABI will be ready to play an integral role in ensuring the legislative initiatives move forward. We look forward to having Iowa Workforce Development Director Beth Townsend at the ABI Employment and Workforce Committee on Aug. 22. If you are an ABI member we hope you join us to hear about what Iowa Workforce Development is doing to address the skills gap and workforce needs we have. We hope you can attend and provide your expertise and ideas for advancing Iowa's workforce.



EXPERT ADVICE

# 5 ways small businesses can stay relevant through online innovation



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**These days, staying relevant involves staying connected.** Businesses are being challenged to deliver more and more conveniences and services online. So how can a small, main street business stay innovative and relevant when it comes to the needs of their customers?

**Here are a few pointers:**

## Keep an up-to-date website

Having an up-to-date website that is mobile-friendly is key in staying relevant. No one wants to spend time attempting to learn about your product or service through a clunky, un-optimized interface, nor will you be able to compete with other businesses if your website is out-of-date.

## Be transparent

As big as the internet is, it holds many similarities to a small town. Everyone is somehow connected and everyone talks. Keep that in mind as you conduct your day-to-day business. What you do offline can find its way online in the form of reviews. Convey an air of transparency by inviting your customers to review your products and services through online review platforms like Google or Yelp. It shows customers you have nothing to hide and that you value their feedback.

## Provide convenient online tools or services

With big-box stores and other online services upping their game when it comes to convenience, it's important that small businesses do the same. This could involve developing a mobile app to help your customers pay their bills or manage their accounts online, or providing speedy delivery or pickup options through your website. Prove value and convenience, and you'll prove relevance by default.

## Build relationships with your audience

Engage your customers through genuine interactions with them online. One way to do that is to utilize social media. Provide customer service by answering their questions and developing a sense of camaraderie with your social audience.

## Never stop learning

Make a point to keep up with the latest trends and best practices when it comes to marketing and sales strategies. To stay relevant, you must constantly research your competitors and industry trends, identifying what you need to do to stay ahead of the curve.



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# ELEVATE IOWA



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A CUSTOM PUBLICATION FOR ABI

## Elevate Advanced Manufacturing

In 2015, Iowa manufacturers gathered for the first time to celebrate the industry and icons in the industry who have helped to grow it into one of the state's largest sectors.

The Legends in Manufacturing awards dinner and celebration, now held every fall, is an opportunity for manufacturers to reflect and take pride in their work, the products they create, the people they employ and the contributions they make to their communities.

Elevate Advanced Manufacturing will host the awards ceremony on Sept. 19 at Prairie Meadows Events Center in Altoona. The Iowa Association of Business and Industry's Advanced Manufacturing Conference will occur the next day, Sept. 20.

Help celebrate industry leaders and learn the latest about manufacturing at this special two-day event.

### Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner & ABI Advanced Manufacturing Conference

**SEPTEMBER 19-20, 2017**

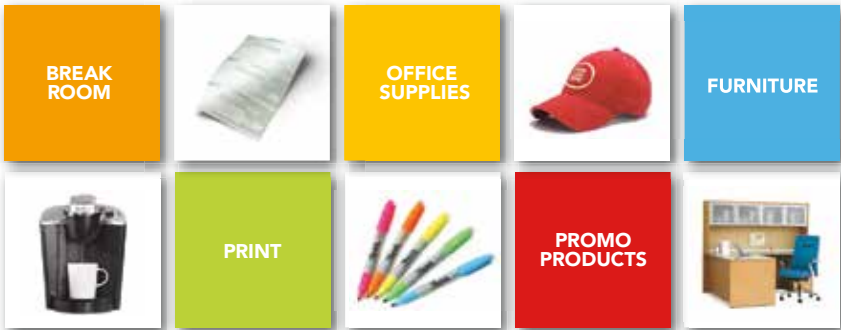
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[www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi](http://www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi).

## AHEAD OF THE CURVE

# Business Horizons helps prepare students for future

BY MADDIE GALLOWAY



High school students from across Iowa recently graduated from Business Horizons, a program of the Iowa Association of Business and Industry Foundation (ABI Foundation). The program teaches students about career opportunities, the business world, teamwork, leadership and personal development.

For more than 30 years, Business Horizons has shown students from all across Iowa the career opportunities that lie within the state. To achieve this, Business Horizons offers exciting, hands-on experiences that are both challenging and engaging. During the weeklong program, the students gain knowledge of how to be successful in the business world. They work in teams to create and produce a product, develop a business plan and pitch their proposals to actual business leaders who serve as mock investors.

This program just doesn't happen overnight. There are many people involved making this program successful. Some of the biggest contributors are the sponsors for the program. Kaci Kohlhepp-Conetzkey works at DMACC, which has been a sponsor for almost five years. In that time, Kohlhepp-Conetzkey has helped the program by being an adviser during the week. She sees firsthand how the program benefits the students.

"Every year I see students that are quiet and reserved really come out of their shell," she said. "By the end of the week everyone is contributing to the group, which is really awesome to see."

Dawson Goodridge of Union County was one of the many students who attended Business Horizons this past summer. "When I entered Business Horizons, I was deathly afraid of public speaking," Goodridge said. "After BH, I can say I now have the confidence to be a leader and to speak in front of others."

There is more to the program than breaking students out of their shells. Kohlhepp-Conetzkey said that teamwork is one of the biggest skills that Business Horizons tries to instill in the students.

"No matter what field you go into, everyone has a different thought process and you might not get along with everyone," she said. "Business Horizons teaches you to put those differences aside to create a product and to sell the product. You have to learn to work with others to do that."

Kay Neumann-Thomas, vice president, programs for the ABI Foundation, oversees the program. She says that Business Horizons not only helps build better social skills but also helps the students find their potential. "During the program, students discover their personal strengths and what it truly takes to run a business, as well as a new network of peers and mentors."

Neumann-Thomas said Business Horizons not only teaches valuable life skills, but prepares students for future career success within Iowa.

"Students graduate from this program with a greater understanding of the futures available to them in Iowa and are better prepared to pursue those goals," she said.

Another student who attended this summer, Alexis Schares of Black Hawk County, saw how powerful the program was for preparing her for the future.

"For me, Business Horizons was a great experience," Schares said. "I made a lot of new friends, learned a lot of how to prepare for my future, learned a lot about teamwork, and overall had a ton of fun! It has inspired me to take action by showing me the importance of preparing for my future now."

Gaining real world experience means seeing directly how actual businesses run. The students visit Iowa businesses and manufacturers to develop a better understanding of the innovative companies doing business in Iowa every day. They listen to expert speakers on how to manage money, how to work in a professional environment, and much more.

For more information on Business Horizons and the ABI Foundation, visit [BusinessHorizonsIowa.org](http://BusinessHorizonsIowa.org).

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## ARE YOU AN ABI MEMBER? CHANCES ARE THE ANSWER IS YES.

ABI is Iowa's oldest and largest business network, representing almost **1,500 businesses** of all types and sizes employing **over 330,000 Iowans** in all **99 counties**. If you are not sure if your organization is a member of ABI, contact Dorothy Knowles at 515-235-0568 or [dknowles@iowaabi.org](mailto:dknowles@iowaabi.org).







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