

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY:

*A look at some of Iowa's
multigenerational
family businesses*

TIM BIANCO
PRESIDENT, IOWA SPRING





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A CUSTOM PUBLICATION FOR ABI

A VIEW FROM THE TOP



David Bywater

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Iowa-grown businesses and the entrepreneurs behind them

If you like stories about Iowa companies that have grown and been successful, then you will enjoy this edition of Business Record Iowa. The cover story is a profile on just such companies and the women and men behind them. The membership of ABI is made up of many successful businesses with similar stories. You can get to know these companies better by participating in the activities of your association.

Summer is a busy time for ABI. In addition to promoting ABI and our members, a part of our ABI mission is to promote the programs of the ABI Foundation. The month of July included the annual Business Horizons experience, in which 65 high school students came together for a week on the campus of Central College to learn about business and entrepreneurship. August includes the kick-off of the annual Leadership Iowa University program (a multi-session look at Iowa business). I challenge you to become more familiar with work of the ABI Foundation and its many activities during the coming year.

We start the annual ABI Public Policy development process this month. There are five meetings in August covering the topics

of Employment and Workforce, Workplace and Product Safety, Economic Growth, Environment, and Taxes. Last year over 121 member companies were represented in these meetings. Through the process, we develop the foundation for our legislative success and advocacy throughout the year. By participating, you add your voice to ABI positions on the critical topics being considered by our government. Your ABI board will approve the new policies in September in order for the staff to begin working on them before the fall election.

You might also want to consider participating in ABI events such as Bringing Boji Back or the ABI Executive Open. Both are great ways to connect with ABI members. In addition, do not forget about all the other high-value work being done by ABI and its member company representatives. Let us hear about what you would like to see in future editions of this journal. In the meantime, I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming ABI event. ■

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IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY:

A look at some of Iowa's multigenerational family businesses

Much like the small towns that define Iowa, family-owned businesses started by visionary entrepreneurs have a rich history in the state. Throughout generations, these companies have provided many benefits to the communities they live in and to the state as a whole.

"I feel like we've given economic vitality or a shot in the arm to the community," said Mark Hanawalt, president and CEO of United Equipment Accessories in Waverly. "That's important to us. We want to make a difference in our community."

Here are some of these Iowa-grown businesses, and the entrepreneurs behind them.

Springing into the family business

Tim Bianco spent many hours in the family factory as a child. So much so, he referred to it as a second home of sorts.

His father, Jim, started and owned Iowa Spring, originally based in Des Moines but later relocated to Adel. As Tim puts it, his father was always at work, so if Tim wanted to get some family time, he had to be at the factory.

"I was one of those kids that if you wanted to hang out with your dad, you had to go to work," Tim said. "He was always at work. Even though I started working full time in 1989, I grew up working in the factory from the beginning. I always knew my career path."

The beginning of Iowa Spring dates back more than a decade before Tim joined the business. After moving to Des Moines from central Illinois in the mid-1960s, Jim worked as a salesperson for a mechanical spring company. That company was bought out, and Jim was determined to create his own business.

He borrowed money from his father, mortgaged his house and took advantage of a small-business loan. Jim operated his company with just one machine and one engineer when it started in 1977. Iowa Spring focused on creating large springs for large machines, like John Deere tractors, one of the company's earliest customers, and it also created springs for automatic garage doors.

The company started near the fairgrounds east of downtown Des Moines and moved to Adel in 1979 after it outgrew its space. When the farm crisis hit in the 1980s, Iowa Spring took a hit, like many other companies, but continued to grow after the crisis subsided.



Tim knew he wanted to work in the family business ever since his childhood, but entering the family business wasn't going to be easy. When he enrolled at Drake in the mid-1980s, Tim worked three jobs, including at Iowa Spring, to help pay tuition.

When Tim graduated in 1989, his father hired him as a salesperson, but it came with a catch. Jim wanted Tim to learn the garage door business, so he told Tim to work for a local garage door installer for nine months. It served as an informal internship.

Tim learned the ins and outs of that business, and a few years later he was on the road as a salesman, traveling around the country for about a decade. In 2002, he took over the company. Since then, Iowa Spring has seen consistent growth, about 5 to 10 percent per year, Tim said.

"When I started, we had about 30 employees," he said. "Over the years, we continued to add equipment and people. Fast-forward to today, and we have two manufacturing facilities, one in Iowa and one in North Carolina, and roughly 160 employees."

The future of Iowa Spring looks bright, even in a period of change. The company, with the advice of Iowa State University's Center for Industrial Research and Service, is changing its manufacturing process, about a 24-month project. But that won't change the reputation the organization has built through two generations of family ownership.

"We're known in our industry as a maker of big springs," Tim said. "We have a well-regarded reputation, and we're sought after by big manufacturers. People who make big prod-

ucts need big springs. They come find us."

Born and bred for agriculture

There are a few numbers that stick with Charlie Schafer and remind him of the importance of his job in the agricultural industry: More than two-thirds of corn loss and more than half of soybean loss is directly related to water issues.

"That's crazy, and the USDA tells us that based on the most recent data and best projections, those issues are getting worse," Schafer said. "With all the technology, you would think it would be getting better, not worse."

Schafer's dedication to farming is what encouraged him to start his business, Agri Drain in Adair, with his brothers, Chris and Bill, in 1976. Schafer grew up 7 miles north of Adair, on a 160-acre farm with his parents and five brothers. While attending Ellsworth Community College, Schafer, the youngest of his family, came home to help his parents keep the farming operation going.

"We had corn and beans, a big garden, hogs and cattle," Schafer said. "It was a great way to grow up. How fortunate can you get? I enjoyed helping out my parents, even as small as our operation was."

Schafer and his brothers formed a partnership after he graduated from junior college. At first, the company served as drainage contractors, installing tubes for Iowa farmers, but as the market evolved and the partners became more knowledgeable in the industry, the company started to focus on product development, manufacturing and distribution in 1984, ending the construction business entirely.

Tim Bianco (right), president of Iowa Spring visits with Nick Carlisle, shipping coordinator on the plant floor.

It was a good decision, as the company grew along with its product lines. Now Agri Drain has about 47 employees and works with drainage contractors around the United States and Canada. It has become a complete supplier of products for drainage water management, subirrigation, wetlands, ponds, lakes, erosion control and land improvement.

Agri Drain has been moving toward automation in its water drainage systems, and Schafer hopes it can make a big difference in the industry. These systems can drain excess water from fields, store it and use it in times of need.

"We think automation is the future," Schafer said. "We want to add and subtract water before the crop even knows there's a deficit or excess so it never brings them under stress. It's pretty amazing."

Born and bred on farm fields, Schafer considers himself lucky to be helping Iowa farmers and working in the industry for as long as he has.

"It's a wonderful group of people who are really dedicated and committed," Schafer said. "It's a great industry, and I'm happy to be a part of it."

Three generations of success

Creating a family legacy has worked out well at United Equipment Accessories in Waverly.

Now a third-generation business, United Equipment Accessories started in 1952. The founder, Vern Iserman, worked out of his garage. The first product he produced, which isn't part of the company's line anymore, was a component remote control kit that was used to remotely operate truck-mounted cranes or excavators from the rear operator cab.

The company has grown from that one control kit into producing a variety of products for heavy machinery, like industrial cable reels, Decril cable, cable chain/cable carriers and durable shift controls. The products are key pieces in construction and forestry machines and are essential in some wind turbines.

United Equipment Accessories has grown dramatically since its beginning, and a lot of that has to do with Mark Hanawalt, the second-generation owner and stepson of Iserman.

Hanawalt graduated from Cornell College in 1975 and worked for the business all his life.

"I wore many hats, so I had a lot of knowledge of core needs in very specific areas. I could look for what made people successful," Hanawalt said. "It was a great background to take over the company."

When Hanawalt became the president in 1999, he said he had already been running the company for a decade prior.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 >>

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SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession Planning for Software Systems

You've heard a lot lately about succession planning for businesses — passing everything down to the next generation and leaving a legacy.

Something you may not have thought of, though, is that just like with a business, you need to plan for the life cycle of any proprietary software systems you use. These include an ERP, a CRM, a quality assurance tool, back office management systems, customer portals and more.

At Far Reach, we like clients to think about custom software systems as if they were team members. After all, employees and software have a lot in common:

Both are there to accomplish something specific within your organization.

They need development to stay up to date with trends.

They should have a purpose that ties to your organization's goals.

Every employee has a life cycle at an organization. They're hired, they grow within their role, they gain additional responsibilities, they take on leadership roles, and someday they retire or leave.

Software also has a life cycle within an organization. It's hired (developed), it's built out to take on more tasks, it takes on responsibilities formerly handled by multiple other systems, and someday it's replaced or retired.

To make the most of technology in your organization, you need to be purposeful and deliberate about your software strategy. When you develop a new system, ask yourself the following:

What is the system's "job"?

Is it brand new or replacing another system or some combination of those?

Will the system be used only temporarily to validate assumptions? Or is it validated and ready to be built for the long term?

Once the system has been developed, will you leave it be, do simple maintenance or continually enhance it?

What's the system's retirement plan? Who or what will replace it when the time comes?

The key is thinking ahead. But how far in advance do you need to plan? It depends. In the same way you would like to have years of transition for a key leader within your organization, some systems require years of planning and development to make a transition as seamless as possible. Other software systems may not require the same level of planning, and a few months may be adequate. In general, the larger the impact of the software on the operations of your organization, the more advanced planning required.

Taking a proactive approach to your business's custom software is how you make the most of your technology investment. ■



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EMBARRASSED EXECUTIVE

Understand your customer before you build an app

Q. I have a new app idea that I'm really excited about. Is it true that if I build it, they will come?



Brett Burkhart

Partner, Shift Interactive

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A. It may have worked in the movie "Field of Dreams," but it's not usually the case when it comes to getting new customers or users for software, apps and websites.

If they do pay you a visit online, they might not stay to complete a transaction. Just being an Iowa business doesn't mean you've got a leg up on other options available on the web, even to a local audience. The internet is a global marketplace, and a crowded one at that, and in order to gain new customers you have to truly understand them.

A movie title that more accurately describes what you need to deliver to potential customers is "The Whole Nine Yards."

So how do you do that?

It takes having a deep understanding of the users: what they want, what they're not getting elsewhere, where they hang out and how you can get their attention.

Have conversations.

Talk with your potential customers to gain insights into who they are, as well as their perceptions, current pain points and challenges. After all, an architect wouldn't design a home for someone without learning about their desires and involving them in the process.

Before you start building the best new web application, mobile app or website, take the time to really understand your customer or end user. Then go out and talk to them. Get confirmation on your assumptions. Share the idea. You'll learn a lot of keys to success and at a much lower cost than if you built the wrong solution based on incorrect assumptions. ■

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

He was schooled on all the things he needed to take it to the next level. He expanded product lines beyond the construction and equipment industries and took sales international. The result was a large increase in revenue and size.

United Equipment Accessories now employs 130 people, compared with the 20 to 30 people it employed about four decades ago. And Hanawalt still has bigger dreams for the company.

He wants to double in size. Hanawalt believes that growth will come through acquisition and expanding to new markets. With his son, Daniel, in the company as well, United Equipment Accessories looks poised to continue growth and providing a vital service to the community.

Bottling for more than a century

The Atlantic Bottling Co., an Iowa-based company that sells more than 400 products and packages all over the Midwest, looked nothing like it does now when it started in 1905. It started with ice cream and didn't get into the soda business until 1909, when Frank Villisca sold the business to his sons, Royal, Harry and Henry Tyler.

In 1915, they began their foray into the soda industry by selling just four flavors, called "Tyler's Flavors": orange, grape, strawberry and cream. In the 1920s, when the family bought a plant in Clarinda, they found a franchise contract for Coca-Cola. While the Coca-Cola brand was becoming more popular around the country, it wasn't gaining in Iowa.

The Tylers worked with Coca-Cola and sold the company's soda along with its original flavors. Soon enough, Iowans wanted more Coke.

Royal sold his stake in the business

to Harry and Henry in 1923, and as the company grew, Harry and Henry decided to split it. In 1949, they drew straws to determine who got which of the four locations at the time. Harry got Atlantic and Creston; Henry got Shenandoah and Grand Island.

Harry's son, Jim Tyler, began delivering Coca-Cola from a wagon when he was a young boy. Jim was a fighter pilot in World War II and returned to the family business after the war. He took over the company in the 1950s, growing it and later expanding it to Greater Des Moines.

Kirk Tyler, the son of Jim Tyler, who took over the business in the 1950s, grew up in the business and ran a delivery route. He went to Atlanta, the home office of Coca-Cola, after college graduation in 1978 to go through the SOB program — "That stands for son of a bottler," Kirk said with a laugh.

He returned to Des Moines in 1981 and became the company's director of sales. In 1991, he was named the president of Atlantic Bottling Co.

Perhaps the biggest change he oversaw was the expansion of the company's Coca-Cola territory rights in 2016. The Atlantic Bottling Co. assumed territories in areas that surrounded distribution centers located in Mason City, Ames, Spirit Lake, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Ottumwa and in the Quad Cities area in Illinois.

Throughout the three generations of family ownership, the Tyler family has become a well-known name around the state.

"It means a lot, and it means a lot to our family," Tyler said. "We've had such a long history of it. When people think of Coca-Cola in Iowa, they think of the Tyler family." ■



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CAPITOL BUSINESS



ABI works to inform you and your colleagues



Nicole Crain

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Each month you read about ABI public policy events or legislative issues the association is working to advance on your behalf. However, there is perhaps no more important topic than what the ABI public policy team will be working on in the next three months: voter education.

Iowa is on center stage when it comes to the presidential elections. But just because there isn't a presidential election this year doesn't mean November is any less important. Every vote counts. We have seen time after time the number of races at the local and statewide level that come down to a few dozen votes. We want to make sure you have the resources you need to make an informed decision in November. Here are just a few ways that you can stay up to date on key issues and election information.

Subscribe to the Election Update newsletter.

This weekly newsletter, published from September to November, gives ABI members a preview of key legislative races, political analysis and important voter registration and absentee voting deadlines. The members-only, subscription-based newsletter will also provide ABI members with the first look at ABI Friend of Iowa Business endorsements. Please contact me if you would like to receive this newsletter.

Visit IAVotes.com. ABI's grass-roots and voter education website has a plethora of nonpartisan information that you can share with your colleagues and friends. The website contains voting records of state representatives and senators and voter registration and absentee ballot deadlines, as well as candidate comparisons for Iowa's congressional races. The website is the one-stop shop for all voter education information throughout the election season.

Follow IAVotes on Facebook and Twitter. Information will be posted this fall to educate the public about the importance of voting. On Election Day we will provide polling place information and live updates once the polls close. Our social media channels give you resources at your fingertips to ensure you get to the polls and vote. If you're an employer, please share these resources with your employees. If you are a political guru, please share them with your friends who may not be as excited about Election Day as me. In Iowa, we have a month before the election to vote. We also have from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. the day of to ensure we can make it to the polls and exercise our right. While you have a few months to prepare, I encourage you to check out some of the resources above and be an informed voter. The ABI public policy team is here as a resource for you. Please contact us at any time, and let us know how we can help you. ■



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



AUGUST 14

ABI Economic Growth Public Policy Meeting

ABI Office | Des Moines | 11:30 AM

AUGUST 15

ABI Environment Public Policy Meeting

ABI Office | Des Moines | 11:30 AM

AUGUST 16

ABI Tax Public Policy Meeting

ABI Office | Des Moines | 11:30 AM

AUGUST 27

Executive Open Golf Outing

Des Moines Golf and Country Club | West Des Moines | 12 PM

OCTOBER 2

Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner

Prairie Meadows Event and Conference Center | Altoona | 4:30 PM

OCTOBER 3

Advanced Manufacturing Conference

Prairie Meadows Event and Conference Center | Altoona | 8 AM

Visit www.iowaabi.org and click the "Events" tab for details on upcoming events.

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Manchester Leasing Services | Clive

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ABI and Elevate Advanced Manufacturing to kick off MFG Day



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According to mfgday.com, Manufacturing Day (MFG Day) is a celebration of modern manufacturing meant to inspire the next generation of manufacturers. MFG Day is recognized annually in Iowa and is held on the first Friday of October. This year it's Oct. 5. ABI and Elevate Advanced Manufacturing will kick off MFG Day with the Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner and the Advanced Manufacturing Conference.

The Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner celebrates the manufacturing industry and recognizes legends in manufacturing for their hard work and dedication to Iowa, the industry and their company. Elevate Advanced Manufacturing scholarship winners will also be recognized at this event. The Advanced Manufacturing Conference will be filled with outstanding keynote speakers and breakout sessions to learn new ways to grow in manufacturing.

"The Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner and the Advanced Manufacturing Conference is a great event to network with business leaders, recognize Iowa leaders for their success in the industry and their company, and learn ways to grow Iowa business and industry from outstanding speakers," said Michele Farrell, Elevate Advanced Manufacturing project manager.

The Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner is Oct. 2 at 4:30 p.m. The Advanced Manufacturing Conference is Oct. 3 at 8 a.m. Both events will be at the Prairie Meadows Hotel & Convention Center in Altoona. Register online at www.iowaabi.org/events.

Iowans can participate in 2018 MFG Day by hosting and participating in tours, presentations and hands-on activities. If you're interested in hosting an Iowa MFG Day event, email manufacturingday@iastate.edu. You can learn more about past and present events at www.mfgday.com. ■

TOP TIPS

Want to start a business? Here's what you need to know.



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In the depths of the financial recession of 2008, human resources administration and insurance industry veterans John Hovey and I decided to leave the corporate world behind and start a business of our own. With more than 50 years of combined service, we founded Focus OneSource based on the principles of trust, choice and transparency.

Starting a business tends to be a learn-as-you-go process consisting of constant trial and error. This doesn't mean you can't get a head start. The more you know in the beginning, the higher the chances the company has for success. Here are our top tips for anyone with an entrepreneurial idea:

Have a business plan. A business plan is the backbone of a business. Having a solid business plan can serve as an invaluable reference for the business. Not only does it define what the business is and what the business hopes to become, it also illustrates the purpose and direction the business wants to go. Business plans help to set goals by outlining a vision of the future.

Secure funding. A business without funding will drown in its own debt. Profits will be low when a business is first start-

ing. Securing proper funding is required to allow for the cash flow to meet expenses until profits pick up.

Gain access to necessary resources. In addition to financial resources, a successful business should also gain access to:

Human resources – Hire the right people to join the team. Look for people with talent and strength that will be an asset to the business.

Educational resources – Gain as much education as possible. Know about the competition as well as the ins and outs of the industry.

Physical resources – Secure appropriate physical resources such as a workspace, supplies, marketing materials, etc.

Be willing to get your hands dirty. Being your own boss can be fun, but if a business is going to thrive, the owners must be willing to get their hands dirty and dive into the core of their business. ■

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