



ABI CONFERENCE: Iowa Leaders Tackle Economic Future With Gubernatorial Forum, CEO Panel



Program Includes Keynote Speakers: Donna Orender and Shawn DuBravac

STORY ON PAGE 8

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 23
Top 8 Announced:
Coolest Thing Made
in Iowa
VIRTUAL

MAY 1
Legislative Update
(Members Only)
VIRTUAL
*Continues every other Friday
during session.*

MAY 4
Top 4 Announced:
Coolest Thing Made
in Iowa

MAY 12
Regional Policy
Meeting
COUNCIL BLUFFS

MAY 14
Regional Policy
Meeting
LE MARS

MAY 20
Regional Policy
Meeting
DAVENPORT

MAY 26
Regional Policy
Meeting
DES MOINES

JUNE 2-4
Taking Care of
Business Conference
CORALVILLE &
IOWA CITY

JUNE 2
Leadership Iowa
Graduation
IOWA CITY

JUNE 3
Coolest Thing
Made in Iowa
Announcement
CORALVILLE

JULY 19-23
Business Horizons
DES MOINES

AUGUST 2-6
Leadership Iowa
University
DES MOINES

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Visit our newest members' websites, and see how their products and services can benefit you.

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- McGough | www.mcgough.com
- Daylite Pictures | www.daylitepictures.com
- RCS Millwork, LC | www.rcsmillwork.com
- Axis Therapy Centers | www.axistherapycenters.com

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

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

FROM THE CHAIR:

Business is a Team Sport

At its core, business is a team sport. Success doesn't happen in isolation — it's built through collaboration, shared ideas, and the collective efforts of people working toward a common goal. That spirit is what makes Iowa's business community so strong, and it's the inspiration behind this year's Taking Care of Business Conference.

Scheduled for **June 2–4 in Coralville and Iowa City**, the 2026 conference is designed to bring that team mindset to life. Each year, ABI works to create an experience where business leaders can come together, learn from one another, and build connections that extend

well beyond the event itself. This year's agenda is no exception, with sessions and speakers focused on the challenges and opportunities facing Iowa businesses today.

One of the most rewarding parts of serving as ABI Chair is the opportunity to help shape this event — from selecting locations and venues to working alongside ABI staff to develop a meaningful program. Our goal is to create an environment where members can step away from their daily responsibilities, gain new perspectives, and return to their organizations better equipped to lead and grow.

I'm especially excited to host this year's conference in the Iowa City and Coralville area. As a University of Iowa alum, it's a place that holds personal significance for me and provides a vibrant backdrop for bringing our statewide business community together.

Whether you're a longtime attendee or considering joining us for the first time, I encourage you to make plans to attend. When we come together as a business community — sharing ideas, supporting one another, and working toward common goals — we all move forward.

I look forward to seeing you in June.
ABI



Kellan Longenecker
ABI Chair
General Mills

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ABI FOUNDATION:

Building Iowa's Future Workforce Through Early Engagement

This year, take the opportunity to strengthen your workforce by engaging earlier, building awareness, and creating meaningful connections with the next generation of talent. With students across Iowa actively exploring future careers, now is the perfect time to introduce them to the opportunities within your company. Through initiatives like Elevate Iowa Manufacturing, you can play a direct role in shaping a strong, skilled pipeline for years to come. Here are several ways to get involved.

Engage with Students Early

Much of your future workforce is sitting in a classroom right now. Introducing your company to students in a K-12 setting is a proactive strategy that builds awareness and sparks interest in manufacturing careers.

By connecting early, you can:

- Increase awareness of career pathways
- Expand and diversify your future talent pool
- Strengthen your brand in the community
- Align student skills with industry needs
- Reduce long-term recruiting and turnover costs

The Iowa Association of Business and Industry engages students at all levels of their education journey and invites members to participate in these valuable experiences.

Bring "Crystals of Innovation" to Your Community

One of the most engaging ways to connect with younger students is through Crystals of Innovation, a hands-on, gamified learning experience designed for grades 4-9.

Through interactive challenges, students discover their strengths while exploring concepts like robotics, aero-

space, additive manufacturing, and quality control. These activities build teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills — all while introducing modern manufacturing in a fun, approachable way.

Bringing this experience into your local classroom is a powerful way to make a lasting impression and inspire future talent.

Expand Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Learning by doing is one of the most effective ways to prepare students for the workforce. Work-based learning allows students to gain real-world experience while helping employers identify and develop future employees.

Through partnerships like Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates and Kuder via the iJAG Connect program, businesses can:

- Deliver classroom presentations
- Host facility tours and job shadows
- Offer internships and apprenticeships
- Connect directly with students through the iJAG Connect portal

If you're new to work-based learning, support is available to help you build a program that fits your business and workforce needs.

Participate in the Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour

The Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour is a statewide initiative designed to highlight the innovation and opportunity within Iowa's manufacturing industry.

By opening your doors, you give students a firsthand look at modern manufacturing careers — helping reshape perceptions and spark interest in your industry. Students who experience your workplace today are more likely to consider your company tomorrow.

Learn more about Elevate Iowa Manufacturing by visiting www.ElevateIowa.com. ABI

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COVER STORY FROM PAGE 5

ABI CONFERENCE: Iowa Leaders Tackle Economic Future With Gubernatorial Forum, CEO Panel



Hyatt Regency Coralville
Hotel and Conference Center

Hundreds of the state's executives, entrepreneurs, policymakers and industry experts will gather in the Iowa City area from June 2-4 for the Iowa Association of Business and Industry's (ABI) Taking Care of Business conference. The annual conference helps foster dialogue on economic growth, workforce challenges, innovation and the future of industry in the state.

Taking place in Coralville's Iowa River Landing at the Hyatt Regency Coralville Hotel and Conference Center, the event will feature keynote presentations, breakout sessions, and hands-on workshops on topics ranging from artificial intelligence and cybersecurity to leadership development and workforce retention.

"The Iowa River Landing and its flagship property, the Hyatt, are amazing spaces for people to meet," said Stacey Houseman, vice president of sales for Think Iowa City, the area's destination management organization. "There's so many amenities, restaurants and entertainment. We've got the newer Xtreme Arena, Von Maur and other local retailers to shop in, a cookie store and cupcakes, there's a little something for everyone."

The hotel was recently renovated, with new guest rooms as well as a new kitchen and bar, Ms. Houseman said. There's more than 60,000 square feet of meeting space, including an exhibit hall, two ballrooms and plenty of smaller meeting rooms.

"It's an amazing property — one of the top Hyatts in the country," she said.

Keynote speakers include Donna Orender, a nationally recognized

executive and former president of the WNBA, and Shawn DuBravac, a futurist, best-selling author, and former chief economist of the Consumer Technology Association (CTA).

The "Coolest Thing Made in Iowa" competition winner will also be announced during the conference. This statewide contest highlights Iowa's manufacturing strength, which contributes more than \$44 billion annually to the state's economy, accounts for roughly 16% of Iowa's GDP, and employs more than 215,000 people.

The 2026 nominees come from 51 cities across the state, with products ranging from agricultural equipment and consumer goods to food and beverage items and construction materials. The winner, which is chosen through a public vote, will be revealed on June 3.

Conference goers will also be able to experience Iowa City's vibrant culture through events highlighting the area including the welcome reception at the University of Iowa's Hancher Auditorium and dinner in the Ted Pacha suite at Kinnick Stadium.

"(ABI) is a fun group that likes to intertwine lots of events in whatever city they're hosting the conference in," Ms. Houseman said. "They really like to find cool spaces and experiences."

Attendees can play a round of golf at the Brown Deer Golf Club, go on an art and literature walk downtown, have a tour of the University of Iowa, or attend an ag tourism tour featuring local distillery Cedar Ridge, Walker Homestead Farm and Winery, and Calyx Creek Lavender Farm in Oxford.



University of Iowa's Hancher Auditorium

The conference will also feature several new events, including a Gubernatorial Candidate Forum and CEO Panel:

Iowa Gubernatorial Candidate Forum

As Iowa looks ahead to its next chapter, leadership at the state's highest level will play a critical role in shaping opportunity and economic competitiveness. Hear from candidates for governor as they outline their priorities and respond to questions centered on Iowa's employers, workforce and long-term growth.

CEO Panel on Iowa's Leading Industries

What's ahead for Iowa's most critical industries? In this exclusive CEO panel, top leaders will share candid insights on growth, risk, innovation and long-term strategy. From navigating economic uncertainty to leveraging emerging technologies, these executives will discuss how they're positioning their organizations — and Iowa — for sustained success.

As Iowa continues to navigate economic shifts and emerging technologies, the 2026 conference promises to play a key role in shaping conversations about growth, resilience and opportunity. ABI



Ted Pacha Suite at Kinnick Stadium



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CAPITOL BUSINESS:

Engage in ABI's Public Policy Process by Attending a Regional Meeting

It's mid-April, which means the 2026 legislative session's scheduled days are winding down. It's been a very busy year, with over 1,800 bills introduced, reviewed and tracked. Lawmakers are now focused on finalizing the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, negotiating a final property tax reform and relief proposal, determining a policy balance between landowner protections and access to ethanol markets outside Iowa which has renewed a debate of eminent domain policies.

ABI doesn't pause once the legislature adjourns. We immediately begin preparing for the next session, launching our public policy process for the year ahead.

Starting in May and at the annual

Taking Care of Business Conference in June, we will host six regional meetings. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity to review the legislative session's impact on the business community and share your insights on priorities for the year ahead.

We will make sure we hit all four points of the compass and central Iowa to make attendance convenient.

Current locations are:

- **Tuesday, May 12 (Council Bluffs)**
- **Thursday, May 14 (Le Mars)**
- **Wednesday, May 20 (Davenport)**
- **Tuesday, May 26 (Des Moines)**

Visit the ABI Events page on our website for details and additional meetings to select and register for the most convenient meeting.

We welcome not only ABI members but also community leaders, including city council members, county supervisors, and others who want to share their perspectives on business issues. We will use ABI's weekly newsletter to inform members of the regional opportunities, you won't want to miss this valuable opportunity to shape ABI's agenda going forward. Please contact JD Davis (jd-davis@iowaabi.org) or Brad Hartkopf (bhartkopf@iowaabi.org) if you have any questions. ABI



JD Davis

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EXPERT ADVICE:

The New Search Reality: Be the Answer, Not Just the Click

For years, online visibility meant ranking high on Google and getting the click. That's changing. Today, many customers ask a question and get an AI-generated summary before they ever visit a website. Some skip traditional search engines altogether and go straight to AI tools to compare options.

That doesn't mean your website matters less. It means clarity and specificity matter more.

AI tools pull from content that is structured, specific and easy to verify. If your information is vague, buried in PDFs or inconsistent across platforms, you're less likely to be included in those summaries.

Here are five practical ways to adapt:

1. **Replace generic claims with specifics.** If you're a manufacturer, don't just say "high-quality products." Say what you make, who you make it for and what makes it different (for example, the industries you serve, your production capabilities, number of locations and how long you've been in business).
2. **Add clear FAQs.** Put the real questions your customers ask on your site, such as pricing ranges, timelines and service areas. Short, direct answers are easier for search tools to summarize.
3. **Show your qualifications.** Spell out certifications, licenses, years in business and measurable results. Don't assume customers (or algorithms) will connect the dots.
4. **Keep key details in plain text.** Don't bury important information like hours, product offerings and contact information in images or downloadable brochures. Use headings and bullet points that are easy to scan.
5. **Stay consistent across the web.** AI tools cross-check your business name, services and contact information across your website,

LinkedIn, Google Business Profile and other directories. Inconsistencies weaken trust.

This isn't about rewriting your entire site. It's about making your offerings and expertise clear, specific and easy to reference. Increasingly, customers may see your answer in an AI summary before they ever see your homepage. Make sure it accurately reflects what you actually do and why you're qualified to do it.

- Jeffrey Regenold,
Chief Solutions Officer at Anthologic

WHAT'S TRENDING:

Automation: The New Essential Tool in Protecting Your Business from Payment Fraud

Across Iowa, businesses are feeling the impact of rising payments fraud. Criminals are continuing to use smarter technology and more convincing impersonation tactics. The good news is that automation is now one of the most effective ways to strengthen your fraud defenses.

Why automation matters

Fraud today often targets the points where human error, busy schedules or incomplete verification can create openings. Automated controls close these gaps by ensuring key steps in your payment process happen consistently every time.

Automation reduces the chance of human error

Criminals have become experts at timing attacks when finance teams are overwhelmed or rushing to close out the day. Automated approval requirements, alerts and validation steps keep payments from moving forward until the right checks have been completed.

It protects your accounts around the clock

Check fraud and unauthorized ACH debits remain two of the most common losses for businesses. Tools like Positive Pay and ACH Filters monitor transactions automatically and help stop suspicious activity before it posts.

It strengthens card-payment security

Credit card fraud continues to grow. Features like digi-

tal wallets, one-time virtual card numbers and tokenized credentials add an extra layer of automated protection by replacing sensitive card data with secure, single-use or encrypted versions.

It supports consistent, everyday vigilance

Automation helps by embedding good habits into the process: alerts fire automatically, approvals can't be skipped and permissions are tied to specific roles.

Simple automation steps make a big difference

Businesses can strengthen their security quickly by focusing on:

- Requiring dual approvals on ACH and wire payments
- Turning on Check Positive Pay and ACH Filters
- Setting up real-time transaction alerts
- Using digital wallets or virtual card numbers for online purchases
- Reviewing user access and permissions regularly
- Reducing paper check usage where possible

These steps create a strong foundation that makes your payment routine safer and smoother.

Fraud isn't slowing down, but automation gives businesses an opportunity to stay ahead of it. Contact the Bankers Trust Treasury Management team to help identify where automated controls can reduce risk and improve peace of mind. **ABI**



Kevin Tiernan, CTP
SVP, Treasury Management
Senior Manager
Bankers Trust



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