



**THE BUSINESS OF SUSTAINABILITY:  
IOWA COMPANIES TACKLE  
GREEN INITIATIVES**

**RICK O'NEAL**, EHS&S/Communication Manager, **DEREK DEPUYDT**, Mill Manager, **BRIAN BURMEISTER**, Manufacturing Excellence Manager



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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

# Iowa Business Day on the Hill was Huge Success

As you well know, these are uncertain times due to the coronavirus outbreak.

As this column goes to press, the outcome and end date of the 2020 session of the Iowa General Assembly is not known. What I do know is that ABI members take seriously the hard and often thankless work done by the governor and legislators.

Related to that, last month's annual Iowa Business Day on the Hill was a huge success. Thank you to those who participated from all across our state. Iowa Business Day on the Hill provided yet another opportunity for ABI members (and members of the Iowa Business Council, the Iowa Chamber Alliance, the Iowa Chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business, the Iowa Taxpayers Association and the National Association of Women Business Owners) to thank state officials for their service and to discuss pending legislation. Whether a business owner or a legislator, we all want to

help make Iowa a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Speaking of uncertainty, you may have had trouble finding paper products on store shelves lately. This isn't just a sign of the times; it also underscores the importance of sustainability. This month's cover story looks at how Iowa companies are managing the complexities of sustainability—and putting the future in focus in very real terms.

Finally, as I write this, the 2020 ABI Taking Care of Business Conference is still on. However, that could change, too. We are analyzing this very fluid situation weekly, so please stay tuned for updates. For now, thank you for the record number of registrations and excitement.

As always, thank you for your support! ■



**Cindy Dietz**  
 ABI Chair  
 Collins Aerospace  
 Cedar Rapids

### EMBARRASSED EXECUTIVE

# Creating a Secure Remote-Work Environment

Flexible work options have become the gold standard in office employment. As world events continue to shape our culture and habits, the ability to work remotely evolves from a luxury to a necessity. Innovations in technology have also made remote access more economical to implement.

When evaluating and implementing remote-work policy and technologies, there are a few things to keep in mind to ensure your organization and customer data stay secure.

#### Choose the Infrastructure that Fits Your Goals

Most organizations follow one of two paths for remote work accessibility if employees need to access information from the company's internal network (i.e., not all your business applications and file storage are cloud-based).

#### Option 1: Virtual Private Network (VPN)

- Access any files or applications as if the employee were sitting in the office
- Better for use strictly on laptops or desktop devices
- Performance can lag behind other options
- Data can be copied or transferred to the employee's device (higher risk of data leakage)
- If the user's device is lost or stolen, mali-

cious actors would have unfettered access to your network.

#### Option 2: Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI)

- More flexible and customizable than other options
- Access only files and applications as curated by the administrator for each user/group
- Can be used on any device
- Faster performance
- Data cannot be copied or transferred from the corporate network to the user's device
- VDI does not provide unfettered access to the network if a device is lost or stolen.



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#### Create a Written Remote-Work Policy

Once you decide to allow remote access to your files and applications, creating, documenting and enforcing a remote-work policy that includes security, productivity and code-of-conduct guidelines is imperative.

#### Security

If implemented correctly, providing remote access to files and applications can be just as secure as having your employees physically in the office. ■





**CULTIVATING IOWA'S TALENT CONTINUUM**

# Now is the Time to Nominate Individuals in Your Network for Leadership Iowa



**THE COURSE FOR OUR STATE**



You can make a direct impact by recognizing and recommending outstanding individuals in your network to be considered for the upcoming class of our state's premier issues awareness program, Leadership Iowa. Leadership Iowa is a program of the ABI Foundation.

Forty Iowa professionals are selected annually to take part in eight, two-day monthly sessions in diverse communities across the state. Each session focuses on a specific issue that affects Iowa, including education, agriculture, government, workforce and more.

Participants become better-informed leaders through eye-opening experiences and discussions with subject-matter experts. They develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between the public and private sectors, inspiration for increased civic engagement and a greatly expanded network of trusted associates and lifelong friends.

Remember, a leader by any other name is still a leader. Think of friends, neighbors and colleagues who demonstrate the qualities, interest and enthusiasm needed to continue to improve our state.

Help us reconnect with areas not recently represented in our program by nominating additional individuals who work or live in the following counties:

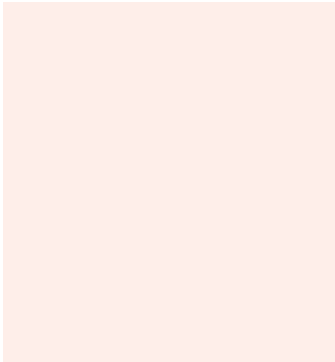
NW	NE	SW	SE
Cherokee	Buchanan	Adams	Cedar
Emmet	Chickasaw	Audubon	Louisa
Ida	Fayette	Fremont	Lucas
Lyon	Howard	Montgomery	Van Buren
Monona	Jackson	Taylor	
Osceola	Tama		
O'Brien	Worth		
Palo Alto			
Pocahontas			

It takes no more than one minute to complete an online nomination form. Simply visit [www.LeadershipIowa.com](http://www.LeadershipIowa.com), submit the individual's name and contact information (self-nominations allowed), and we'll do the rest. Nominees will receive notification of your recommendation with information about the program and application process after May 1. ■

**Nominate before May 1 to be considered for the upcoming Leadership Iowa Class of 2020-21 at [www.LeadershipIowa.com](http://www.LeadershipIowa.com)!**

CULTIVATING IOWA'S TALENT CONTINUUM

# You are Valuable: Thank You, Volunteers



**McKenzie Kielman**  
Marketing &  
Engagement Coordinator,  
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The ABI Foundation programs would not be possible without the generous support of a strong network of professionals from a variety of occupations, organizations and industries. It all goes back to these leaders, inspiring intergenerational interest for innovation in Iowa.

If you're looking for opportunities for you or your organization to partner with a mission-driven organization, here are three ways you can be involved with the ABI Foundation:

#### SPREAD THE WORD

Visit our program websites to nominate high school students ([www.BusinessHorizonsIowa.com](http://www.BusinessHorizonsIowa.com)), college students ([www.LeadershipIowaUniversity.com](http://www.LeadershipIowaUniversity.com)) and professionals ([www.LeadershipIowa.com](http://www.LeadershipIowa.com)) to participate in our programs, or invite them to learn more about these unique opportunities. Stay up-to-date by following Business Horizons, Leadership Iowa University and Leadership Iowa on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram!

#### SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

We have endless opportunities to connect work that fulfills you to our expansive programming with volunteer commitments ranging from an hour or two to multiple days. Quickly approaching are our summer student programs, each requiring nearly 100 volunteers!

Business Horizons (July 19-23 at Central College in Pella) is an innovation simulation for high school students from across Iowa to team up and compete as a start-up from inception to investor pitch, using strengths and skills to strategize and visualize future plans in Iowa.

Each year, Business Horizons is in need of volunteers for a variety of roles throughout the week, from speakers and consultants to competition

judges. While our week-long "Industry Advisors" who lead and mentor student teams may have any professional background, more specific opportunities exist for those with experience in human resources, entrepreneurship, finance/investment and marketing.

Leadership Iowa University (August 9-13 in the Des Moines area) is a college internship capstone to connect our state's next decision makers with tools for personal and professional success.

Leadership Iowa University volunteer opportunities include roundtable and panel discussions, as well as networking events with the student participants. The program seeks to include professionals representing (but not limited to) the following industries: government, business/finance, non-profit, human resources, agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare and more.

... and there are even more volunteer opportunities yet! Do not hesitate to reach out, and we would love to connect with you.

#### SPONSOR SUCCESS

Become a program sponsor and create a legacy alongside us as we strive to create life-changing experiences. Having a positive connection with a business can result in becoming a lifelong advocate. Your tax-deductible contribution is an investment in the future success of our state. ■

## GET TO KNOW

# Meet Our Newest Members

Visit our newest members' websites, and see what they're up to:

AdvancedTek | [www.advancedtek.com](http://www.advancedtek.com)

Brilar, LLC | [www.brilar.net](http://www.brilar.net)

CapstoneCare | [www.capcaretelehealth.com/organizations](http://www.capcaretelehealth.com/organizations)

Enterprise Fleet Management | [www.efleets.com](http://www.efleets.com)

Kwik Trip, Inc/Kwik Star | [www.kwiktrip.com](http://www.kwiktrip.com)

Schemmer Associates | [www.schemmer.com](http://www.schemmer.com)

Second Chance Placement LLC | [www.secondchanceplacement.com](http://www.secondchanceplacement.com)

Learn more about how ABI membership could benefit your company by visiting [www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi](http://www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi).



INTERNATIONAL  PAPER  
Cedar River Mill



# THE BUSINESS OF SUSTAINABILITY: IOWA COMPANIES TACKLE GREEN INITIATIVES

**RICK O'NEAL**, *EHS&S/Communication Manager*

**DEREK DEPUYDT**, *Mill Manager*

**BRIAN BURMEISTER**, *Manufacturing Excellence Manager*



Sustainable businesses in the United States can trace their origins back more than 100 years, when pioneering startups in organic food and wind and solar energy popped up in the early 1900s and 1910s. Things have certainly changed in the last century. As climate change has come to the forefront of the national conversation, we've seen an explosion of green initiatives on a much larger, global business scale.

Today, sustainability is an integral part of many companies. According to a 2017 study from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Boston Consulting Group, 90% of executives surveyed see sustainability as important, and 60% of companies surveyed actually had a sustainable strategy.

Iowa companies are helping lead the green movement. Renewable energy, sustainable waste solutions and regenerative agriculture are just a few of the strategies our state's businesses have implemented.

### **SOLAR-POWERED MANUFACTURING**

It wasn't as if solar energy was off Jenny Steffensmeier's radar — it was just tucked away in the back of her mind. She drove by houses with solar panels or farms with solar fields, but installing solar power in her business? That didn't seem like an option.

Steffensmeier Welding and Manufacturing, located in Pilot Grove, Iowa, means a great deal to Steffensmeier. Her husband, Ben, launched it in 1982 as a small shop in a small town. By 2010, the company had grown into a 40,000-square-foot facility, filling laser cutting, mass manufacturing and machine work projects. Many of the orders came, and still come, from the agricultural sector. When Steffensmeier took over the business after her husband died more than five years ago, she wanted to maintain his passion.

In April 2015, Steffensmeier connected with a customer who performed solar installations. In the course of conversations, Steffensmeier learned about the enormous benefits of a solar field, not just in electricity cost savings, but in reducing carbon footprints, attracting top talent and more.

"You live in your day-to-day, your business bubble, so this wasn't something that I necessarily thought about," Steffensmeier said. "I've gotten a lot better at it. But I felt like the payback that I get in my monthly electric bill is something I can give back to the people that work here and make everything that we do possible."

In 2016, the 430-kilowatt solar field was installed in a nearby lot, providing virtually 100% of the energy to the Steffensmeier Welding and Manufacturing facilities — the first fully solar-powered manufacturing and fabrication building in Iowa. The large array saves the business about \$92,000 per year in electrical costs and will reduce carbon emissions by 8,917 metric tons over the next 25 years.

Before the installation, Steffensmeier Welding and Manufacturing's electric bill reached \$7,000 per month. Today, Steffensmeier said the monthly bill is typically around \$20 per month. She said the solar

array will be fully paid off by 2023, which will translate to substantial long-term cost savings.

"It's really very cool," she said. "We have this giant solar facility, and that matters to people. Sustainability is a big deal, and it's not going away."

Steffensmeier recalled the times when her children would come home from school, raving about a field trip to a nearby recycling facility. Sustainability makes an impression on younger generations, she said, and the hope is that this solar facility will help recruit new workers who are interested in working for a company with a reduced carbon footprint.

"We're in a world with labor shortages everywhere, whether it's construction or welding electricians," she said. "I think this gives them a very good reason to come here. It's a really cool place to work, and now we get to say that we reduce our carbon footprint, and we're really making an impact."

### **RECYCLING PAPER — AGAIN, AGAIN AND AGAIN**

International Paper Co. is one of the oldest largest producers of fiber-based products in the world. The 120-year-old company has also taken sustainability seriously for at least the past decade, creating voluntary sustainability goals in 2010 aimed at improving its impact on people and the planet. It recently released its 2030 vision, which aims to build a better future for people, the planet and the company.

A big part of International Paper's efforts is recycling. Because the company operates primarily with a valuable resource (wood), it has taken steps toward mitigating wastefulness.

"We have to be sustainable because we depend on these raw materials," said Rick O'Neal, environmental, health, safety and sustainability manager and communication manager. "If we didn't have the right practices around forestry or recycling, we wouldn't be in business, right? We want to ensure we have a future at the company, and it's the right thing to do."

In Cedar Rapids, International Paper operates an all-recyclable mill, Cedar River Mill, which takes used corrugated boxes to make additional boxes. It's the largest all-recycle mill in North America, consuming more than a million tons of corrugated containers every year. Without the mill, a large percentage of that product would end up in a landfill.

The Cedar River Mill launched in the 1990s. A now-defunct company came up with the idea of creating an all-recyclable mill in the Midwest, where there was an untapped fiber resource. The company could use that fiber in some of its products. Cedar Rapids had a lot of advantages, the chief being its proximity to several major cities like Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis and St. Louis.

International Paper bought the business in August 2008 and has made the mill an essential part of its sustainability initiatives. Not

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ONE INTANGIBLE THAT WE CAN'T QUANTIFY IS THE GROWING DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE IMPACT THE EARTH. AND IF WE'RE WORKING ON SYSTEMS THAT IMPROVE EFFICIENCY, THAT'S A WHOLE LOT LESS WASTE. **IT'S A WIN-WIN."**

Kellan Longenecker, plant manager, Avon Mill, Carlisle, Iowa

only does it recycle millions of tons of cardboard, it also boasts low utility costs.

"It's a huge part of [our sustainability goals]," said Brian Burmeister, manufacturing excellence manager. "We don't produce the same emissions that you have in other facilities, so it's very, very important and integral to the fact that we're able to do our business in a very environmentally friendly way."

Derek Depuydt, mill manager at the Cedar River Mill, said there is a robust recycling circle within the company. International Paper creates paper but also operates a division that takes used paper and converts it into boxes, which can be recycled again and again.

This loop keeps millions of tons of waste from reaching landfills, and it's a responsibility that International Paper takes seriously.

"We are one of the industry leaders, and we take that role to ensure we're building a future for our employees, the people, the planet, and that we have a lot of robust goals around sustainability," O'Neal said. "Being the industry leader, we wear that badge that we want to be at the forefront of sustainability."

### **REGENERATING, NOT JUST SUSTAINING**

For as long as she can remember, Kellan Longenecker said General Mills has implemented sustainability goals. She's been with the company for 18 years. And at least for the last decade, driving toward sustainability has become one of the top focuses for the global food company.

Longenecker is the plant manager for the Avon Mill in Carlisle, Iowa, and has been at the forefront of General Mills' sustainability goals in the manufacturing space. The company uses recycled products, like cardboard and other fiber-based materials for packaging in its facilities. Efficiency has been stressed with water and energy, reducing overall carbon footprints.

There has also been a lot of work toward achieving zero waste to landfills, meaning all potential waste is diverted from already-overloaded garbage facilities.

"Any project that we complete, we have special attention and focus around reducing the waste and reducing our impact," Longenecker said.

Over the last year in particular, General Mills has shifted much of its emphasis and rhetoric from sustainability to regeneration. The company believes that it needs to play an active role in regenerating them, because sustaining natural resources is no longer enough.

To General Mills, regenerative agriculture means protecting and intentionally enhancing natural resources and farming communities. This could mean myriad things, but a big part is finding ways to work with nature, like pulling carbon from the air and storing it in the soil. General Mills has made it a goal to advance regenerative farming practices on 1 million acres of farmland by 2030.

General Mills is seeing real results toward its commitments. From 2010 to 2019, the company achieved a 15% decrease in its greenhouse gas emission footprint. And in 2019, 91% of its 10 priority ingredients were sustainably sourced. Going forward, General Mills hopes to continue being an industry leader in going green — for both the health of the business and the planet.

"We're tied to that mission of making sure that we're a big part of the solution," Longenecker said. "I also think there's a huge win with employees. One intangible that we can't quantify is the growing desire to understand how we impact the earth. And if we're working on systems that improve efficiency, that's a whole lot less waste. It's a win-win."

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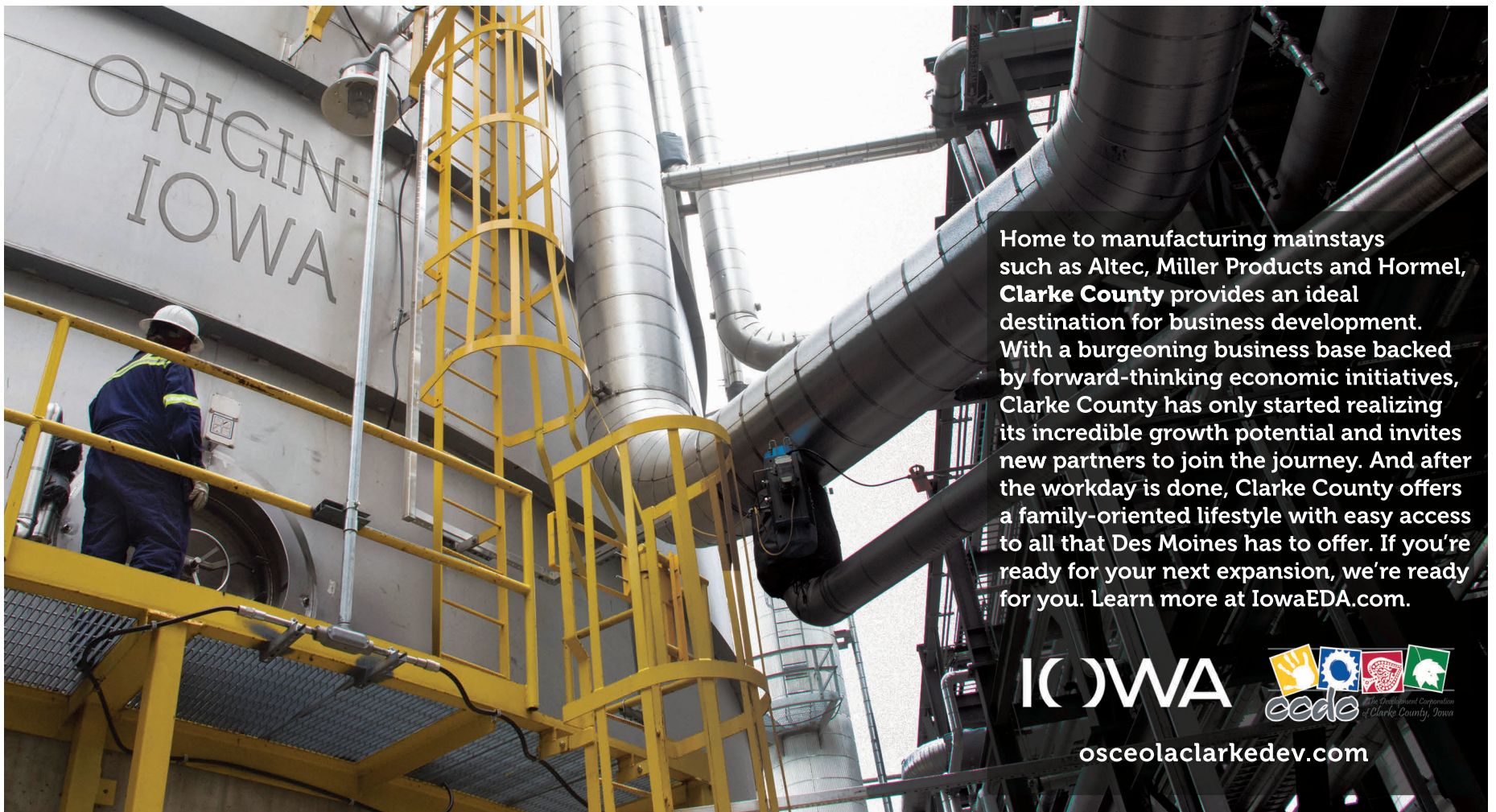
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**SUSTAINABLE LEADERS**

Business sustainability is a topic Adam Hammes focuses on every day. The executive director of the Iowa Sustainable Business Forum, which provides a platform for Iowa companies to share best sustainable practices, Hammes has heard plenty of successful case studies over the years. He compiled them in a book, “Sustainable Business in Iowa: How Leading Companies Profit from Environmental and Social Responsibility,” which was released in January 2018.

The Iowa Sustainability Forum has almost 50 member companies now, which is a sharp uptick from even a few years ago. He’s seen an increased interest in the sustainable movement from businesses around the state.

“Businesses are starting to look a little harder, a little longer and a little more creative at a business solution that acts on the environment,” Hammes said. “A lot of these companies have found that there are really creative ways to make a positive mark on the environment, and sometimes there are business benefits to that.”

Those benefits include significantly smaller utility bills and the ability to attract and retain workforce. Of course, not all sustainable solutions are made with business interests in mind, Hammes said. There are a number of companies in the state that have made the

decision to be greener even at the loss of some profit.

“There are companies who could have made more if they had just ignored sustainability,” Hammes said. “They don’t make bad business decisions, but they do things that aren’t purely profitable. They say, ‘Because people believe in this, we as a company and as leaders are going to make this happen.’”

Hammes pointed to a couple of Iowa companies as shining examples. West Liberty Foods in West Liberty has taken a number of steps toward sustainability. It is virtually a landfill-free business, a huge achievement for a food company. Its facilities are also ISO 14001 certified, an international standard that specifies requirements for an effective environmental management system.

The other company is Design Engineers in Cedar Rapids, which operates Iowa’s first and only certified net-zero facility for a for-profit company. That means the building produces as much energy as it uses every year.

“Those are two easy examples to point to solutions where they achieved something great, and then they went to the lengths to get it verified by a third party,” Hammes said. “It’s great to see these companies coming together and watching great Iowa companies represent sustainability to the best ways they can.” ■



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\*Assuming \$30,000 student loan balance, 8% interest rate, 118-month remaining term after borrower making first two payments on 120-month term, and application of employer contribution to principal in addition to the regular payment starting with third monthly payment due.

CAPITOL BUSINESS



# ABI Members Have Role to Play Assisting Policymakers in Responses to Virus

During a typical Iowa Legislative Session, this space in the April edition of the Business Record would normally reflect the successes of legislative initiatives supported by ABI members and perhaps a reporting on the association's efforts to mitigate the unintended consequences of other legislation considered. The number of remaining legislative session-days would be noted, and they would count in the single digits. This would mark the end of one public policy cycle and begin the ABI committee process of developing public policy for the next legislative session.

But just one day before this writing the legislature was suspended for a minimum of 30 days to prevent the community spread of the coronavirus-19 at the Statehouse as large gatherings around the state and nation are discouraged. If plans hold the hiatus continues at the time of this publication.

The state of public health and the economy have been greatly affected by the virus and the necessary actions taken in response. ABI members have a role to play in assisting policymakers in the proper ongoing responses to the virus as we look forward. The priority areas ABI identified going into the 2020 legislative session are the same priorities that will guide us as we respond to the new challenges presented:

**Workforce** – What are the best policy options to help Iowa employers and employees through the current disruption and to remain one of the best, most productive workforces in the nation?

**Competitive Business Climate** – How can we help Iowa policymakers remain mindful of actions taken in other jurisdictions so that Iowa businesses can compete anywhere and succeed?

**Regulatory Reform** – How do we ensure that public policy responses do not come with new over-burdensome regulatory hurdles?

These are questions for the entire ABI membership. The ABI public policy staff will be seeking input from members as we interact with legislators and the executive branch. If your organization has input valuable to the response policymakers will be crafting, we want to hear from you. Please reach out to make us more effective. ■



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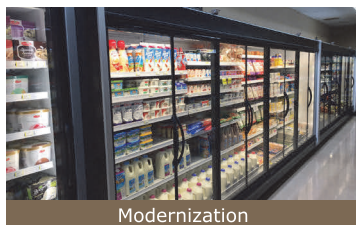
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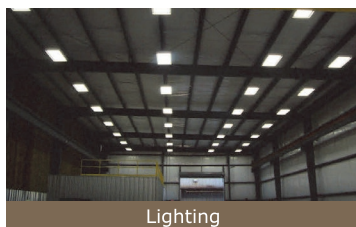
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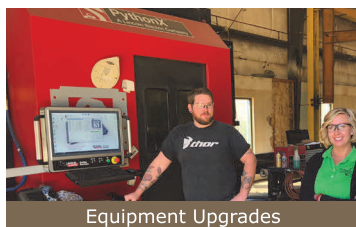
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### More Details:

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**IADG.com/EnergyBank**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### MAY 7-8

#### Leadership Iowa

Waverly

### JUNE 9-11

#### Taking Care of Business Conference

Cedar Rapids Convention Complex | Cedar Rapids

### JUNE 11

#### Leadership Iowa Graduation

Cedar Rapids

### JULY 19-23

#### Business Horizons

Pella

### JULY 30-31

#### Okoboji CEO Forum

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### AUGUST 9-13

#### Leadership Iowa University

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### AUGUST 31

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Des Moines Golf and Country Club | West Des Moines

### SEPTEMBER 29

#### Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner

The Meadows Event Center | Altoona

### SEPTEMBER 30

#### Advanced Manufacturing Conference

The Meadows Event Center | Altoona

Visit [www.iowaabi.org](http://www.iowaabi.org) and click the "Events" tab for details on upcoming events, including updates in response to COVID-19-related safety restrictions for public gatherings.

**EVENT REWIND**

# Leadership Iowa

**March 5-6 | Muscatine**



Leadership Iowa visited Muscatine on March 5-6 for an intensive two-day session focused on manufacturing and community vitality. The class learned about the issues our state’s manufacturers face including training Iowa’s workforce for the modern shop floor, supporting infrastructure to transport raw materials and finished goods, opening foreign markets for Iowa’s products and more. Participants toured Kent Corporation, Phelps Uniforms, Musco Lighting, SSAB and HNI Corporation, as well as heard from a variety of subject-matter experts regarding workforce engagement and community retention efforts.

“Leadership Iowa’s visit to Muscatine is a great way for the class to learn firsthand how Iowa is a manufacturing state both in our history and our future,” said current class member Scott Walter, president and chief operating officer of the EFCO Corporation and board member of the National Association of Manufacturers. “Iowa manufacturers have made incredible contributions to the world.”

Among the session highlights was attending Connecting Statewide Leaders hosted by the Iowa Association of Business and Industry on Thursday, March 5 at Kent Corporation. The event included a panel discussing the future of manufacturing with Andy Bramstedt of SSAB, Kevin Hoban of HNI Corp, Pat Homoele of Grain Processing Corporation, Nick Smith (LI '17-18) of Musco Lighting and moderator Jill Lippincott of the Iowa Economic Development Authority, followed by a networking lunch.

# Iowa Business Day on the Hill

**March 11 | Des Moines**



This legislative-focused day included an update on pending legislation at the ABI office, meeting with members of the House and Senate at the Capitol, and a luncheon featuring Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg and Speaker of the House Pat Grassley. The event, which grows bigger and better each year, is a partnership between ABI, the Iowa Chamber Alliance, the Iowa Chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business, the Iowa Taxpayers Association, and the National Association of Women Business Owners.

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