



**LESSONS IN
BUSINESS GROWTH**

Gabe Glynn, MakUSafe and Kathy Evert, Signarama



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Iowa Association of Business and Industry

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 CUSTOM PUBLICATION FOR ABI

A VIEW FROM THE TOP

The Year Ahead



Jack Hasken
*ABI Chair
Jackson Mfg., Inc.
Maquoketa, Iowa*

Last month, ABI hosted the 2021 Taking Care of Business Conference in Coralville/Iowa City. If you weren't there, you missed one of the best business meetings of the year. It was great to be back in person and I want to thank each and every one of you for attending. You'll want to make plans now to join us next June 14th-16th in Dubuque for the 2022 conference. I promise you it will be one of the very best ABI conventions of all time!

This edition of Business Record Iowa provides my first opportunity to write this column, as I follow Steven Bradford in the role of ABI Chair. Under Steven's great leadership, along with Mike Ralston's great team at ABI, and because of your continued support, ABI just completed another successful year.

In 1987, Illinois Tool Works (ITW) opened an injection molding/plastics assembly plant in Maquoketa. Over the years, the plant has had a couple of owners. In January 2013, after serving as the company's sales and marketing director, I decided to purchase the company and its assets and rebranded

it as Jackson Manufacturing Inc. My partner and my wife, Sarah M. Hasken, and I have owned and operated Jackson Mfg. ever since.

I am proud that Jackson Mfg. continues to employ both traditional employees along with individuals with disabilities from a five-county area in NE Iowa. We are proud of the high-quality work done by them and by all of our loyal employees. I am also very proud that Sarah and I will be the first husband and wife team ever to both serve as Chair of ABI. Sarah was Chair of ABI back in 2010 and provided excellent leadership to ABI and I hope to be able to produce those same results.

Finally, I am also proud to be a long-time member and supporter of ABI. My goal as chair is to continue expanding the association's incredible record of positive impact on Iowa. I look forward to hearing your ideas about how we can work together to keep that positive momentum going. Thank you for your support of ABI. ■

MY GOAL AS CHAIR IS TO CONTINUE EXPANDING THE ASSOCIATION'S
INCREDIBLE RECORD OF POSITIVE IMPACT ON IOWA.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Business Succession Strategies



Kirsten Johanson
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It is frequently said that certain things in life are inevitable. Death and taxes are most cited but, for many lawyers in this area, business succession should certainly be added to the list. Despite the inevitability of it, planning for business succession never seems to make it to the top of many business owners' to-do lists. While procrastination is common, starting the process early and building a good team to support you and your business is essential in seizing the right moment to sell or in planning for the unexpected.

Given the volatile political and economic climate, this is a particularly important time to be thinking about succession. The President and various Democratic members of Congress have proposed significant changes to income tax rates, capital gains tax rates, estate taxes, and estate planning structures which all impact available succession techniques. To avoid being caught on your heels by this kind of volatility, methodically working through a planning process is essential.

Identifying your exit goals is usually the first step. Will the sale of your business need to fund your retirement? Do you intend to use the business as a jumping point into a larger business endeavor? Even if you are just starting a business, thinking through where you are trying to get is a threshold question.

Identifying your target buyer/successor is typically the next step. Is it a competitor or another player in the same market? An internal employee or partner? A family member? Considering the identity of the buyer or recipient of the business has significant bearing on whether you are looking to sell, gift, or do a combination of both.

The transition process is never quick and is usually result of in-depth, long-term planning. Set yourself up for success by starting early and starting with the big-picture items. ■





CULTIVATING IOWA'S TALENT CONTINUUM

The Course for our State: Leadership Iowa 2020-21 Class Graduates

By participating in our state's premier issues awareness program, Leadership Iowa class members have demonstrated their commitment to advance the State of Iowa.

This year's cohort of Iowa leaders, revered for their generosity, raised over \$14,000 for causes within our host communities and in support of each other throughout the year. Additionally, the Leadership Iowa participants' newfound connections to each other and the state at-large brings new potential to how they can continue to make a difference in the lives of Iowans.

Class members attend an integrated series of sessions examining the opportunities and challenges facing our state. Through in-depth discussions, engaging activities and one-of-a-kind opportunities, Leadership Iowa informs and inspires leaders to take action on matters important to themselves and their communities. This year's program explored a variety of topics in the communities of Atlantic, Sioux Center, Ottumwa and Des Moines (virtually), the Quad Cities, Mason City and Marshalltown.

Leadership Iowa participants are selected from every corner of the state and represent a variety of occupations and industries. The benefits gained from the experience are far greater when each person's backgrounds and interests differ. However, there is one attribute all participants share: the desire to effect positive change.



Presenting the Leadership Iowa Class of 2020-21! Iowa leaders from across the state graduated from the program after completing the curriculum from October 2020 to June 2021.

The generosity and dedication demonstrated during and beyond Leadership Iowa by the nearly 1,200 alumni since its inception in 1982 exemplifies the heart of the program. It is more important than ever to recognize the role our state's leaders have in developing solutions.

Thank you to the annual sponsors of this year's program including Premier Partner: EMC Insurance; Diamond Partners: Central Iowa Power Cooperative, Community

State Bank and Grinnell Mutual; and Platinum Partners: BrownWinick Law Firm, Iowa Soybean Association, Pella Corporation and Winger Companies. To see more of their experience in the program, find "Leadership Iowa" on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Instagram. Do you want to see who these leaders are and how to be selected to participate? Find the class list and nominate yourself and others at www.LeadershipIowa.com. ■

EMBARRASSED EXECUTIVE

Business Owners & Executives' Individual Fiduciary Liability on 401(k) (& Other) Plans



Brian M. Thompson,
C(k)P®, CPFA
Focus OneSource 401(k)
Plan Advisor
Owner & Retirement
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Did you know as an owner or signer/decision-maker on a 401(k) (and most Retirement Plans) that Fiduciary Liability extends to individuals responsible for the plan? You can face individual consequences for not adhering to DOL & IRS regulations? Yes!

Depending on your role with a Retirement Plan, you may not be able to avoid all liability, but you can decrease it with this combination of tactics:

Outsourcing – Not all Fiduciary responsibilities can be outsourced, like sponsoring the plan (usually a Board or Owners) or overseeing the service providers to the plan. But two main areas can be outsourced to decrease Fiduciary liability: 1. Administration 2. Investment Management.

- Many companies will sign on to the Retirement Plan as a Fiduciary in each of these two areas, respectively. As a potential side bonus, you or your employees are freed up from these responsibilities to focus on your core business!

Systems & Processes – Although the Business or Non-Profit are responsible for the following items, your Plan's Advisor/Consultant can do or coordinate these services or support you to get them accomplished. This is not a complete list, but highlights some key items:

- Documenting of:
 - Meetings, Reviews, decision-making processes with notes/minutes (internal and with plan service providers).
 - Employee communications- ALL types related to the Plan.
- Review & benchmark the services you are being provided for value and cost, and the investments' performance and cost.
- Secure storage of current Plan Documents, Disclosures, Notices.

Insurance – Organizations can purchase Fiduciary Insurance to help cover the entity and individuals.

If you have any questions about these or other retirement plan questions, please contact Focus OneSource. ■

Advisory services offered through RockWay Wealth Partners, a registered investment advisor.

CAPITOL BUSINESS



Developing Public Policy to Support Growth

On Thursday, June 10, ABI concluded the 2021 “Taking Care of Business Conference. Member attendees divided their time between plenary sessions, small group workshops and networking. For the associations’ public policy staff all phases of the conference put an intense focus on business growth and a consensus that a lack of workforce participants is a key limiting factor to such growth.

Governor Reynolds addressed the group and noted her action to end a \$300 dollar a week federal unemployment payment that is added to Iowa’s already generous jobless benefits was taken to encourage potential workplace participants to return to gainful employment.

ABI workshop participants learned that, due to their strong advocacy, the legislature took great strides during the 2021 session to remove known impediments to workforce participation. Notably childcare was addressed to make it more affordable and more available for parents and employers will have new tools to solve childcare issues for their own workforces. A new commitment of resources was made to solve workforce housing issues and allocating it in a manner that will pay attention to housing needs in more rural areas where many of Iowa’s small manufacturers are located.

While the actions of the Governor and the legislature were seen as positives by conference attendees, employers at the conference struggling to find workers gave anecdotal evidence to a strange dichotomy in the Iowa economy. At the same time Iowa is noted as the #1 state for recovery from the economic effects of the pandemic, Iowa’s workforce participation rate is at a decades-

long low. This means we must do more. But what? The opportunity to shape that response is upon us.

As every year, starting next month, ABI will convene a series of public policy committee meetings. Any member of ABI can participate in the committees and their recommendations become the policy priorities we will press upon policymakers during the 2022 legislative session. The committees are organized to cover economic growth, workforce, environment, tax and workplace issues.

The August dates for these meetings have been set and you can learn more and sign up to take part at: www.iowaabi.org/events. The public policy team hopes you will take part so that we can best represent those policies that will best help our members find greater success, lead the Iowa economy and create wealth for all Iowans. ■



JD Davis
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At the same time Iowa is noted as the #1 state for recovery from the economic effects of the pandemic, Iowa’s workforce participation rate is at a decades-long low.

In Iowa, big ideas flourish. We invest in bold visionaries and innovative ideas that transform industries. From start-ups to enterprises, we’re home to rewarding careers in advanced manufacturing, bioscience and finance. And never ones to forget our roots, Iowa’s leadership in agriculture continues with breakthroughs in digital and precision ag. Opportunities are everywhere in Iowa. If you belong on the leading edge of your industry, you’re in the right place. Learn more at IowaEDA.com.

IOWA
economic development



LESSONS IN BUSINESS GROWTH



Gabe Glynn and Kathy Evert have grown their business and weathered the pandemic.

BY GIGI WOOD

For many, owning a small business is the epitome of the American Dream.

The ability to be one's own boss and call the shots can be highly alluring, even with the risks and challenges that come with business ownership. Launching a company requires great effort and determination, as does each stage of growth that comes with business success.

In Iowa, small businesses are an integral part of the economy. While it's typically big corporations that garner media headlines, small businesses far outnumber their larger counterparts. Iowa's small businesses comprise 99.3% of companies in the state and employ 48.1% of its workers.

Growing small businesses is important to state government and groups such as the Iowa Association of Business and Industry, which recently hosted its Taking Care of Business Conference in Coralville. At the conference, industry leaders gathered to learn, network and share ideas about how to grow and strengthen Iowa's businesses and economy. These groups work together to ensure that Iowa is an attractive home for businesses and that those companies are able to grow with few restrictions. Just this year, Iowa ranked No. 1 for opportunity by U.S. News and World Report for affordability and economic opportunity.

FOLLOWING YOUR PASSION

Kathy Evert started Signarama in Ankeny five years ago after serving as an executive at regional economic development organizations. She was ready for a career change and a new challenge and Signarama fit the bill. Signarama is a full-service sign company serving central Iowa that designs, produces and installs most types of signs and graphics.

"I wanted the independence and the potential [that] business ownership could provide me," Evert said. "I considered a few other startup businesses and looked at several businesses available for acquisition. I acquired Signarama Ankeny in 2016 and started the YESCO Sign & Lighting franchise in 2017."

Signarama sign and graphic services include vehicles and wraps; wall, window and floor graphics; exterior monument and building signs, real estate, development and directional signs; interior signs including ADA-compliant, reception and room ID signs; yard signs; banners; tradeshow exhibits and more. The YESCO division services, repairs and retrofits most types of exterior signs and lighting.

Her advice to those considering starting their own business: follow your passion.

"First, follow your gut, your passion. Second, assemble a support group of other business owners that can be your sounding board," Evert said. "Next, join a few networking groups and local or statewide business organizations. Networking and referrals are powerful and real. Getting involved at some level in your community is the right thing to do. Finally, create a positive work environment and do all you can to be a small business employer of choice."

As an employer, one of her greatest challenges is finding skilled workers. Most graphic design programs in the area do not offer training in design production.

"The sign and graphics industry is a custom business – everything we make is custom-ordered, she said. "Finding and retaining employees with training or experience in the industry is a challenge as the pool is relatively small and training is very specialized. There are many graphic design degree programs, but they lack in the application/production of designs. Most training programs in this industry are held in larger states on either coast or the southeast part of the country, which presents a challenge for small businesses due to the cost for training and time away from the business. The competition for employees in our industry is as fierce as most industries, and that won't change any time soon."

When seeking new employees or training opportunities, she reaches out to her business network.

"It is an ongoing challenge," Evert said. "As part of two franchises, I have a network of other owners and franchise organizations that I reach out to for training and support. Some of our suppliers also provide training opportunities that I am considering for employees. Investing in training and partnering with others for training will be necessary for the long run."

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THE COVID-19 CURVEBALL

The coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns slowed business for most, including Signarama.

"The pandemic affected my business early in 2020 with a slowdown in orders and the uncertainty and unknown I think we all experienced," Evert said. "We prepared for the worst as best we could, arranged for some employees to work remotely, offered curbside pickup and delivery of orders, and added some new products and promotions."

While orders are returning and improving, the supply chain slowdown is hitting home for the company.

"The pandemic disrupted our supply chain like it has many others. This has resulted in price increases, longer lead times and searching for additional suppliers," Evert said. "We are buying some materials in larger quantities versus just-in-time inventory purchases and from new or more than one supplier."

Gabe Glynn was just about to launch his company, MâkuSafe, when the pandemic hit. The company creates devices to be worn by workers to keep them safe on the job.

"MâkuSafe exists to make sure that more workers make it home to their dinner table each and every day," he said. "Through a small wearable armband device, we gather millions of data points in real time from labor workers and send that data to a cloud platform, called MâkuSmart."

The data collected is focused on tracking the environment surrounding the worker to identify the potential for accidents and injuries. MâkuSmart software then processes that data and identifies when risk is beginning to increase, so supervisors can intervene to prevent an accident before it happens, Glynn said.

He co-founded the company after watching his father's career as a safety manager.

"I wanted to try and help him improve the safety of the more than 1,000 workers that he was responsible for every day," Glynn said. "In my research, I learned that tens of billions of dollars are spent on worker injuries every year and that every day on this planet more than 1,000 people lose their life in a workplace accident. We set out to change the way the world views and understands human work."

He and his team spent four years creating the device and software, improving it and planning the business start. They were all set to launch the company in April 2020.

"Our first shipment of production devices was scheduled to arrive to the applause of a couple hundred stakeholders, investors, customers, media folks and employees," Glynn said. "We had grand plans for our product launch and we had dozens of customers that had signed up and placed a down payment deposit to reserve their share of our first shipment. None of that happened. Many of our customers were completely shut down due to the pandemic, our product was delayed, and we never got the chance to hold our big event. It was devastating."

When the company was able to sell its product, it had the perfect device to help with social distancing and contact tracing.

"Thankfully, we had built a technology that was perfectly suited to address some of the contact tracing and worker proximity challenges brought on by the pandemic," he said. "As companies looked to get back to work, we were already positioned to help them do so. Although we never got our grand launch party, we were able to begin deployment of our product in the fall of 2020."

The pandemic also presented challenges to the company culture at MâkuSafe.

"As a startup, culture is one of the most critical elements for success," Glynn said. "You need talented and humble people to, with little instruction, take a vision and bring it to life. As a team, we all experience the highs and lows together and you need to be able to count on your peers to pick you up when you hit a wall. This became very hard to do when our staff of nearly 25 began working remotely."

The company adapted and Friday became remote game day, with virtual Pictionary, wine tastings, a failed attempt at a talent show and a lot of memes on Slack channels, he said.

"If the pandemic taught us one thing, it's that we cannot plan for everything," he said. "As a leader, you have no choice but to be flexible, adaptable and resilient. Nobody else in your organization can do that for you. You must bring the positivity and you must bring the energy every single day."

STARTUP INVESTMENTS

MâkuSafe's greatest challenge wasn't the pandemic, however. Glynn says the company's greatest obstacle has been funding. MâkuSafe is backed by over \$10 million in venture capital.

"Raising capital, especially that much capital, was not easy," he said. "We had a lot of pressure early on to consider moving to Silicon Valley to find investors willing to invest money in a technology that included physical devices."

Through grit, determination, prayer and patience, MâkuSafe found its investors, he said.

"EMC Insurance was one of the first institutional investors in our company, but we have many angel investors that believed in our vision from the earliest days," Glynn said. "It has taken us significantly more time and capital than we ever imagined, but their commitment to helping us reach the finish line never wavered. We used the capital to hire some incredibly talented people to our team, and those people continued to create and expand upon our vision with some leading-edge solutions. Their efforts helped attract global and Fortune 500 companies to our doorstep, and that inspired investors to continue supporting our company."

STAYING CURRENT AND COMPETITIVE

The world of manufacturing has become incredibly technologically advanced. With that comes the need for training and new perspectives on how to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. This is the case at United Equipment Accessories in Waverly. The 69-year-old, family-owned company engineers and manufactures customized rotary solutions, including slip rings, rotary unions, cable reels, and shift controls. UEA's products are used internationally in various industries, including wind turbines, cranes, radar systems, aviation, medical and even theme park rides.

"To stay competitive in our current markets, we try to identify where we can expand, with slight changes in our business and to planning for the company's future vitality," said Deb Malek, UEA's CEO.

Expanding the business and developing new product lines can be planned to a high degree, she said. Planning future growth allows the company to create a strategy for cash flow and investments.

EXPERIENCED TEAM EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE

Fredrikson & Byron was ranked in the 2021 edition of Chambers USA, including:

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“Not having an eye to the future can impact our opportunities and define how fast we can financially grow, or the changes needed to shift the trajectory,” Malek said. “As a smaller company, we must be wiser to where we will put our money, whether it’s manufacturing 4.0, training, product technology, systems, capital, etc., and staying innovative and agile.”

UEA is in the process of developing its managers to become strategic visionaries in their departments to remain forward looking and competitive.

“We will have eight people looking out for the company’s future needs, in their field of expertise,” she said. “Whether that be in technology mapping our products, manufacturing 4.0 tech mapping, automation of standard office processes, or Cybersecurity Maturity Model certifications. We have eight teams who know our business and are able to see how their departments can prepare UEA for our growth path. When your talent is doing work in which they are strong, that can be powerful.”

The pandemic brought on the greatest challenges the company has ever experienced, she said. In the short term, UEA dealt with supply chain constraints, rapid price changes and finding the right skilled people, she said. Now the company is watching the changes in international commerce and geopolitical impacts.

“Prior to COVID, we exported and imported product to and from Asia, India and Europe,” Malek said. “Currently, some customers are managing their cost of transportation and potential tariffs by routing sales to competitors on the same continent. We are watching the impact to our competitive positioning to our global customers as these current patterns are still unfolding.”

A takeaway from the pandemic was the need to be more agile with data to respond faster to changing events.

“We will be moving more to automation of reports to allow faster response, whether in pricing or supplier and shipping delivery, financials,” she said. “In a fast-changing, unknown time, data accessibility and speed can help us see. Secondly, we have increased our scope of external monitoring material with ITR Smart Monitoring, Kiplinger Letter, etc. Thirdly, communication; we had people in the plant and some working from home, and we have set up a shared place for two-way communication. Now everyone gets the same message and feedback quickly.”

Those who want to experience business growth should always look to the future, work on their business every day and develop a team to have a shared growth horizon to create a strategic path, she said.

“Learn to be innovative and agile, always go back to your base growth horizons and questions,” Malek said. “Has it changed, should it change, what advantage has this new environment given us or what new opportunity has it uncovered?”

MAKING PRIORITIES

Michele Farrell has invested in businesses and started the marketing consulting group Measured Intentions, where she helps small and medium-sized companies market themselves, measure the results and grow.

“We really create a culture around helping companies understand what marketing is, what it does and how it can help,” she said.

Her husband, Lance Farrell, started the company Farrell’s Extreme Bodyshaping and the couple invests in a military body armor startup, among other companies.

Owning a small business isn’t for everyone, she cautions.

“It’s not easy to run your own business,” Farrell said. “You really have to hustle, and you’re not guaranteed a paycheck.”

When running your own business, it’s easy to become overly busy at work and lose sight of the important things in life, so it’s important to focus on priorities, she said.

“Make sure you’re taking care of yourself while you’re serving your customers,” she said. “They are obviously the most important thing, but you need to focus on you and your team. No matter what the challenge is, it’s important to do right by the people who have given you so much.” ■

WHO NEEDS HOUSING?

MANY HARD WORKING IOWANS IN POSITIONS LIKE THESE EARN LESS THAN WHAT IS REQUIRED TO AFFORD A MARKET RATE APARTMENT AND UTILITIES IN IOWA, WITHOUT BEING HOUSING COST BURDENED.



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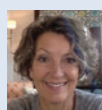


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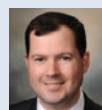
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TOP TIPS

Five Tips for Sales Analysis



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#1: KNOW YOUR INDUSTRY AND MARKET

Sales occur when the consumer feels the price is commensurate with the value they receive. Industry and market standards can help you target your pricing to achieve that balance.

#2: USE BREAK-EVEN ANALYSIS

How much does your business need to sell to cover costs? Understanding the break-even point can open opportunities for improving production or processes.

#3: LEVERAGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In addition to industry benchmarks, use information such as cost of goods sold, gross margin percentage, and financial statements to make informed decisions about customers, services, and product lines.

#4: EVALUATE CURRENT CUSTOMER BASE

Higher sales doesn't necessarily equate to more profit. Strategically re-evaluate customers in the bottom portion of sales dollars, gross margin percentages, and contribution margin but don't cut a customer until you can replace them.

#5: A STRONG ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE TEAM

As you grow, the more sophisticated and important your sales analysis becomes. It's critical to scale your accounting team's ability with your growth, or you risk not reaching your potential — or even being sustainable.

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*Learn more about how ABI membership
could benefit your company by visiting
www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi.*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY 18-22

Business Horizons

Central College | Pella

JULY 29-30

Okoboji CEO Forum

Okoboji

AUGUST 8-12

Leadership Iowa University

Des Moines Area

AUGUST 9

Environment Public Policy Meeting**(Members Only)**

ABI Offices | Des Moines

AUGUST 11

Workplace & Product Safety Public Policy Meeting**(Members Only)**

ABI Offices | Des Moines

AUGUST 23

Economic Growth Public Policy Meeting**(Members Only)**

ABI Offices | Des Moines

AUGUST 30

Executive Open

West Des Moines

SEPTEMBER 27

Executive Open - East

Cedar Rapids Golf and Country Club | Cedar Rapids

SEPTEMBER 28

Legends in Manufacturing Awards Dinner

The Meadows Events & Conference Center | Altoona

SEPTEMBER 29

Advanced Manufacturing Conference

The Meadows Events & Conference Center | Altoona

Visit 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.



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- Expandable
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- 28 ft. Ceiling
- 5.04 Acre Site
- Expandable
- 20 Minutes to I-35

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- 30 ft. Ceiling
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EVENT REWIND

Iowa. Connected.



JUNE 8-10, 2021 | CORALVILLE/IOWA CITY

Iowa. Connected. ABI Taking Care of Business Conference a Success

More than 500 ABI members and business leaders convened in Coralville/Iowa City June 8-10. Highlights of the conference included keynote speakers Dr. Tarika Barrett, CEO of Girls Who Code, Fortunate Magazine Senior Editor at Large, Geoff Colvin, and best-selling author of nearly 50 sports books Ross Bernstein. Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds addressed attendees on Wednesday afternoon and the ABI Foundation raised more than \$40,000 at their annual auction on Wednesday night. After last year's event was canceled due to the pandemic, members were excited to network with sponsors, exhibitors and all attendees during the three days in Iowa City/Coralville. ■



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The annual meeting included a gavel exchange between the ABI Board of Director's incoming and outgoing chairs, Jack Hasken with Jackson Manufacturing (left) and Steven Bradford with HNI Corporation (right).



Drew Conrad of Waterloo/Cedar Falls was recognized with this year's Leadership for Iowa Award; presenting the award was Leadership Iowa Past Chair Jason Gross.



Attendees enjoyed the Chair's Dinner and ABI Foundation Auction at Big Grove Brewery in Iowa City.