

## **VERMEER STRONG:** *How the Pella-based company recovered, rebuilt in the face of destruction*



(From left to right) **Mindi VandenBosch**, Channel Advancement Manager, **Bob Vermeer**, Chair Emeritus, **Jason Andringa**, President & CEO, **Mary Andringa**, Chair of the Board





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**Iowa Association of Business and Industry**  
400 East Court Avenue, Suite 100  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
515-280-8000 or 800-383-4224  
Fax: 515-244-3285  
Email: [abi@iowaabi.org](mailto:abi@iowaabi.org)  
Web: [www.iowaabi.org](http://www.iowaabi.org)

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## A VIEW FROM THE TOP



**David Bywater**  
*ABI Chair  
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# ABI provides value to your business all year long

ABI's annual Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner and conference were terrific. Now in its fourth year, the dinner — sponsored by ABI and ABI's Elevate Advanced Manufacturing initiative — has become one of our state's top events for manufacturers. Iowa manufacturing is celebrated and honored, with ABI member companies and their leaders recognized. If you missed this, you missed one of the year's best events. Make your plans now to be a part of this event next fall.

The annual Advanced Manufacturing Conference, held the day following the Legends dinner, provided significant content for participants. Great speakers and extensive networking marked the day with ABI members from across the state.

The ABI Foundation held the first in a year-long series of sessions with the 37th class of Leadership Iowa last month. LI is the nation's oldest statewide leadership development pro-

gram, and well over a thousand alumni are now working to make their companies — and their communities — better.

My purpose in noting these events and activities is not to focus on the past. As you know, ABI is always about the future. The point is that ABI works all year long to advance an agenda that provides value to your business. Growing your business and growing Iowa communities are the top priority for ABI. Your support is appreciated, and with the leadership of the ABI board of directors, ABI will execute this agenda well.

Finally, after a series of meetings in Ames, another thing I can share is that the 2019 ABI Taking Care of Business Conference is coming together nicely. I am excited for you to learn more about the big things going on in Ames. Watch for news of a fantastic speaker announcement coming soon, and mark your calendars now for June 4-6. You will be glad you did! ■

## SUCCESSION PLANNING

# Knowledge transfer is a critical part of M&D leadership succession planning and preparation

Many people on the brink of retirement from manufacturing and distribution companies have been on the payrolls for decades. We're talking 30 to 40 years at the same company, in the same department, with intimate knowledge of the company's history, its customers, its industry and its sub-industries. So much invaluable information is warehoused in these individuals' minds, and they are on their way out of business and into retirement. Where will all this information go? How do business owners replace key leaders (and capture their expertise) who will be walking out their doors in the next few years?

By preparing for it, of course. And preparation starts with an acknowledgement of certain inevitabilities. Whether they are baby boomers or Xers or millennials, one generation will always yield to the next. Succession will

always be a factor for any business that wants to endure, and succession can be a risky prospect.

In our practice, we encourage business owners and leaders to square with the reality that one day they will indeed exit the business, and they can't prepare for that eventuality soon enough. They don't have to know for sure what that exit will look like (sale, transition to family, etc.), but they must begin crafting a succession plan that allows for a host of possibilities.

So whether you and your company are somewhat prepared or very unprepared for the inevitable transition of leaders, the time to plan is now. A well thought-out succession plan that includes a strong culture component, satisfies key stakeholders and provides for seamless leadership change is critical to your business's future and the preservation of your legacy. ■



*Story updated by (pictured):*  
**Mark D. Wyzgowski, CPA**  
*Managing Principal, CLA*  
[mark.wyzgowski@CLAconnect.com](mailto:mark.wyzgowski@CLAconnect.com)

*Original author:*  
**Brad D. Baumann, CPA**  
*Managing Principal, CLA*







# VERMEER STRONG:

## How the Pella-based company recovered, rebuilt in the face of destruction

BY LUKE MANDERFELD

On July 19, 2018, the Vermeer Co. headquarters was full of hustle and bustle. The company had invited more than 400 customers and dealers from around the world to visit its mile-long strip of factories, buildings and history to celebrate Vermeer's 70-year anniversary.

But what was supposed to be a day of celebration and joy turned into a frightening day for the company's leadership, team members and visitors. An EF3 tornado ripped through the campus during the afternoon hours, causing massive damage to some of the company's plants.

Looking back at that day and the events afterward, though, July 19 also serves as a reminder of how powerful dedication and resiliency can be.

"We had a tremendous amount of people doing very heroic things," said Bob Vermeer, former chief executive officer of Vermeer and current chair emeritus of the company. "And it took a team to get it done."

### Fearing the worst

News and alerts started to trickle in during the early afternoon hours that day: There were storms capable of producing tornadoes entering the Central Iowa area.

"We took it seriously and were monitoring it, but we've been in a lot of tornado warnings and shelters," said Mary Andringa, chair of the board at Vermeer. Mary was inside Vermeer's Global Pavilion on campus at the time, helping lead the 70-year anniversary celebration.

But as the afternoon progressed, the messages started to become more serious.

The storms became more dangerous as they entered the Des Moines metro, and alerts started to go off on people's phones. At the time, CEO Jason Andringa was hosting tours in the Vermeer Founders' House, the house where his grandparents and Vermeer founders, Gary and Matilda Vermeer, had lived.

When a tornado warning went into effect just before 4 p.m., Jason quickly drove to the shelters in plant one. Vermeer had strict disaster and tornado drills in place, which likely helped save lives, Jason said later.

While huddled in the shelter with team members, Jason kept checking his phone and was convinced the storm was going to miss the campus to the north. Those in the shelter, including Jason, were receiving text messages that



(From left to right) **Mindi VandenBosch**, Channel Advancement Manager, **Bob Vermeer**, Chair Emeritus, **Jason Andringa**, President & CEO, **Mary Andringa**, Chair of the Board

SUBMITTED PHOTO

warned the tornado was getting closer — 13 miles away, eight miles away, three miles away. As the storm hit at around 4 p.m., the lights flickered inside the plant one shelter.

"We all stood there looking at each other," Jason said. "After the craziness passed, the security guard's radio became very active. People were saying the roof was off, windows were out and there were injuries. At that point, we knew something bad had happened."

In the pavilion just before the storm, the building's alarms started to blare and Mary instructed everyone to move to the downstairs shelter. Mary and the rest of Vermeer's team members at the pavilion were making sure everyone was safe when the tornado hit.

"The doors swung out and the electricity went out," Mary said. "We were in the dark for a little while except for everyone with their phones. And when we were given the all-clear, there was no electricity. We started hearing reports that roofs were off and glass was broken."

As soon as the all-clear call came, Jason rushed out of the shelter. He hopped in the car with two of his leadership team members and his pastor from a nearby church to survey the damage. They drove along the back of the campus, and about halfway through the drive they realized the extent of what had happened.

Walls were caved in on plants five and six. Water systems had ruptured, leading to geysers shooting into the air. Cars in the parking lots were piled four or five high. Looking at the rubble, Jason thought there must have been major in-

juries or even fatalities.

But for Jason and his team, there wasn't time to ponder. It was time to act.

Emergency responders were on the scene quickly, tending to the threats and minor injuries across the mile-long campus. The leadership team moved to plant one to set up a command center. From there, it was about receiving and distributing essential information.

A select team was on the phones with the hospitals, who reported seven minor injuries. They also coordinated releases to the press to get more information out. They made hundreds of calls to team members to make sure all were safe.

At 1 a.m. the next morning, about nine hours after the tornado hit, the team went home, happy that all employees were safe, but knowing there was much more to be done.

### A "huge hurdle"

In contrast to the hectic nature of the storm, Vermeer's response in the days and weeks afterward was organized, coordinated and calculated. On a simple whiteboard in the crisis control headquarters, duties were split and assigned to various team members.

At 7 a.m. on July 20, the day after the tornado, a select team was already back to work. They had two main tasks: resume operations and get team members back to work.

To accomplish those goals, Vermeer had to assess the total damage to its campus. It became clear early in the process that plants five and six were totaled. But plants one through three could be back

in commission a couple of days later. And plants four and seven could be back in the near future.

Some team members assisted with the rebuilding, which helped them earn steady paychecks even when their old production lines were out of commission. Engineers also worked to move products from damaged facilities to other locations on- and off-site, including the Global Pavilion. All told, in the first day and over the weekend, the team went into overdrive. Leadership spent many hours alerting employees of Vermeer's plans while employees worked hard to clean and re-commission plants.

By the end of Monday, just four days after the tornado, the initial recovery process was done. More than half of the company's 2,700 employees were back to work along with more than half of the company's production. For the employees who weren't working, leadership ensured they knew what would happen moving forward.

"It was a huge hurdle to pass," Jason said about those first four days. "There was a lot to do yet, but all of our people knew what the plan was, and we had a plan to build Vermeer equipment again."

In the weeks since, Vermeer has focused on coming back stronger than ever. In the direct aftermath of the tornado, the "Vermeer Strong" tagline helped fuel the quick recovery process. That mantra has continued to push the team over the past few months.

Mindi VandenBosch, a third-generation member of the family business, serves on Vermeer's committee aimed toward the rebuilding efforts. The committee has pulled employees from many differing disciplines to come together and find a solution for plants five and six.

VandenBosch fits perfectly into her role on the committee. She specializes in lean manufacturing, which is the practice of making processes faster and more efficient. Vermeer as a whole actually started a lean manufacturing initiative 20 years ago with the goal of being flexible and forward-thinking.

VandenBosch views this rebuilding effort as a way to review processes that have been in place for many years. In October, the company sent out a survey to its employees asking for ways to improve. The responses have been insightful and helpful.

"Reaching out to employees and valuing their input is a part of our cul-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>





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<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ture," VandenBosch said. "We want to understand their bottlenecks, and that helps us understand how to better push a product through our facilities."

With the exception of two product lines, all of Vermeer's production has returned, a remarkable turnaround considering the circumstances directly after the tornado. Vermeer currently has plans to build Shop 48, an engineering hub, just north of campus. The name references the year the company was founded, in 1948.

There are also plans to rebuild in the place of plants five and six in the next few years, but nothing is definite. Vermeer hopes to have a clearer plan by the spring.

"We think we have the look and feel of the building, so it's now looking at the flow and how you set up every step," VandenBosch said. "We've heard from a lot of people, and we're very proud of the team and how they've helped us get to this point."

**Community prevails**

It took many people working together for Vermeer to come back as strongly and quickly as it did.

In the days after the storm, the Pella community, Iowa, fellow manufacturing companies, customers and many more partners of Vermeer reached out to offer support. Many, including the Iowa State

University football team, even offered to help with the cleanup. But Vermeer had to refuse because of the potential hazards. The company also wanted to give the work to its team members.

"There was just a huge outpouring of support from the community," Bob Vermeer said. "Many offers of help. That was great, and it was very, very impressive."

Vermeer is also thankful for those who came to its aid in the direct aftermath, including the quick first responders, who were on the scene before many people were out of the storm shelters.

Looking back at the four days following the tornado, Jason can hardly believe how well the company responded. He's thankful for the agile team members, who were willing to do anything it took, and the Vermeer Strong mindset, which helped the company stay focused even in the face of tough circumstances.

"I will probably never believe that we were able to do it," Jason said. "That Friday night, I would have said there is no way we can get all of our people back to work within 30 days, and there is no way we can recover all of our production within 40 days."

"That's what we did." ■

**As Thanksgiving quickly approaches, many people across the United States are reflecting on what matters most to them in life. ABI wanted to do the same by asking business leaders around Iowa what they are most thankful for when it comes to ABI's programming and resources.**

**How thankful are you for the strong results from the Iowa Industry Political Action Committee (IIPAC) this year?**



**Steve Dust**, president and CEO at the Legacy Foundation: "I am thankful that the IIPAC had the resources to fuel many campaigns for knowledgeable, business and growth-friendly candidates. Business leaders and pro-growth individuals like me contributed to IIPAC in increasing amounts to ensure we have people in the Legislature who protect the interests of our state's employers."



**Fred Buie**, president of the Keystone Electrical Manufacturing Co.: "As I consider IIPAC and its advocacy of legislation that stimulates business growth and competitiveness, I am most thankful for our accomplishments in workers' compensation reform. We are making year-over-year improvement in this area. Additionally, I am thankful that IIPAC has maintained a strong focus on business issues and educating business leaders on the status of those issues."

**How thankful are you to have gone through ABI's Leadership Iowa program, and how did it benefit you?**



**Molly Varangkounh**, president at Hy-Capacity: "On a professional level, I met a new network of business resources that I can call on for help dealing with everyday challenges and opportunities. I'm so thankful the program is held over several months, as it gives time for the relationships to develop. As an Iowan, I learned our state is filled with hidden gems. We explored towns, businesses and industries that I hardly knew existed. As a business leader, the program helped paint a picture of the challenges many Iowa businesses face today as well as the challenges that will continue to grow."



**Michele Farrell**, owner at Measured Intentions: "I am very blessed to have gone through Leadership Iowa. What a gift to be surrounded by creative minds and the opportunity to get to know them! There is a very special connection you have with anyone who has gone through the program. This connection is a privilege, not only when we need support setting up a meeting or a contact, but to be there to give that support back. That is the real gift."

**How thankful are you that the ABI roundtable is a resource for you?**



**Steve Boal**, chief financial officer at Accumold: "I've been part of ABI's CFO roundtable since its inception. I find it valuable to build relationships with other CFOs of the manufacturing and distribution businesses. Although our businesses are quite different, we find many topics of mutual interest. Since speakers normally have an hour or less, it provides an opportunity for a briefing on various subjects by knowledgeable and respected individuals from our state."



**Kellan Longenecker**, site manager at General Mills: "I am incredibly thankful for the direct access to other manufacturers that ABI provides through the Operations Roundtables. These meeting events and tours across the state allow me to work with other organizations who are facing similar challenges. But more importantly, they expose me to companies who have found creative ways to overcome manufacturing obstacles."



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## TOP TIPS

### The considerate colleague



**Deborah Rinner**

Vice President,  
Chief Learning Officer,  
Tero International Inc.

drinner@tero.com

Does civility create a workplace benefit?  
Dr. P.M. Forni of Johns Hopkins University, author of "Choosing Civility: The Twenty Five Rules of Considerate Conduct," has proved civility is imperative to the health of an organization.

Not only did his research conclude treating co-workers politely lowers stress (which can activate positive rather than negative effects in the nervous and immune systems), he also found civility positively influences tenure, absenteeism and workplace morale.

Civility is often a stated value in an organization's mission statement. But values are only useful if demonstrated.

What are some easy ways to demonstrate civility?

- 1. Ask people their opinion or to share their idea.** When we are asked to give our opinion or idea, it signals we are seen as having value. To ask what others think signals both inclusivity and appreciation.
- 2. Fill people in.** There isn't an organization alive that isn't going through some kind of change. Letting others know what's happening during times of change lowers fear of the unknown and feelings of ambiguity.
- 3. Stand up.** A simple shift in posture of standing up when greeting someone communicates respect. Standing up sends a nonverbal signal to the other person that they are valued and important to you.

William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." Asking, informing and standing are easy ways to begin to show appreciation, demonstrate civility and be a considerate colleague. ■

## EXPERT ADVICE

### Giving thanks for our great state

There is so much in Iowa I'm thankful for this Thanksgiving. Gov. Kim Reynolds and Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg, for supporting Future Ready Iowa; for making Iowa a leader in STEM education, education spending and graduation rates; for expanding mental health services; for helping Iowa achieve the second-lowest unemployment in the U.S.; and for the middle class tax cut.

The House and Senate, for supporting the initiatives above.

ABI, one of the most respected organizations at the Statehouse. For Mike Ralston's 13 years of leadership, and for the board and staff that help Iowa businesses succeed on the ground and in the Legislature.

Every Iowan, for making Iowa No. 1 in "Best State Rankings" in 2018 in U.S. News & World Report.

As a health care provider and business owner, I am thankful for:

The opportunity to practice in Iowa, where we are one of the top states for physical therapy, in leadership and in practice.

Our professional peers within 21st Century Rehab PC and Midwest Therapy Network. They put patient care and outcomes first.

The insurance industry and especially Wellmark, who work to promote preventive and conservative medicine/wellness and support direct access to therapy services.

The great medical schools of Iowa, and most recently, for Drake University and Allen College for starting occupational therapy programs.

Most importantly, I'm thankful for family — my wife and business partner Michelle and our three daughters — and to God for all the gifts bestowed on us all! ■



**Steve Cassabaum, MSPT, DPT**

President and  
Founder, 21st Century  
Rehab PC

steve@  
21stcenturyrehab.com



### Do you know Alexis?

Dr. Alexis Campbell serves as director of Science Bound, Iowa State University's premier pre-college program designed to meet our state and national need for a technical workforce by discovering new ways to increase the number of ethnically and racially diverse Iowa students who earn ASTEM (agriculture, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) degrees.



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ELEVATE IOWA

# Manufacturing Leaders Recognized at Statewide Event

*Elevate Advanced Manufacturing Honors Significant Contributions to the State's Economy*

In its fourth annual Legends in Iowa Manufacturing event, Elevate Advanced Manufacturing, a program of the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI), recognized leaders in manufacturing at an awards dinner on Oct. 2. Over 200 people attended the event at the Meadows Events & Conference Center in Altoona.

Awards were presented to the following individuals, companies and organizations:



Jim Tyler and Kirk Tyler of Atlantic Coca-Cola Bottling won the Legend of Manufacturing award for companies with more than 300 employees.



Tim Greene of Quality Machine of Iowa won the Legend of Manufacturing award for companies with fewer than 100 employees.



Eugene Sukup of Sukup Manufacturing received the Posthumous Legends award. Charles Sukup and the Sukup family were there to accept the award.



Kelly Mitchell of DMACC Business Resources was the 2018 Elevate Ambassador of the Year.



West Delaware County Community School District and the Delaware County manufacturers Henderson Products, XL Specialized Trailers and Paladin Implements were chosen as the Legends in Manufacturing Champion.







Richard Davidson of Thombert Inc. won the Legend of Manufacturing award for companies having between 100 and 300 employees.



Roger Brown of Precision Pulley & Idler won the Manufacturer Export award.

“As one of Iowa’s largest industries, manufacturing contributes \$28 billion annually to the state’s economy,” said ABI President Mike Ralston. “It’s an honor to recognize the founders and leaders of these amazing Iowa companies, and to thank them for the outstanding contributions they make to our state.”

Congressman David Young attended the dinner and addressed the crowd as the program ended. Young has been recognized by both the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as a champion for manufacturing and business.

### THE LEGENDS IN IOWA MANUFACTURING EVENT WAS SPONSORED BY THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES:

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**Bronze sponsors:** APICS, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Bank of the West, Capital One, Indian Hills Community College, Kirkwood Community College, Neumann Brothers, Northeast Iowa Community College, Purdue University Global, Regenexx, Stellar Industries, TrueNorth, UEA



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## CAPITOL BUSINESS



## ABI Board Sets 2019 Legislative Priorities

Since this edition is about what Iowa business leaders are thankful for, I want to thank you for the opportunity to represent your company and employees — both at the Capitol and in meetings with state agencies. The public policy team is grateful for the opportunity to help educate legislators and elected and appointed state officials — in a bipartisan manner — about why pro-jobs policies are important to you.

We are also thankful the elections are over and the focus has shifted to the 2019 legislative session. With that, we want to share with you the priorities approved by the ABI board of directors at its September meeting:

The Iowa Association of Business and Industry is proud to have served as the Voice of Iowa Business since 1903. ABI is a member-driven organization, and its legislative priorities reflect the goals of business and community leaders across Iowa.

Iowa is the No. 1 state, according to the U.S. News & World Report, and ABI members want to help Iowa stay on top. The 2019 legislative priorities are opportunities for Iowa and ABI to continue Building on the Best.

**Workforce** – As the organization that represents 1,500 member companies that employ more than 330,000 working Iowans, we understand the importance of a qualified workforce and a robust talent pipeline.

- ABI supports implementation of the Future Ready Iowa legislation that was passed in 2018. ABI supports the Legislature focusing on work-based learning opportunities and expanding career and technical education offerings to students at all levels. ABI encourages the Legislature to continue support of programs that have been successful in addressing the workforce shortage, such as Home Base Iowa and Elevate Advanced Manufacturing.
- Unemployment Insurance – Challenges with Iowa's unemployment insurance benefit system discourage individuals from obtaining full-time employment and must be addressed.
- Workforce Housing – As Iowa com-

panies continue to hire individuals throughout the state, more workforce housing is needed. ABI supports expanding the workforce housing tax credit program to provide rural communities access to development/redevelopment.

**Competitive Business Climate** – ABI looks for ways to support a competitive business climate and ensure a rock-solid foundation for businesses to grow and expand. ABI supports:

- Broadband internet connectivity and access. ABI supports investment in Iowa's broadband and Internet Protocol (IP)-enabled services.
- A business-friendly tax system that creates clarity and consistency for Iowa businesses.

**Regulatory Reform** – ABI members work to comply with many regulations at the local, state and federal level. Continual review of existing regulations is necessary to spur economic growth. ABI supports legislation and policies that are no more stringent than the federal government and that:

- Streamline environmental permitting requirements, reducing cost and time for businesses and the state.
- Reduce complexity and provide for efficient compliance with the state tax code.
- Eliminate outdated policies that hinder small business expansion. ■



**Nicole Crain**

Senior Vice President,  
Public Policy, ABI

[ncrain@iowaabi.org](mailto:ncrain@iowaabi.org)



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### DECEMBER 6

#### Connecting Statewide Leaders

Oskaloosa | 11 AM

### DECEMBER 6-7

#### Leadership Iowa

Oskaloosa | Topic: Business & Industry/Workforce

### JANUARY 16

#### Legislative Briefing and Reception

Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center | Des Moines | 3:30 PM

### JANUARY 16-18

#### Leadership Iowa

Des Moines | Topic: Government

### MARCH 7-8

#### Leadership Iowa

Cedar Rapids | Topic: Public Safety/Security, Community Preparedness & Response

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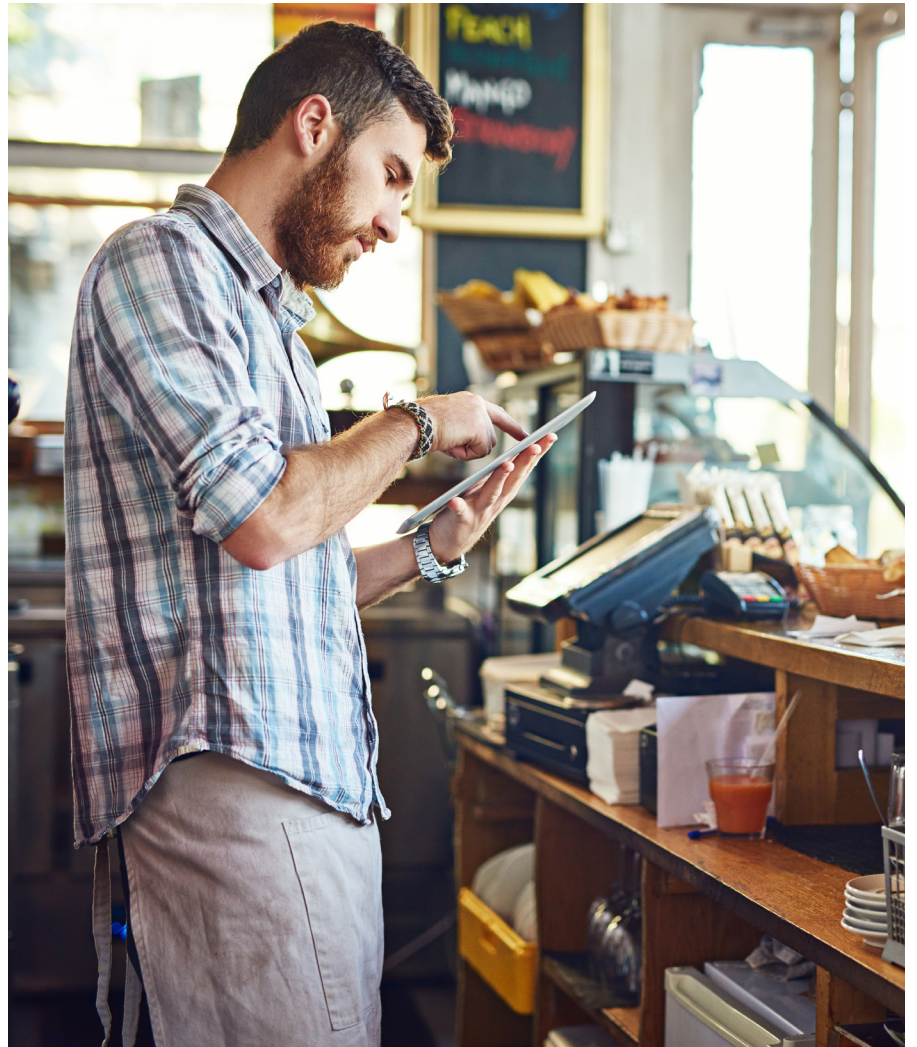
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## AHEAD OF THE CURVE

## ABI FOUNDATION: Working to keep Iowans in Iowa

There are initiatives throughout the state working to develop and prepare our high school students, college students and young professionals for successful careers in Iowa. Your company is most likely engaged in outreach and recruitment programs, designed to encourage students to add your name to their list of potential future employers. The competition is fierce for skilled workers across our state, so gauging the interest of these young people needs to begin early, and the cultivation of these relationships over time is imperative to attracting and retaining this talent in the future.

A large part of our mission at the ABI Foundation is to build and strengthen Iowa's workforce. We do this through programs and initiatives that impact the lives of Iowans at every stage, from students to seasoned professionals. We've found the main component causing young people to look outside the state for opportunities after graduation is simple: awareness.

To the right are survey results from our high school (Business Horizons) and college (Leadership Iowa University) students who took part in our 2018 programs. These students come from a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and geographic locations across the state. They are our best resource for information and trends that pertain to their age groups.

Students are simply not aware of all of the amazing opportunities for them here in Iowa, oftentimes in their own backyard. After just five days, their awareness grew tremendously, which equates to more students knowing they can fulfill their goals here in our great state.

As Iowans, we tend to be humble and quietly accept our successes while we work toward the next goal. Iowa: It's time to be loud! Let's continue to work together to show these talented students how successful they can be in Iowa. ■

### STUDENTS WERE ASKED IF THEY FELT THEY HAD A STRONG AWARENESS OF OPPORTUNITIES IN IOWA

*Their response was ranked on a scale from 1 to 5  
(1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)*

**Business Horizons (high school) students  
who answered agree and strongly agree:**

BEFORE:

40%

AFTER:

94%

**Leadership Iowa University (college) students  
who answered agree and strongly agree:**

BEFORE:

35%

AFTER:

100%

## EMBARRASSED EXECUTIVE



**Mike Teachout**

President,  
Focus OneSource

mteachout@  
focusonesource.com

## How do your customers know you are thankful for their business?

The month of November is the beginning of the holiday season and the perfect time to show your customers that you are grateful for their business. If your company is like most, your focus is usually on new business. How many times have you seen a business at which you are currently a customer, offering enticements to attract new customers? What am I, chopped liver?!

November is the perfect time to express extra thanks as the season of thankfulness creeps in. Here are four ideas that you may want to consider implementing to show your customers just how much you care:

- **Send a handwritten thank you** – It doesn't have to be long to make an impact. Just tell them how much you appreciate them.
- **Help them learn** – Take advantage of

your company blog and social media accounts to share relevant information about your company and industry.

- **Check in** – Reach out to your customers periodically to see how things are going, ask about any questions or concerns they may have and to give important updates.
- **Invite customers to a company event** – This is a great opportunity to connect with your customers outside of the typical work environment.

A simple 'thank you' is the best way to express your gratitude to your loyal clients. Not only will they feel appreciated, but it can also open up the conversation to any questions or concerns your customers may have.

Enjoy the holidays. ■

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