



IOWA  
ASSOCIATION  
OF BUSINESS  
AND INDUSTRY

BUSINESS

JUNE 2025 MONTHLY

ABI on hunt for Coolest Thing Made in Iowa

Coolest  
THING MADE IN  
IOWA

STORY ON PAGE 12

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>JUNE 24</b><br>Regional Public Policy Meeting<br>WATERLOO                       | <b>JULY 13-17</b><br>Business Horizons<br>DES MOINES              |
| <b>JUNE 25</b><br>Regional Public Policy Meeting<br>IOWA CITY                      | <b>AUGUST 3-7</b><br>Leadership Iowa University<br>DES MOINES     |
| <b>JULY 1</b><br>Regional Public Policy Meeting<br>DES MOINES                      | <b>AUGUST 7-8</b><br>Executive Forum<br>CLEAR LAKE                |
| <b>JULY 8</b><br>Webinar: Workers<br>Compensation Series<br>(Session 2)<br>VIRTUAL | <b>AUGUST 25</b><br>Executive Open Golf Outing<br>WEST DES MOINES |

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VISIT [WWW.IOWAABI.ORG](http://WWW.IOWAABI.ORG) AND CLICK THE "EVENTS" TAB FOR DETAILS ON ALL UPCOMING EVENTS.

## FROM THE CHAIR:

## Celebrating Iowa Innovation

One of ABI's newest—and most exciting—initiatives is the Coolest Thing Made in Iowa competition. Now in its second year, this contest is quickly becoming a favorite, and for good reason. It highlights the innovation, craftsmanship, and pride that define Iowa's manufacturing sector.

This month's Business Monthly introduces the Top 4 finalists in the 2025 competition. These impressive products showcase the diversity and strength of Iowa industry, and they remind us that world-class things are being made right here in our state every day.

As board chair, I'm proud to help celebrate the people and companies behind these remarkable creations. I encourage you to learn more about each finalist and the stories behind their success.

And don't forget—we'll announce the winner live at ABI's Taking Care of Business Conference this week in Council Bluffs. I look forward to seeing you there as we celebrate the coolest thing made in Iowa. **ABI**



Chad Reece

ABI Chair  
Winnebago Industries

## EXPERT ADVICE:

## Simplifying the Complex: Find the Right Customer with the Right Message

For many B2B and technical companies, creating clear, concise marketing messaging can be more challenging than it sounds. When you're deep in your own expertise — whether it's engineering, IT, logistics, finance or any other complex topic — it's easy to lead with features, jargon and internal priorities. But doing so can push away the very people you're trying to reach.

Here are three ways to simplify your message and connect with the right audience:

**1. Focus on the who.**

Before you talk about what you do, get specific about who it's for. What prob-

lems are they trying to solve? What pressures are they under? What keeps them from moving forward? Your message should speak directly to their world, not yours.

**2. Clarity builds trust.**

In a world of constant information overload, readers appreciate copy that's easy to digest.

Vary your sentence length. Break up large blocks of text into shorter paragraphs. Use bullet points and plain language. And don't be afraid to incorporate images, videos or other visuals. This isn't dumbing it down; it's sharpening your message so it can land.

**3. Lead with outcomes.**

Instead of listing product features, tell people what those features do. What's the result?

What friction do you remove? What value do you unlock? Even better, tie those outcomes to customer pain points. You're not just selling what you make — you're selling what it makes possible.

When you simplify your messaging, you're not just making things easier to read. You're making it easier for your ideal customer to say yes. And that will lead to better engagement, more qualified leads and stronger relationships built on trust. **ABI**



Travis Arndorfer

Anthologic Marketing + Technology

## CAPITOL BUSINESS:

## ABI Regional Meetings Right Around the Corner

The Iowa Legislature wrapped up its business for the year early in the morning on May 15. The first session of the two-year General Assembly went into overtime as policymakers eventually came to an agreement on issues like the budget and other policy items, but ultimately did not pass legislation related to property taxes and the governor's energy omnibus.

ABI staff was directed to focus on Tax, Workforce and Regulatory Reform issues. We were successful in helping secure passage of unemployment insurance premium reform, which is set to save businesses \$1 billion over the next five years while maintaining the solvency of the fund and comprehensive drug and alcohol testing reform, which will mitigate litigation risk for employers who utilize those programs in the workplace.

Unfortunately, the Legislature chose to pass what is estimated to be the most expensive healthcare mandate in Iowa history in Senate File 383, a \$340 million hit to the private sector via "pharmacy benefit manager reform". ABI staff have been working to educate the business community about the impacts and what they need to do in preparation for the July 1st enactment date.

With all of that said, there were many other issues the Legislature considered. ABI staff looks forward to presenting the entirety of the results of the legislative session to the business community through regional meetings in the coming weeks.

These meetings will be conducted across the state and allow attendees to learn more about session, ask questions and provide feedback on what we should be focused on for 2026. The following meetings have been scheduled.

- Council Bluffs (Wednesday, June 11th)
- Waterloo (Tuesday, June 24th)
- Iowa City (Wednesday, June 25th)
- Des Moines (Tuesday, July 1st)
- Sioux City (Date is still being determined)

ABI staff would encourage you to attend one of these meetings. There is no cost to register. Go to [www.iowaabi.org/events](http://www.iowaabi.org/events) for more information or contact Michelle Vollstedt ([mvollstedt@iowaabi.org](mailto:mvollstedt@iowaabi.org)) if you would like to join. **ABI**



Brad Hartkopf

Senior Director, Public Policy  
ABI  
[bhartkopf@iowaabi.org](mailto:bhartkopf@iowaabi.org)



# Congratulations to the Leadership Iowa 2024-2025 Class!

The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) Foundation proudly celebrates the outstanding individuals graduating from the 43rd year of Leadership Iowa. Over the past year, this class has traveled to eight host communities (Algona, Clarinda and Shenandoah, Ottumwa, Des Moines, Clinton, Sioux Center, Cedar Rapids, and Council Bluffs) gaining valuable insights into Iowa’s challenges and triumphs. Their transformative journey began last October, with each month bringing a new session topic and a fresh perspective in a different community.

The 2024-25 Leadership Iowa program was made possible through the generous support of presenting sponsors Chevron and EMC Insurance. Additional annual sponsors include CIPCO, Community State Bank, Emerson, Grinnell Mutual, Iowa Soybean Association, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, MidAmerican Energy Company, Musco Lighting, and Pella Corporation. Leadership Iowa is also deeply grateful for the unwavering support of the Leadership Iowa Board of Governors and the 200+ individuals who contributed their time, talents, and expertise to make this year truly remarkable. ABI



NAME	BUSINESS	WORK CITY
Melissa Baker	Tippie College of Business, Univ. of Iowa	Iowa City
Zach Bohannon	First Interstate Bank	Cedar Rapids
Seth Brown	Iowa Medical Society	Des Moines
Adam Buckentine	Pillar Property Management	Council Bluffs
Nick Callison	IMEG Corporation	West Des Moines
Aaron Curtis	ITC Midwest	Des Moines
Jason DeVries	INVISION Architecture	Des Moines
Erika Elbert		Garner
Ellie Evans	First Mainstreet Insurance	Cedar Rapids
Jose Garcia	MHCS	West Des Moines
Matthew Henkes	Iowa West Foundation	Council Bluffs
Julie Heuton	Two Rivers Marketing	Des Moines
Christy Hickman	Iowa State Education Association	Des Moines
Sarah Hruska	Eagle Grove Coop / Prestage Foods of Iowa	Eagle Grove
Amy Jones	Royal Neighbors of America	Rock Island
Patrick Jones	Jones Contracting Corp	West Point
Erlin Kakkanad	Principal Financial Group	Des Moines
Travis Kieffer	Plastics Unlimited	Preston
Dustin Lantz	Des Moines Public Schools	Des Moines
Theresa Lewis	The Arc of East Central Iowa	Cedar Rapids

NAME	BUSINESS	WORK CITY
Natalia Leymaster	Arconic	Bettendorf
Aaron Loan	Gallagher	Cedar Rapids
Sarah Luth	McKee, Voorhees & Sease PLC	Des Moines
Wade Nasheim	Keen Project Solutions, LLC	Ankeny
Eric Nelson	Iowa National Guard	Johnston
Abi Reiland	Sara Hopkins Real Estate Team	Des Moines
Marc Roe	Greater Ottumwa Partners in Progress	Ottumwa
Alyssa Saunders	Anthologic	Des Moines
Samuel Stagg	10Fold Architecture + Engineering	Ames
Angie Stepsis	Greater Des Moines Partnership	Des Moines
Sheritta Stokes	1619 Freedom School / Waterloo CSD	Waterloo
David Storey	Rainbow Enterprises LLC	Swisher
Emily Stork	Bankers Trust Company	Des Moines
Melissa Strovers	Grinnell College	Grinnell
Jonathan Sukup	Sukup Manufacturing Co.	Sheffield
Casey Wenstrand	Southwestern Community College (Iowa STEM)	Red Oak
Sue Wilber	City of Marion	Marion
Jan Williams	Ames Regional Economic Alliance	Ames
Mindy Williamson	Iowa State Fair	Des Moines
Michael Wilson	Chevron	Ames

## Leadership for Iowa Award Honoree Susan Judkins (Leadership Iowa Class of 1998-99)



The Leadership for Iowa Award is presented each year at ABI’s Taking Care of Business Conference to recognize an alumnus of the Leadership Iowa program who demonstrates exceptional leadership at both the local and state levels. This year, Leadership Iowa is proud to honor Susan Judkins with this award. Susan is a true trailblazer whose professional accomplishments and commitment to community service have made a lasting, positive impact throughout Iowa.

Susan Judkins is the Client Development Director for RDG Planning & Design and serves on the Clive City Council, a seat she has held since 2013. Her broad experience with city government began early, starting as a library aide in her hometown of Vinton, Iowa. It has since evolved into decades of significant contributions to local and state government including service on the Indianola School Board and Director of Governmental Affairs for the Iowa League of Cities.

Susan’s wide-ranging career has spanned economic and leadership development, state policy, and infrastructure advancement. She launched the Vision Iowa program, which laid the groundwork for revitalizing communities through tourism and cultural investment, and later guided key legislative efforts for the Rebuild Iowa Office following the

2008 floods. This included Iowa’s Smart Planning law and Code language establishing Watershed Management Authorities, now numbering 29 statewide.

In addition to her professional achievements, Susan is a dedicated community volunteer. She has held leadership roles with BRAVO Des Moines, the Iowa Wildlife Federation, the Polk County Homeless Coordinating Council, and many other nonprofit boards. She remains deeply engaged with Rotary Club of Des Moines, the Iowa Commercial Real Estate Association, and Reach Out and Read Iowa. A strong supporter of leadership development, she founded TACE, a networking group for AEC professionals, and has remained actively involved with Leadership Iowa after her 1998-1999 class year. Susan was selected as Co-Chair of the 1999-2000 class and later served as the Leadership Iowa

Board Chair for the 2004-2005 year.

Her lifelong commitment to community betterment has earned her numerous honors, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Iowa Environmental Council, the Industry Impact Award from the Iowa Commercial Real Estate Association, the Cecil Bolsinger Lifetime Service Award for significant achievements in Rotary and the local and regional community, and the Governor’s Volunteer Award.

Susan holds a BA in Business Management from Simpson College and an MBA from the University of Iowa. She resides in Clive, Iowa, and is the proud mother of two daughters and a stepdaughter. Susan truly demonstrates what it means to lead with purpose, courage, and compassion. Her service, innovation, and dedication make her a true champion for Iowa’s future. ABI



# ABI on hunt for Coolest Thing Made in Iowa

BY EMERY STYRON

What’s the “Coolest Thing Made in Iowa” in 2025?

Is it a tasty pastry hand-braided in West Bend? An industrial pump manufactured in Cedar Falls and prized by chocolatiers world-wide? An Ankeny-built cotton picker probably used nowhere in the state? Or how about a “revolutionary” device created by a Red Oak family for cooking over an open fire?

It’s the second year of the competition dreamed up by ABI to highlight Iowa’s thriving manufacturing industry and the career opportunities it provides, according to Marketing and Communications Director Kelsey O’Connor.

According to the National Association

of Manufacturers, the sector employs more than 225,000 Iowans and contributes \$42 billion to the state’s economy each year. “We just want to celebrate the industry and the Iowans who work hard every day and create these cool products. Sometimes it’s a whole product in itself or a portion of a greater product. These products are used in the state of Iowa, nationally and globally,” she said.

Nominations opened in early April with some 70 products submitted by the public for consideration. The competition tends to pit Iowa communities and employers against each other in friendly rivalry, Ms. O’Connor said. Manufacturers encourage their employees and residents of the towns where they are located to vote early and often to support their products.

Members of the public were invited to vote once per day for up to four favorite products in a popular round in April, followed by two March Madness-style bracket rounds in May then a final round of popular voting ended June 3.

“We’ve seen an increase in nominations and voting overall, adding to the awareness of all the products and industries that are made here,” she said. The first popular vote round grew by some 9,000 votes over last year’s figure with, more than 83,000 votes so far.

Last year, the winner was the Vermeer’s zero-turn ZR5-1200 Self-Propelled Baler manufactured in Pella. Another major ag manufacturer, John Deere, is in the running this year with its cotton picker, but Ms. O’Connor stresses that the size of the

company is not what matters.

“The perception from last year is that only the large companies make it to the final four. It’s really about how much you can get the community and employees excited. It’s the opportunity to talk about what your product does and how much it contributes to your community and Iowa in general.”

This year’s finalists range in size from the industrial giant Deere to the family-owned Moose Fireplace Grill with no employees, with the 90-employee Butter Braid® Pastries and 500-employee Viking Pump holding the middle ground.

The winner will be announced at ABI’s annual Taking Care of Business Conference on June 11 in Council Bluffs.



## Butter Braid® Pastries Country Maid – West Bend, IA

Butter Braid® Pastries are braided by hand and made with 100% real butter in the heart of Iowa. These braided pastries are bursting with sweet and savory fillings and can be topped with a sweet icing or rich dipping sauce for an extra layer of indulgence. For over 30 years, the Butter Braid® brand has “Shared the Good” with you, your family, and your community. And we continue that tradition today, bringing hand-braided pastries to your table to share with loved ones and supporting the dream chasers who are working hard to meet their goals.

- WEBSITE:** [www.countrymaid.net](http://www.countrymaid.net)
- EMPLOYEES:** 90 full-time
- DATE FOUNDED:** 1991
- FUN FACT:** Only repeat product to advance into the top 8 and now top 4



## CHC Chocolate Pump

Viking Pump – Cedar Falls, IA

With Viking Pump's patented O-Pro® Sealing Technology, you keep your product where it belongs; Inside the pump and off your floors, and one of the greatest successes has been in the Chocolate production industry. As an Iowa based company with vertically integrated manufacturing facility, we support chocolatiers all over the world, and our pumps can be found within the Hershey facilities to the Bellagio in Las Vegas pumping the chocolate in the largest chocolate fountain too!

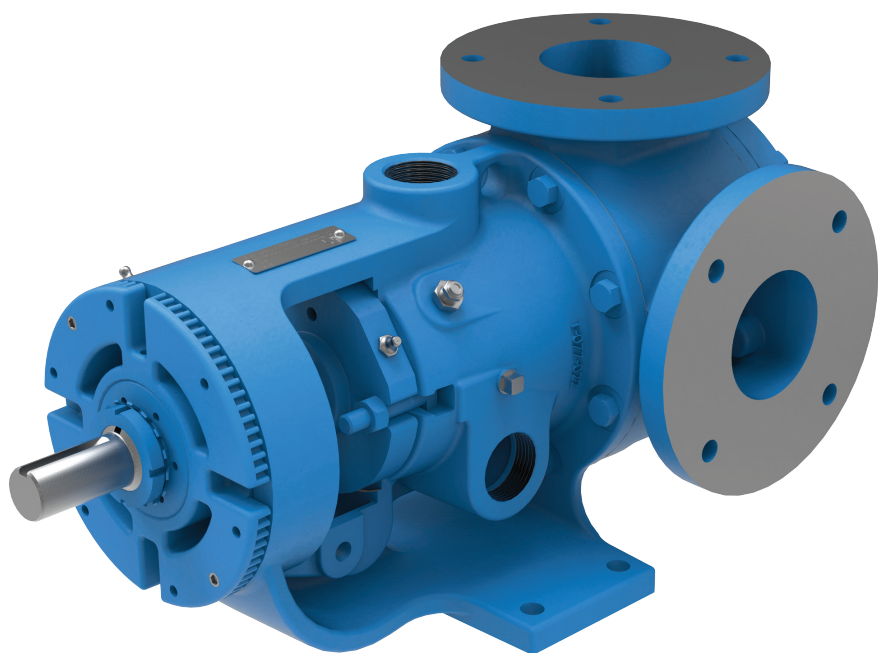
**WEBSITE:** [www.vikingpump.com/chocolate](http://www.vikingpump.com/chocolate)

**EMPLOYEES:** About 500 in Cedar Falls. A unit of IDEX Corporation, Viking has a global manufacturing, sales and service footprint in more than 200 countries and on all seven continents

**DATE FOUNDED:** 1911

**FUN FACT:** Jens Nielsen, a Danish immigrant, built and patented the first-ever rotary internal gear pump to remove water from his quarry in what is now downtown Cedar Falls. He partnered with three fellow immigrants – a machinist, a doctor and a shoe salesman to form Viking Pump Company, named after the first European explorers of North America. Source: [vikingpump.com/our-story](http://vikingpump.com/our-story)

# VIKING PUMP®



CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



[www.IADG.com](http://www.IADG.com)

## Low-Cost Financing for Business Energy Efficiency Projects



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### Eligible Borrowers:

The IADG Energy Bank is focused on making loans to businesses and industries for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects. Preference will be given to manufacturers.



Lighting



Equipment Upgrades

### MORE DETAILS:

For a program overview, related requirements, and ensure availability of funds visit:

[IADG.com/EnergyBank](http://IADG.com/EnergyBank)

**Contact:**  
**Bruce Nuzum**  
**800-888-4743**





CP770 Cotton Picker

John Deere – Ankeny, IA

The John Deere CP770 cotton picker is designed for exceptional efficiency and performance in cotton harvesting. Capable of continuous harvesting at over 11 acres per hour, it greatly enhances productivity while reducing costs, minimizing losses, and maintaining crop quality. The CP770 features advanced technology such as AutoTrac guidance, automated crop handling system, real-time crop moisture sensing, module weight, and row-by-row yield documentation, enabling operators to make informed decisions. Furthermore, its integration with the Harvest Identification Cotton Pro system ensures complete crop traceability from field to fashion. This cotton picker has provided remarkable capabilities for cotton customers worldwide.

EMPLOYEES: 30,000 in the U.S.

DATE FOUNDED: 1837

WEBSITE: [www.deere.com/en](http://www.deere.com/en)

FUN FACT: The CP770 is loaded with operator comfort features and options including a roomy fridge, footrests, touchscreen radio with two speakers and a subwoofer, ActiveSeat suspension, heat-to-feet HVAC ducts and lots of USB ports. Source: [deere.com/en/harvesting/cotton/cp770-cotton-picker](http://deere.com/en/harvesting/cotton/cp770-cotton-picker)



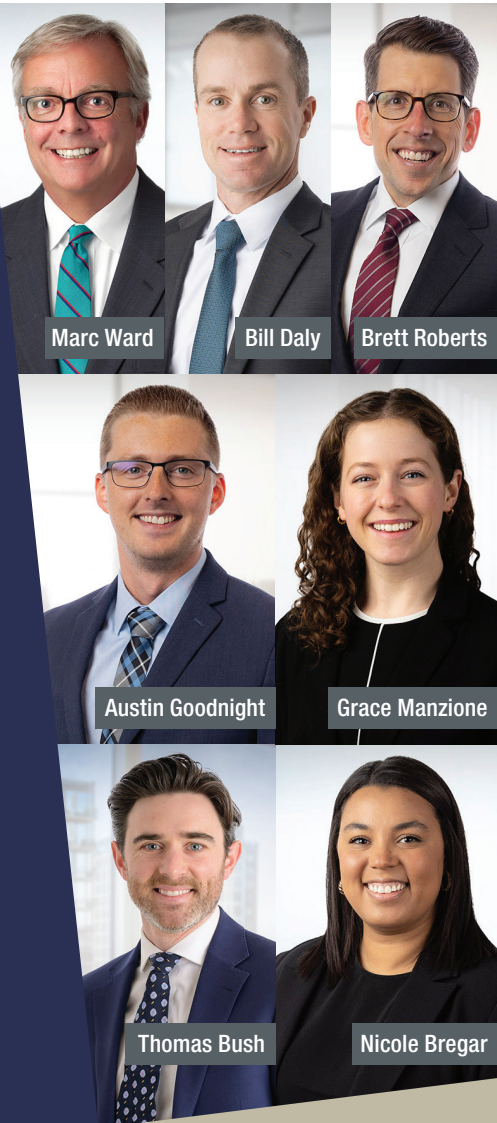
JOHN DEERE



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For the sixth consecutive year, Fredrikson is ranked nationally among the top 20 most active law firms advising on merger and acquisition and private equity deals in PitchBook’s 2024 Annual Global League Tables.

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## The Moose Fireplace Grill

The Moose Fireplace, LLC – Red Oak, IA

The Moose Fireplace Grill is a revolutionary new way to enjoy cooking, grilling, baking, tailgating, camping and a fireplace all in one. Proudly manufactured in Iowa. The Moose Fireplace Grill is for every individual who enjoys the outdoors, the smell of a campfire and the opportunity to enjoy the culinary splendor of food made on an open fire. Mark and Emily Allen work on promoting and delivering The Moose. Mark has been a full-time financial advisor with Edward Jones for 22 years. Manufacturing of The Moose is completed at Red Oak Fabrication in Red Oak. JLow Consulting handles web content and promotional content, Tim Zarley is patent attorney. Mitch Kearnes from SBDC/Iowa State University is our business advisor and Joey Norris of Dream Forge is our designer/engineer.

**WEBSITE:** [www.themoosefireplacegrill.com](http://www.themoosefireplacegrill.com)

**DATE FOUNDED:** 2024

**EMPLOYEES:** 0 full-time employees

**FUN FACT:** Emily is CEO of the Allen Family. "We have 5 kids, so it's busy."



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WHAT'S TRENDING:

# Increasing Your Returns in A Changing Environment

With tax season wrapping up, now is a great time to evaluate your business plans for tax incentive opportunities. In an ever-changing economic environment, the various incentive opportunities can support your business growth, development needs and ambitions. Some of the questions to ask when exploring these opportunities include:

1. Do you have any significant upcoming capital expenditures? Are you planning any new equipment purchases? Are you considering building renovations or expansions?
2. What do your hiring plans look like for the next few years? Do you needs related to your workforce? Is training an important part of your business?
3. Are you looking at growth in other states? Have you started that process? What are some needs that your growing business has?
4. Does your business conduct any Research & Development (R&D) related activities? Has anyone ever performed a review of your Fixed Assets to find potential ways to save?

Determining which incentives you may qualify for can be challenging, but if you answered yes to any of the questions above, there are likely opportunities that could help you achieve your business goals and generate cash flow for your



**Matt Carlson**  
Senior Manager  
mdcarlson@eidebailly.com  
Eide Bailly

project. Some of these could include credits, cash grants, forgivable loans/low-interest loans, training reimbursements, property tax abatements and other tools.

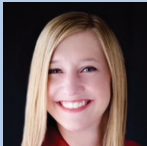
If you have interest in exploring specific opportunities that your business may qualify for, it might make sense to partner with a trusted advisor who can determine which incentives you may qualify for and how to navigate through that process. Eide Bailly can help navigate these projects from start to finish, assuring that you're using all the benefits and incentives available to your business. **ABI**



Anthologic  
**ALYSSA SAUNDERS**



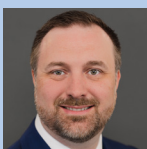
AssuredPartners  
**JACK CARRA**



Bankers Trust  
**JAYME FRY**



BCC Advisers  
**JIM NALLEY**



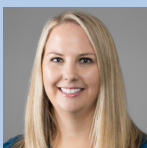
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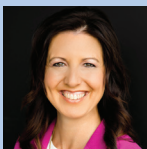
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Wells Fargo  
**CASEY CASON**



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*The Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) has been the voice of Iowa business since 1903. Its mission is to provide a strong, unified voice to business and industry on issues affecting Iowa employers. ABI is comprised of member companies representing all industries and sizes in Iowa's 99 counties. ABI members employ more than 330,000 Iowans.*

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