

THE TIMES KEEP A-CHANGING:

Newer technologies continue
to affect how business is done

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The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) is the voice of Iowa business. It is Iowa's oldest and largest business network, representing 1,500 businesses that employ more than 333,000 Iowans. ABI benefits members by advocating on their behalf at the statehouse, connecting them with decision-makers to share ideas and services, offering solutions and best practices for issues that affect their businesses and developing our state's business and civic leaders.

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A VIEW FROM THE TOP



David Bywater

*ABI Chair
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ABI offers even more opportunities to network, grow your business

ABI members place a premium on education and learning. That's why, 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 is to give ABI members increased opportunities to interact with each other and to ensure that ABI members have the latest information about issues that could help them grow their businesses.

In any given month, somewhere around Iowa, you will see ABI programs being produced. 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 website at www.iowaabi.org and click on the Events tab to find the latest event being held near you.

ABI members value the opportunity to share best practices and learn from each other. One topic that is often discussed at ABI events is the latest in technology, and that topic (new technologies and changes in

the way business is conducted) is the focus of this month's cover story.

As a final note, last month's annual policy committee meetings were well attended and substantive. 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. That kind of participation, 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. Your support and participation make all the difference in ABI's success.

Let me close by saying on behalf of ABI members and all Iowans who have benefited from the programs of the ABI Foundation, thank you, Kay Neumann-Thomas! Kay is retiring after a wonderful career spanning 20 years and many, many Leadership Iowa sessions, Business Horizons camps and other Foundation events. I know all Iowans join me in wishing the best to Kay and her family. ■

EXPERT ADVICE

Streamline order processing with custom software

People are often surprised to hear that custom Under Armour uniforms are manufactured right here in Iowa. In Waterloo, to be exact.

Powers Manufacturing, which has been around since 1902, creates and manufactures athletic uniforms. They have their own line of uniforms, and they also manufacture and sell Under Armour's custom team uniforms as the North American licensee.

As anyone involved in manufacturing something custom knows, ordering, manufacturing and other processes can get pretty complex pretty quickly.

Powers Manufacturing got really good at taking custom uniform orders from coaches and reps via fax, mocking up the designs, revising over phone and email until approved, and producing the final product. But the entire process was manual, and each order required days of work by customer service representatives (CSRs).

The leadership team at Powers Manufacturing saw an opportunity to streamline the ordering process, allow coaches and reps to mock up their own uniforms, and reduce CSR time on each order.

They approached Far Reach, a custom software development company, to design and develop a custom software solution that would help them make their proven manual process

more efficient. That solution took the form of a custom interactive uniform builder.

Coaches and dealers can now create their uniform design online; input team rosters to pick names, numbers and sizes; submit orders; and review and confirm mock-ups. And the Powers Customer Service Reps manage the ordering process through this same system.

"The amount of time CSRs spend on each order has drastically decreased since we launched the uniform builder application," said Grant Weidner, president of Powers Manufacturing.

In addition to the customer-facing builder, Far Reach helped connect the uniform builder to the back-of-house manufacturing operations system. Doing so reduced manual entry, which reduced human errors and saved time.

We see this situation a lot — an organization has a manual process in place that works really well. But it doesn't scale, and it's not as efficient as it could be. Some organizations take the step to find or build a technology solution that automates the manual process, while others continue with the status quo.

If you have your manual processes nailed down but are hindered because they don't scale, or if you see benefit in automating them, look into technology as a possible solution. ■



Kelly Kimmich

*Business Strategist,
Far Reach*

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◀ EVENT REWIND

Business Horizons 2018

JULY 15-19 | CENTRAL COLLEGE

Business Horizons 2018 was a successful week for the ABI Foundation and all who took part in the program. The program was host to students representing more than 40 high schools and 75+ volunteers for the action-packed week. Students worked in teams to create a mock business, took part in fun competitions, developed their leadership skills and much more.

This year debuted the new Business Horizons Technology Track, in addition to the Media Track, and provided a workshop opportunity for Iowa educators to experience the program firsthand. After the five days of fun and learning, it's clear that these students are ready to take on the year ahead! Learn more about Business Horizons and opportunities to get involved at BusinessHorizonsIowa.com.



Photo credits: Sydney Peterson (Waukee High School) and Eric Scrivner (Silver Shutter Productions)

Join us in congratulating Wendy on her recent partner promotion.

Congratulations Wendy!

"Wendy's professionalism, insight and approach is a perfect fit with our culture of meeting and exceeding client expectations and creating a great work environment for our team members. We look forward to Wendy being part of the MHC&S leadership for many years."

- Dan Schwarz, CPA/ABV, Co-Managing Partner



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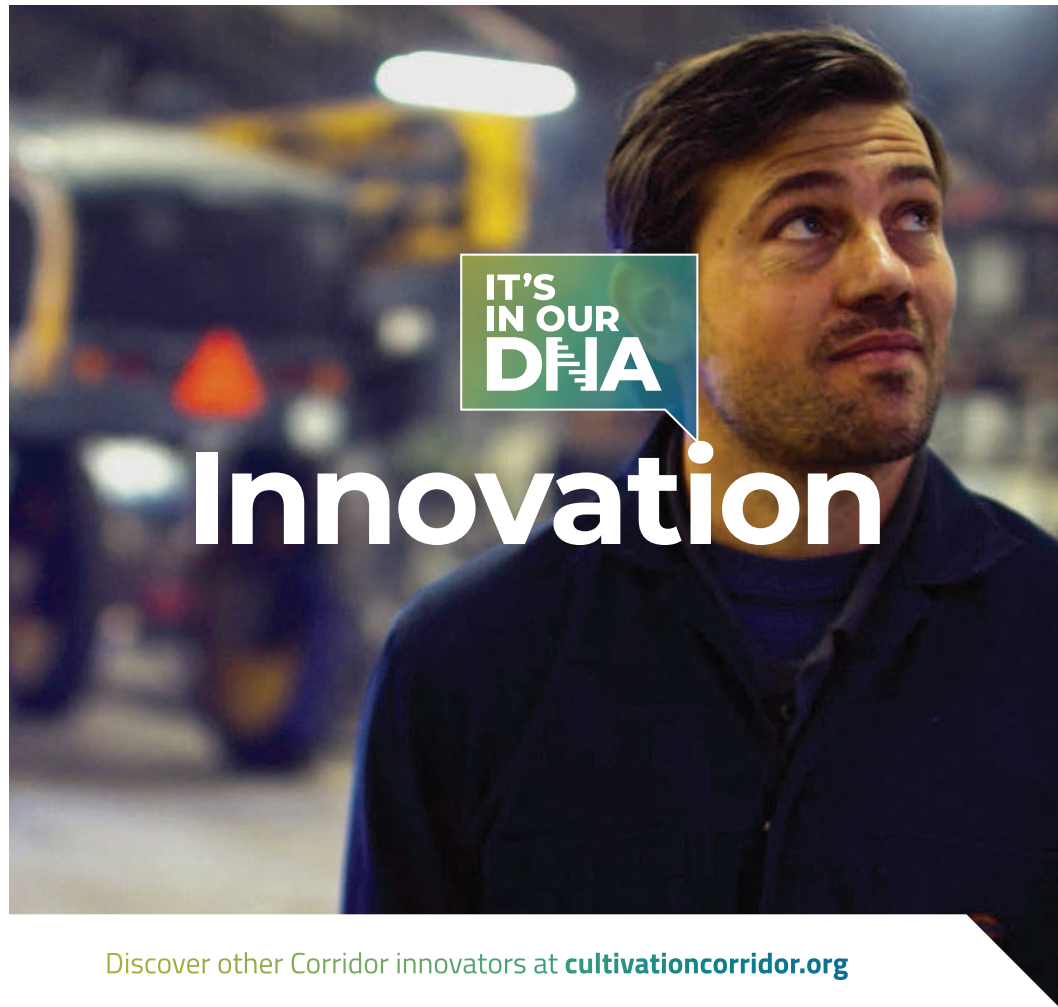
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◀ EVENT REWIND

Leadership Iowa University 2018

AUGUST 5-9 | DES MOINES METRO

If this year's Leadership Iowa University group is any indication of the future workforce in our state, then we are in for an exciting future. The ABI Foundation's college program, Leadership Iowa University, took place Aug. 5-9 in Des Moines and nearby communities. Participants included 20 students representing eight colleges and 13 companies and internship programs. The students visited 16 different businesses and organizations to learn about the variety of great opportunities here in Iowa. More than 100 Iowa professionals interacted with the group as keynote speakers, roundtable discussion participants, networking event attendees and more. Learn more about the students and how to get involved at LeadershiplowaUniversity.com.



Do you know Berni?

Dr. Berni del Campo arrived in Iowa's Cultivation Corridor in 2006 after landing an internship at DuPont Pioneer. While pursuing a PhD at Iowa State University, he found access to tools, resources, friends, collaborators and experts that helped him launch Advanced Renewable Technology International (ARTi), an innovative manufacturer of biochar, a biomass-based soil additive and water filtration medium.



Discover other Corridor innovators at cultivationcorridor.org



THE TIMES KEEP A-CHANGING:

Newer technologies continue to affect how business is done

It's no secret that technology in the last few decades has had a profound effect on various businesses and industries. Computers changed the workplace in the 1970s and '80s, and the internet made waves in communication and trade in the 1990s and into the 21st century.

Innovation chugs along and doesn't seem to be slowing down as we move from the information age to artificial intelligence and machine learning. From manufacturing and modern offices to cybersecurity and education, newer products and technologies continue to change the face of businesses and industries everywhere.

Manufacturing technology fills a dire need

As a workforce shortage continues to be a problem for manufacturing companies in Iowa and throughout the nation, organizations continue to push technology to slim down processes and make product lines less labor-intensive.

Iowa's unemployment rate fell to 2.6 percent in August, giving the state the second-lowest rate in the nation. And the current workforce is an aging one, leading to even more concerns down the road. One in every four Iowans is a baby boomer — about 750,000 people — and will presumably retire soon, if they haven't already.

In rural counties, where many of Iowa's more than 5,000 manufacturing companies are located, young people are leaving in droves. The so-called "urban sprawl" has created a steady population decline in rural counties and the rise of people in metro and suburban counties throughout the state.

The smaller workforce has forced manufacturers to rely on technology, particularly automation, to keep up with production.

"People aren't moving here, and it's not going to change," said Ron Cox, director of Iowa State University's Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS). "We have to admit that, and automation, robots and software-assisted machinery are becoming more prevalent. That's something Iowa manufacturing companies are going to have to embrace if they haven't yet.

"If you want to keep growing with less people, you've got two options: Be a better company than the company next door and steal employees, or automate."

The CIRAS program at Iowa State assists companies in the manufacturing industry through a variety of avenues: consulting work, educational events, access to equipment and much more.

Chris Hill, director of CIRAS' technology assistance program, also mentioned the worker shortage forcing many Iowa companies to invest in newer machinery. In addition, as manufacturers strive to make their processes more cost- and time-effective, rapid prototyping has become a necessity in the industry.

Manufacturers have always attempted to innovate newer and better products, so creating prototypes — a preliminary model of a product — is a large part of their business. Rapid prototyping is a catchall term referring to a group of techniques used to create a prototype faster and at a lower cost.

Before rapid prototyping, manufacturers spent six or more months creating a new product with many different variations to test what worked best. With rapid prototyping, that timeline has been shortened to days and weeks, allowing companies to put less time and money into the process.

"So now you don't have to develop four different options over those six months to evaluate them," Hill said. "Now you see which [prototype] is the most likely candidate to excel in a couple of weeks and then focus all of your efforts on that one product."

One process in rapid prototyping is 3D printing, which creates products much faster and cheaper than traditional molds. 3D printers, controlled by a computer program, also offer versatility since they can build more than one type of product.

"3D printing is probably the most utilized tool in rapid prototyping," Hill said. "It's been so successful over time that it's now become a common process."

While the manufacturing industry continues to evolve and improve its processes through technology, many manufacturers, especially those who are averse to risk, may be skeptical to take the leap. But Cox said it's important to take little steps.

Since most of the automation technology has been on the market for a few years, prices have become much more competitive and affordable.



PHOTO BY DUANE TINKEY

From left: Steve Healey, chief technical officer, Pratum, Ron Cox, director, CIRAS, Kim Augsperger, president & owner, Saxton, Inc.

"It's constantly looking at the crucial gaps and not trying to invest in everything at once," Cox said. "They should be investing in the pieces most pertinent to today that will keep them going in a positive direction."

Delivering education in new ways

The newest members of the workforce have a much different education experience than most current workers, and that's in part because of how technology is changing the way learning is delivered.

Purdue University Global, a public university operated by the Purdue University system, has been at the forefront, teaching classes online to a wide range of students. The organization has a robust presence in Iowa, with 1,013 graduates, mostly working adults, during the 2016-17 school year.

The trend in education in the last few years has been personalization and easy access, which is aided primarily by technology.

"When I went to school, it was a very one-size-fits-all method of teaching and learning," said David Starnes, chief academic officer at Purdue University Global. "With technology, we're now able to make education available at any time, anywhere. It's on demand today."

Online learning is nothing new — the Babson Survey Research Group has reported growth in students taking online courses for 14 straight years — but the way learning is delivered on the internet has been refined and improved.

Starnes said there's been a bigger emphasis on data analytics, with faculty having real-time access to assignments

and grades to make quicker decisions and aid struggling students. These programs can also help students stay on track if they've strayed from the desired path.

The real-time updates help the institution, faculty and students have the best experiences possible, ensuring better learning and results.

Today's students have learned more ways to collaborate through technology, which is one of the areas in which incoming employees are lacking, Starnes said. Students work in groups online, which better prepares them for a more technologically equipped workplace.

"I think students are more prepared to work in a virtual workplace," Starnes said. "They've been exposed to an environment where most or maybe even all of their work has been accomplished through technology. I think employees are better prepared to access tools, solve problems and are more creative."

Perhaps biggest of all, technology continues to give educational access to people who may not have had the same opportunity 10 or more years ago.

"I was watching this parade of graduates go by and it really hit me," Starnes said. "Without the technology that we offered today, many of those people wouldn't get a degree."

"I think students have a lot more opportunities to demonstrate prior learning and save time and money with the technologies we have today."

Flexibility in the workplace

Much like education, technology has allowed for more flexibility in office

spaces and task completion.

Kim Augspurger, president and owner of Saxton Inc., a Des Moines-based company that helps companies design offices to maximize productivity and work performance, has seen a shift in work spaces toward collaboration and community. The change has come about in part because of technology.

"Technology is really a dual-edged sword," Augspurger said. "For years and decades, we had to come to work and sit in front of a computer, which was attached to technology by a wire. But wireless and mobile technology has really changed where you can work, so you have choice."

The flexibility has also fueled the rise of telecommuting. According to 2017 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, 3.7 million employees — about 2.8 percent of the workforce — worked from home for at least half the time. That may not seem like much, but the number of regular telecommuting employees has actually grown by 115 percent since 2005.

While remote work has grown because of technology, that doesn't mean the workplace isn't important. Augspurger said face-to-face communication "is the best way to create breakthrough concepts." In fact, she said more people prefer discussing important issues face-to-face.

"It's more productive, and it's the only way to create trust between people," she said. "Even though technology has allowed us to work from home, in cars and coffee shops, I think the demand for face-to-face interaction is still strong. It can't be replicated."

As for how employees work within the office, technology has changed that, too. Organizations have shifted to more shared spaces with interconnectivity to spur collaboration. Meeting rooms for groups of five to eight people — the most common size of work teams, Augspurger said — are becoming more the norm.

Some modern offices also have unowned spaces. Workers can sit and work on their devices anywhere. There are also private rooms for employees to work in a more secluded space, but for the most part, technology has done away with the office cubicle of the past.

"Technology is changing where we work and how we work," Augspurger said. "It's all about giving everyone choices."

More technology, more problems

With the rise of technology and interconnectivity across all industries comes the rise of those who wish to exploit it. That's why cybersecurity has been top of mind for many business owners around the state and nation.

By 2021, cybersecurity damage is expected to reach \$6 trillion, according to Cybersecurity Ventures, a leading cybercrime research publication. The same

organization found the cybersecurity threat has triggered a dramatic shift in spending as well, with businesses and organizations expected to invest \$1 trillion in cybersecurity from 2017 to 2021.

Steve Healey, the chief technology officer at Pratum, an Iowa-based cybersecurity consulting company, has seen spending increase anecdotally in his role as well.

"We've seen a year-over-year increase in security services," Healey said. "And with that, we've also seen an increase in attacks. We're doing more incident response cases or forensic investigations when companies are dealing with some type of breach and the fallout from that."

Healey said the biggest change in the cybersecurity industry has been the avenues that attackers take to gain access to networks. With highly automated security services blocking attackers from the back end, phishing attacks have become more prevalent.

Phishing is the practice of sending emails under false pretenses to persuade recipients to reveal personal information or grant access to their systems. An unknowing person may open a link or download a file that infects their computer. Then, since most devices within an organization are interconnected, the infection can spread throughout an entire system.

Wombat Security, a security awareness training company, reported 76 percent of information security professionals said their organization experienced phishing attacks in 2017.

"We're seeing an uptick in targeted attacks with intruders attempting to breach the entire network through the human element," Healey said. "They target employees because technology is growing and getting more advanced, so there's all sort of automated features blocking all of these incoming attacks."

Healey said training employees on the dangers of phishing will help mitigate attacks.

To keep up with the ever-changing cybersecurity industry, Healey recommends all business owners incorporate it into everyday business processes. The company's decision-makers should be in communication with technology departments. And new threats should be made known before they hit.

"Business leaders have to own their security," Healey said. "This is not a problem for the [information technology] teams solely. The business and the executive management teams need to engage with the IT teams to learn how to implement technology."

"They also need to own and really dive into how security is integrated into the culture, the people, the processes and the technology of the organization. Those things are more important and go far beyond the newest technologies or products." ■



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SUCCESSION PLANNING

Build business value through succession planning

**Brian Crotty**

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Business owners seldom seek to exit their businesses without attaining financial security. They understand that one requirement of financial security is to increase business value, but many struggle to achieve this goal. Fortunately for these owners, using new technologies and succession planning can work hand in hand to directly address their need to build business value or serve as an unexpected solution for owners who want to increase their businesses' value, but don't know how.

One of the pillars of succession planning is a timeline that plots the value-building actions that owners should consider to position themselves to exit their businesses on their chosen exit date. Following the creation of the timeline, the next step is to assess the strength of the company's value drivers. That's because value drivers often create sustainable, recurring, scalable and ever-increasing cash flow.

Some of the value drivers you may install in your business are:

- 1** A stable, motivated management team that stays after you leave the business.
- 2** Operating systems that improve the sustainability of cash flows.
- 3** A solid, diversified customer base.
- 4** Recurring and sustainable revenue resistant to commoditization.
- 5** Good and improving cash flow.

In companies for which the priority is operational excellence (understood as quality and productivity of processes), the business value from information technology (IT), for example, will be measured in terms of key performance indicators at the process level. For example, IT will be seen as valuable if the systems helped to reduce the delay for processing an insurance claim or to ensure a no-error delivery of supplies to the production line.

A common mistake that business owners make when thinking about exit planning is that they focus more on "exit" than on "planning." They worry if they commit to succession planning, then they will have to aim all of their energy at leaving their businesses, whether they want to or not. However, succession planning and using technology to grow value drivers goes far beyond the concept of leaving the business in that the process addresses various issues that can positively affect the business's value, cash flow and overall operational performance. ■



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EMBARRASSED EXECUTIVE

Q: Can technology negatively impact the way we interact in business?



Rowena Crosbie

President,
Tero International

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A: An employee engagement survey revealed a significant trust deficit between employees and their senior leaders. To analyze the situation, a consulting group was brought in.

Expecting to hear sordid details of breaches of trust in the final report, the CEO couldn't believe his ears when he discovered the focus of much of the feedback applied to him and the messages he was communicating daily — messages of being unapproachable and uninterested in his employees.

Needless to say, that was not his intention. He sincerely valued all the employees.

What did the report highlight as the crime he was guilty of perpetrating? His attention was frequently focused on his handheld device. The technology received the benefits of his eye contact rather than him using his eye contact to nonverbally greet employees as he passed them in the hallway or interacted with them in meetings. The message was surprising. The message was powerful.

In today's world, with today's technology, eye contact with devices is more prevalent than eye contact with people. The message this sends can be destructive: "I have more important things to attend to than you." By resisting the temptation to look at your device, you're communicating respect.

We can be confident that there are more technological advances on the horizon. This may be good news for organizational efficiencies and bad news for leaders who count on people to deliver competitive advantage. The new technologies that are changing the way we do business may also be leading to an increase in social awkwardness and a deficit of trust.

What percentage of your attention is engaged with technology instead of with the people around you? ■



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CAPITOL BUSINESS

Best practices for encouraging employees to vote

**Kim Durcho**

Director, Voter
Engagement and
Advocacy Programs
BIPAC

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Each even-numbered year (and sometimes in the odd ones), we're asked to head to the polls and cast our vote for the men and women who will decide policy at the local, state and federal levels. All considered, this can seem like a lofty ask, and with various dates, deadlines and guidelines for voting, our country's election system can be difficult to navigate. That's why



it's important that companies, trade associations and other business organizations make resources available to their employees, members or other stakeholders

so they can participate and become educated before going to the polls.

Whether someone needs to register to vote, update their registration, look up their polling place or find their candidates, it's crucial they have the tools at their fingertips to do so. Employees appreciate being provided this information and want to hear from their employer about issues and elections. According to the BIPAC 2016 Employer to Employee Engagement Study:

52%

of those who got information from their employer said it led them to register to vote.

65%

of employees are more likely to vote based on the information received from employers.

83%

found the information received from employers helpful in deciding how to vote.

When conducting voter registration and education activities, it's important to keep a few things in mind:

- Never tell an employee how to vote. Instead provide them educational resources.
- Every organization has a different culture, and what works for one might not work for another. Diversify your communications so every employee has an opportunity to receive information — whether it be on social media, via email or from a poster hanging on a bulletin board.
- Make the connection personal. If a voter understands the difference their

vote can make and how the election outcome can affect them, they will be more likely to cast their ballot.

- Participate in Employee Voter Registration Week!

In 2014, the Business-Industry Political Action Committee (BIPAC) started Employee Voter Registration Week, an effort to make a dent in the number of unregistered citizens across the country. This year, the campaign is celebrating its fifth anniversary and will be held Sept. 24-28.

During this week, companies, associations and other organizations will join together to encourage voter registration and participation among private sector citizens. The initiative will not tell employees how to vote or whom to vote for, but instead aims to serve as a resource to help employers educate their employees about key issues and the importance of participating in the electoral process. If you're interested in joining this important effort, please visit EmployeesVote.com to download messaging and graphics and sign up to be a partner.

Let's get out the vote for the midterm elections! ■

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS



SEPTEMBER 18-19

Manufacturing Best Practices Road Show
Iowa | Illinois

SEPTEMBER 24-28

Employee Voter Registration Week
Statewide

OCTOBER 2

Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner
Prairie Meadows Events and Conference Center | Altoona | 4:30 PM

OCTOBER 3

Advanced Manufacturing Conference
Prairie Meadows Events and Conference Center | Altoona | 8 AM

JANUARY 16, 2019

Legislative Briefing and Reception
Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center | Des Moines | 3:30 PM

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AHEAD OF THE CURVE

A CUSTOM PUBLICATION FOR ABI

Kay Neumann-Thomas leaves behind legacy of kindness, positivity

Kay Neumann-Thomas is unabashedly a keeper of quotes. But one quote from her mother has stuck with her all these years. It has served as a direction on life: "Always act with kindness."

In many ways, Neumann-Thomas has lived up to that sentiment.

Neumann-Thomas' 20-year career with the Iowa Association of Business and Industry is coming to an end this month, but her kindness and heartfelt work ethic will stick around for many years to come. Neumann-Thomas has served as the ABI Foundation's vice president of programs, overseeing the Foundation and its programs geared toward developing Iowa's business and civic leaders, college students and high school students.

Before Neumann-Thomas start-

ed at ABI in 1998, she had a 25-year career in television, working at stations in the Des Moines area.



Her daughter, a high schooler at the time, finished the Business Horizons program, the ABI Foundation's weeklong personal and professional development program for Iowa high school students, and was buzzing.

"I was totally impressed with the program and staff," Neumann-

Thomas said. "When my daughter completed the program, she said it was the best week of her summer, which is a pretty high compliment."

A few months later, Neumann-Thomas heard from a friend about an opening as the director of that very same Business Horizons program. She was looking for a change in careers, and the spot felt like a perfect fit.

"I wanted something that would be meaningful and have a positive impact on individuals, our community and our state," Neumann-Thomas said.

Neumann-Thomas has been at ABI ever since, gradually adding more programs to her list of responsibilities. And she's seen success. Under her guidance, Leadership Iowa has seen a record number of applicants, Business Horizons has started additional career-focused tracks, and the Leadership Iowa University program for college students recently celebrated its 10th year of success.

As she transitions out of her role, Neumann-Thomas is hesitant to say she's retiring but is excited to have more time to spend with her family.

"The R-word [retirement] scares me a little bit because I don't feel quite ready to retire," she said with a laugh. "I'll spend more time with my family, and I still want to remain involved with ABI and the ABI Foundation." ■

TOP TIPS

Assessing AI for your business



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It seems like every business article you read today talks about artificial intelligence. Whether it's about how tech heavyweights like Amazon and Facebook are leveraging it or how new startups are disrupting industries through innovative uses of it, AI is playing a critical role in creating efficient, effective and responsive companies.

At Shift Interactive, we're building intelligent web and mobile solutions that leverage AI to make experiences that are more personalized, automated and meaningful, but it still seems that AI has yet to find its stride within many businesses today. Research from Forrester seems to support that viewpoint, stating that 58 percent of business and technology professionals are researching AI systems, yet only 12 percent are actively using them.

It's easy to think that AI is too expensive, too unclear, too bleeding-edge or something only for larger corporations, but I promise that's not the case. AI can be as simple or complex as you need it to be to help improve your business.

At its simplest, AI means a machine can think and learn based on data it is provided. I like to think of it as being able to absorb information, interpret it and then act in an intelligent way based on it. An everyday example of this would be Amazon's product recommendations it compiles based on your previous shopping searches and purchases, but AI can help deliver far more than just the perfect shirt to match my shoes. It can be

used at deep levels of a business that result in optimized operations, proactive issue detection, sales forecasting, smarter marketing, refined user experiences and more.

For all the fear about jobs being eliminated because of advancements in AI, Steve Lohr of the New York Times says "artificial intelligence is freeing workers from drudgery far more often than it is eliminating jobs." Thinking this way can help foster creative thinking about applications AI may have in your business today.

With how expansive its use cases are, it can be a bit overwhelming to strategize where to begin with AI. Here are a few questions to ask yourself to better evaluate where AI might be of the most benefit in your business:

- Where do we currently spend a great deal of manual effort in our business today?
- Which of the identified areas above affect our ability to meet our business's top objectives?
- What data do we currently have related to these identified areas, or what can we easily begin capturing?

By working through these questions, you can begin to develop potential areas of focus in your business that could benefit from implementations of AI. With these goals and knowledge of the data your business has in hand, you'll be ready to engage a technology firm to partner with you in creating AI that truly makes an impact for you and your business. ■

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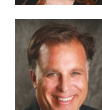
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