

BRANDON VALLEY *Journal*

PROGRESS
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Community, Pride, Team, and Dedication Lead to Growth at Marmen Energy

Marmen Energy has been part of the Brandon community for nearly 9 years and has seen so many changes in the community, industry and how they grow. The last couple of years have impacted not only local businesses and industries but everyone who lives here. Marmen has been fortunate to grow and progress in Brandon with the help of their amazing Team Members who have been dedicated to producing a high-quality product for the wind industry that Marmen is proud to be a part of.

In the energy business since 2002, Marmen is considered one of the largest manufacturers of wind towers in North America and is proud to have contributed to the growth and development of the wind industry. Marmen produces wind towers of all sizes.

Marmen expanded to Brandon in 2013 and is a family-owned company. And, while based in Canada, calling Brandon home has been a top priority. With over 240 Team Members at the Brandon location, they continue to add to their Team as contracts with partners continue to expand. The stability and opportunities Marmen Energy offers is unprecedented. They value and appreciate their people who take pride in what they do.

The job market has been greatly impacted by COVID and businesses, including manufacturers who are struggling with recruitment, materials, and projects. Marmen isn't immune to these same struggles.

"While we continue to look for new people, we are extremely grateful to those Team Members who have helped build Marmen Energy to what it is today. Progress only happens because of a great team, and we appreciate ours immensely." said Aimee Miritello, the HR Manager at Marmen Energy.

WELDING IS CRUCIAL BUT THEY DO SO MUCH MORE

Marmen is known for hiring welders, and while that is a primary position at Marmen Energy, other key roles are needed to accomplish building the huge towers you see along the interstate. The process to build the massive towers takes many hands and positions, including Cutting Table Operators, Material Handlers, Blasters, Painters, Electrical, Maintenance and NDT Inspectors, to name a few. The process and the innovation from a steel plate to a base tower that takes two large lift operators to move is fascinating.

Marmen hires people with all levels of experience and

many, new high school, or trade school graduates. The training program for newly hired staff has been developed to ensure that they feel comfortable and safe before starting a new role on the team.

FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING

Partnerships with area high schools, Career and Technical Education (CTE) School and the regional technical schools has been an important part of recruitment and building the manufacturing generation of the future. Marmen has developed more internships for students as young as 16 so they can learn early on the great opportunities of a career not only at Marmen but in the industry in general. Safety is a top priority and they welcome parents to stop in and get a tour to know their child will be safe while experience a great skill and get paid.

"We are all about wanting to help future generations find their career paths," said Leah Jaeger, Human Resources, and school liaison at the Brandon facility. *"And it's not only about financial opportunities, but about helping them find their passion and gain ample experience."*

WHY CHOOSE MARMEN?

With so many opportunities locally and regionally in business, especially manufacturing, why choose Marmen Energy in Brandon, South Dakota?

There are a lot of great companies in our region and offering great opportunities. It's up to each person on what opportunities fit them best. It is worth your time to check out the variety of production positions at Marmen Energy and here's why:

- Stability
- Family-owned
- Competitive pay-based on experience
- Get paid to learn - training if there is no prior experience
- Schedule allows for 4-5 days off in a row
- Amazing benefits - some of the best in the region
- Work with a team and company that cares and take pride in their work

Apply today!

*You have nothing to lose by checking out an opportunity at Marmen Energy that could **Energize Your Career!** Call 605-582-4500. Text MARMEN to 25000 or Go Online to www.MarmenInc.com to find out more information.*



BRANDON PLAZA



New Commercial Development in Brandon, SD

50 Acres Total Land
20 Acre Sand Bottom Lake
14 Lots (.76 – 4.8 acres)

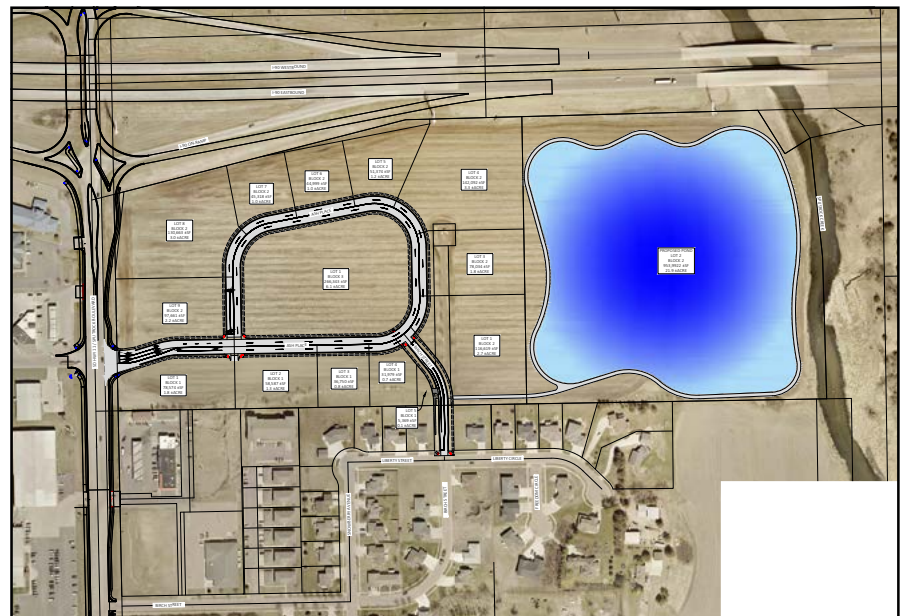
Brandon 90 Plaza will be located on the north side of Brandon at the intersection of Interstate 90 and Splitrock Boulevard/ Highway 11. Daily traffic volume is:

I-90 West of Exit 406: 25,200

I-90 East of Exit 406: 17,400

Splitrock Boulevard: 13,300

Projected 2045 Splitrock Boulevard: 23,500



**Get in touch with us to learn more about
 Brandon 90 Plaza's exciting opportunities.**

CONTACT Darrel Viereck - Developer **PHONE** 605-366-3100 **EMAIL** darrel@darrelviereck.com

You can learn more about the development on our website at www.brandon90plaza.com

Growing with Brandon

Development of Brandon 90 Plaza is four years in the making

Coming off a year of literally moving tons and tons of dirt and installing underground infrastructure, the development that runs parallel to Interstate 90 is now nearly primed for building.

And 2022 will be the year that it begins according to Darrel Viereck, who is the developer for Brandon 90 Plaza.

“We just need to pave the roads and then the building will begin,” Viereck assures. “We’re not promising anything to anybody before July 1, but if we get a spring like we had the last two years, we could maybe move up the construction timeline.”

In what is officially the first of many announcements of businesses to come, Brandon will be gaining two restaurants, a Jimmy John’s and Culvers. A medical marijuana store will also be forthcoming. MISD Property Holdings, LLC, was the first of three applicants to be drawn through a lottery process at the Jan. 10 Brandon City Council meeting. Viereck said the business will operate in its own stand-alone store.

“They’re excited, obviously, because they came in on a Tuesday and by Friday they were in,” Viereck said.

The eastside of the property has been set aside for two hotels. Viereck said feasibility studies are underway for both. A convention center and restaurant are also

being considered for one of the two hotels.

There are other businesses eyeing the development as well, Viereck said.

“People are talking. Everybody’s asking questions because we filled in a hole. We’ve proven to everybody that we are who we say we are,” he said.

Viereck has been pursuing the Brandon 90 Plaza for four years ago. After seeing visible progress this past summer, he sums up that progress as “mind-boggling fun.”

Viereck said inquiries continue to come in, and said they’ve ramped up in recent weeks with the addition of an aerial view of the property on the brandon90plaza.com website.

The ultimate goal, he said, is to attract businesses that Brandon and the surrounding area want to patronize.

“Everything that’s going to make Brandon better than it is and make people pay attention,” he said. “We’re a destination at this point, no doubt, and it’s all about giving choices to the city of Brandon, too, it really is.”

He said the property will be “memorable” by the universal lighting they plan to install throughout the development.

“Our street lights and our parking lot lights are going to be uniform, so anytime anyone drives by this property,

it’s going to glow,” he said. “I want everybody to remember when they drive by it, and if you don’t stop, you’ll remember it.”

Viereck is optimistic that further business announcements will be made in the weeks to come.

“I think we’re only a couple weeks away from this busting wide open. We have so much activity going on. We know what we want and what we want to see from the people coming in there,” he said.

Brandon 90 Plaza is planned to be constructed on nearly 50 acres of land that’s nestled along the south side of Interstate 90 and abuts Splitrock Boulevard/ Highway 11 on its western edge. Twenty-seven of those acres have been prepared for commercial development and the remaining 17 acres have been dedicated to a lake that will create a prime view for the two planned hotels and event center.

Viereck estimates the development will spur more than \$70 million in potential tax base for the city.

It’s been four years since taking the project from concept to the development’s current status.

“From day one, it just kept getting bigger and better,” Viereck said.

For potential business inquiries, contact Viereck at (605) 366-3100.





Christopher Swier, Director of Operations & Chad Hasert, CEO

Attention to customer service has been key to FlexIt's rapid growth

In just three years, FlexIt Hydraulics has grown from a staff of 15 employees to now more than 50, and by the end of 2022, they expect to have 70 employees on their Brandon payroll.

And as the manufacturer of hydraulic hose assemblies has increased its staff numbers, the facility in which the production of hydraulic hose assemblies takes place, has also more than doubled.

FlexIt began production in 15,000 square feet of space and soon expanded to 20,000 square feet. In March 2021, they gave the go-ahead for a new building, which measures 32,000 square feet, and took occupancy seven months later at 620 E. Willow St.

"It's new," said Chad Hasert, chief executive officer of FlexIt. "We got to design it the way we wanted it."

Hasert and Chris Swier, director of operations of FlexIt, believe the company's rapid growth is reflected in providing good customer service and having the right people in place.

"We've always said that whether you're getting phone calls, emails,

quoting opportunities, it's reacting. Call back right away. Don't wait a day or two. Answer the email in a timely manner. It's a full circle of building a quality product and shipping it on time, and that comes back to service," said Hasert. "The easier we can make our customer's jobs by not being late, having to expedite stuff, I think that's been part of our success. Again, it goes back to service, which keeps creating new opportunities for us with our current customers."

Swier also gives credit to the market dynamics.

"Ag and construction equipment are in demand, and there's certainly a full slate of players in the field, but I think we've done a good job of finding our niche in that, which is really high customer service and a really good quality product," adds Swier. "Most other companies are very regimented. You put in your order four weeks ahead, there's a two-week lead time and there's no changes. We try to be flexible with things like that so that customers experiencing changes in their production cycle can move us

around a little bit, too. And that is not an easy thing for any manufacturer to be flexible like that. We look at it as more of a marketing cost than a production cost."

Their production staff, both say, have bought into their customer service way of thinking.

Hasert attributes that to the long-standing working relationship he's with a large segment of the staff and treating them like "family."

"Our goal has been to keep the shifts at 15 to 20 employees. That way you keep that 'family' atmosphere and don't become a number. We all know how tight the labor market is, but if you can create that family atmosphere where everybody feels like they're part of the team and you're not just 'a number,'" Hasert said.

Of the initial 15 employees that FlexIt began operations with, only one has left, Swier said.

"He ended up completing a two-year degree in IT and moved into that field. We were happy to see him move on with his professional growth, but we've had good retention for employees that

enjoy being part of FlexIt. We've certainly struggled to get new employees, just like everybody else, but typically, once we've got somebody on board and we're past the 90 days, we do a pretty good job of retaining people," Swier said.

There's another perk that production staff will enjoy in the hot summer months. When they designed the new building, Hasert said they made sure to make the entire plant climate controlled.

"I personally don't know a lot of manufacturing companies that are climate controlled," he said.

FAST & FURIOUS

Although FlexIt began production Oct. 1, 2018, Hasert said production truly started in January 2019.

"In order for us to do business with our customer base, you have to do audits and pass them, and of course, you can't pass an audit unless you're building product," Hasert explains. "We were building product that essentially, as soon as the audit was done, we basically threw it away."

Coming off the heels of their third full year of production, Hasert describes the company's growth as "fast and furious."

"It's been a busy three years," he said. "When you look back, I would say is we were fortunate to start when we did. We had commitments from customers as long as we passed the audits. If we would've started in 2020 during COVID – because you know, everything stopped – but we had enough going already with our customers that we just kept growing."

Adds Swier, "If we would've started early 2020 and not been able to visit customers, it would've likely been detrimental."

Instead, the company grew right at 40 percent, and Hasert is

forecasting more than double that growth margin in 2022.

This "fast and furious" growth is also leading into a second location in the southeast region of the U.S.

"That area, whether it's automotive, agriculture, construction, there's been a big shift to the Carolinas, Tennessee," Hasert said.

"What traditionally existed in the Great Lakes Region has predominantly all gone to the Southeast. It's a very strong manufacturing sector there," Swier said. "Having some regional representation there is valuable to a lot of our customers. If they've got changes in their production schedule, you can react quicker. Your shipment times aren't as long, and there will be an advantage for marketing and adding more capacity, too, which could be done in a lot of different ways, but getting both the regional appeal and the additional capacity together is a good package."

Swier said FlexIt is working with graduate students at the University of South Dakota in putting together a full financial play.

"We're looking at multiple options and they're doing cost benefit analysis for each of those to help us come up with the smartest decision," Swier said.

Production at FlexIt continues around the clock. They offer three shifts: 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., 2 to 10 p.m., and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Swier said the eight-hour shifts include lunch breaks.

"Most companies, your lunch time is chunked out of your pay time.," he said.

Hasert said FlexIt's early success wouldn't have been possible without its dedicated staff and customers.

"We feel very blessed with the team that has joined us and the customers that have given us the opportunities," he said.

FLEXIT

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A FLEXIT FAMILY MEMBER SINCE OCTOBER 2018

— *Amber*

I like the working conditions. There's a lot of high-tech with it, but it's pretty fail-safe because it's a very good system.

A FLEXIT FAMILY MEMBER SINCE OCTOBER 2018

— *Kathy*

I like the people I work with and the hours, and I love how it's hands-on. There is a family atmosphere here. We all trust each other and I love it and I love this place.

A FLEXIT FAMILY MEMBER FOR 2.5 YEARS

— *Shauna*



Sioux Valley Energy gives its members more reasons to Go Electric with its 2022 program offerings.

“With changes in fossil fuel prices and concerns over that, we are dedicated to helping members find out how going electric can save them money,” said Sheila Gross, Sioux Valley Energy’s Energy Specialist in its Beneficial Electrification Department.

The Cooperative’s Beneficial Electrification Department, established in 2021, works to find solutions for members seeking to save money, take control of their electric bill, and be more energy efficient.

“We previously had several employees in several different departments, such as Electrical Wiring Services and Energy Services, each working one aspect of the member services programs,” said Vice President of Human Resources and Member Services Debra Biever. “It made sense to combine these departments and have them all working on the same team within the Beneficial Electrification Department. We felt by combining these internal resources and adding some engineering expertise into the same department, we could better serve our members by being quicker to respond to member needs and quicker to adapt and grow our member services programs.”

This gathering of Cooperative resources in one department fits well with

the definition of beneficial electrification.

“Beneficial Electrification is the use of electricity for end uses that would otherwise be fueled by fossil fuels. This not only eliminates the carbon produced locally, but takes advantage of a reliable, low-cost electric grid that is getting greener every day with the implementation of additional wind and solar generation,” said Beneficial Electrification Manager Ben Pierson.

The Co-op’s large-capacity water heater program is a prime example of beneficial electrification.

Marathon and Westinghouse/HTP large-capacity water heaters are offered to members for \$400. The water heaters are part of the Co-op’s long-standing load management program.

“With these water heaters, we can shift loads away from high-demand times. This has helped save more than \$700,000 a year in load demand charges,” said Gross. “It’s a big savings for our members and the Cooperative.”

The Cooperative also has incentives

for members planning to add electric vehicles to their households. The incentives include rebates for purchasing an EV, rebates for preparing homes for the addition of a future EV, and special rates to encourage off-peak electric charging.

“We are embracing what members want by offering rates that put the control in their hands so that members can save on their costs,” said Gross.

For members looking to upgrade or make changes to their home’s heating and cooling system, Sioux Valley Energy offers rebates for air-to-air heat pumps, geothermal heat pumps, and ductless air-source heat pumps, as well as a reduced electric heat rate.

Also in the works for 2022 is a community-based solar project planned at the Co-op’s Colman, S.D., headquarters. Details on the project, which will be available to SVE members, are being finalized.

Learn more about Sioux Valley Energy’s programs at www.siouxvalleyenergy.com/my-programs

Author: Brenda Kleinjan, Sioux Valley Energy Communications Specialist – 800-234-1960



Marathon large-capacity water heaters are offered to members for \$400. The water heaters are part of the Co-op’s long-standing load management program.

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EVS



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605-582-4000 • 907 7th Ave. • Brandon, SD

Tradition runs deep in the fire industry and Spartan Emergency Response (Spartan ER) based in Brandon, SD, has been a major contributor to that industry with over 250 years of combined experience. As a North American leader in the emergency response market, Spartan ER and its portfolio of brands, Smeal Fire Apparatus and Ladder Tower (LT), manufacture a broad range of custom pumpers, tankers, rescues, and aerials that are designed to meet fire department's needs.

Fire trucks are one of our society's oldest and most recognizable vehicles. But its look and functions have dramatically changed over the years to meet the increased demands of the job. One thing that has remained steadfast is Spartan's commitment to delivering high-quality, reliable, and safe apparatus to departments and communities around the world.

Their vast dealer network comprises coverage in 44 states in the United

States, 10 provinces and 3 territories in Canada, and multiple countries in Latin America. Fire truck design, development, manufacturing and after-the-sale support have always been at the heart of the company and continues today.

Engineering and manufacturing excellence combined with an intimate knowledge of every customer's needs has been at the heart of Spartan's success since the beginning. It's a people business through and through, and it starts with the employees and their dedication and pride in building world-class firetrucks. Every day on the job at Spartan translates into lives saved in communities all over the globe. It's an honor to serve an industry whose primary mission is to save lives and protect property.

Spartan is always seeking to expand their team of dedicated employees. Visit www.spartaner.com to learn more. Spartan operates facilities in Michigan, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and Nebraska.



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Kevin Huber, CEO

‘We’re the real deal’

Brandon’s IT Outlet is an international player in the technology industry

When it comes to the complex world of Information Technology – or IT – there’s an international player nestled in Brandon’s backyard.

Brandon native Kevin Huber recently moved his IT Outlet headquarters from Sioux Falls to the Brandon Industrial Park.

Information Technology is the use of any computers, storage, networking and other physical devices, infrastructure and processes to create, process, store, secure and exchange all forms of electronic data.

IT Outlet was formed on the northside of Sioux Falls in 2006. Huber has been there from the start, and in 2019, he and business partner Kris Robbins purchased the business before making the trek west to Brandon this year.

“We love it out here,” Huber said. “You bring a business to your hometown, and you get to support all the local businesses as well.”

Huber was quick to acknowledge that he’s proud that he was able to bring a business back to his hometown. But that wasn’t the only reason for the move.

“It’s certainly prideful, but it’s also convenient. I live in Brandon, man. It takes me a minute-and-a-half to get to work,” he said with a laugh. “I think anybody would be proud. I always wanted to have my own business and to have the ability to call my own shots. To be able to bring business out here and provide the tax dollars and set up accounts with local businesses has been great.”

But it’s not just local businesses he’s helping out. That’s certainly a big part of it, but IT Outlet is a global player in the IT market. They buy products from Dubai and Germany and are engaged in a lot of international shipping.

They most recently were hired by the country of Guam, where they set up a new

IT system for residents of the U.S. island territory in the Western Pacific.

Huber and his team were connected to the project in Guam after they were introduced at an earlier job in Houston, Texas. The job in Guam took just over a week, and the team went from South Dakota, to Hawaii, to Guam, to Tokyo.

“We took them back through Tokyo so they could get some culture and see different parts of the world,” Huber said. “I’ve hired some really great, great people to do things that I don’t have to worry about any more.”

Megan Van Holland is IT Outlet’s marketing lead specialist. She joined the company in November and had previous experience with a non-profit agency.

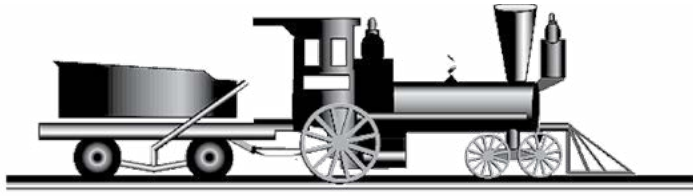
“It’s never boring and it’s a really great environment,” she said of working for Huber. “Coming to work for Kevin and the IT Outlet guys has been really nice. You’re

able to be yourself and they really care about you.”

IT Outlet prides itself on being able to work with small businesses with no dedicated on-site IT person looking for help, or a Fortune 100 company looking for ways to streamline or maximize their technology footprint.

Considering IT Outlet was a multi-million-dollar company last year, it doesn’t really matter that it’s not located in a major metro area.

“We’re all over the place,” Huber said. “But it’s funny. Nobody’s heard of us. Nobody knows what we do. But last year we’re about a \$22 million company that’s all been home grown, never marketed, never hardly did a lick of anything. We’re the real deal.”



Midwest Railcar Repair, Inc.

Midwest Railcar Repair has been a part of the Brandon community for over 20 years. In fact, it's a business that started in 1954 as a servicing facility for the Sioux Falls meatpacking plant. Relocating twice during its four decades in Sioux Falls, the business moved to its current location just north of Brandon in early 2000. The current owner Greg Carmon purchased the company in 1988 from GE and constructed the current state-of-the-art facility now home to this nationally-rec-

ognized servicing facility.

As the name suggests, repairing of railcars is their focus. Today, these railcars come from all over North America to our local business to receive inspections, interior cleaning, regulatory qualifications, conversions, alterations, painting, interior lining and damage repairs.

Repairing these 110-ton behemoths requires space, technology and the expertise that Midwest Railcar Repair brings to the industry. With a capacity for over



700 railcars on-site, their 38 specifically-designed indoor repair stations allow the skilled employees of Midwest Railcar Repair to achieve what few in the nation have the expertise to keep the nation's railcar assets on-track.

Combine those elements with a Midwestern work ethic and you have the gold standard of the industry.

Did you know they have their own full-fledged waste water treatment plant and metal fabrication shop on-site? The railcar industry is so important that even the American Welding Society has a specification specifically developed to cover the welding standards for the manufacturer and maintenance of railcars, locomotives, and their components intended for North American railroad service. An industry with calibrated flashlights, certified tape measures and nationally qualified specialists is high-tech.

With railcar technicians skilled and certified in the techniques of: ultrasonic inspection, thermography inspection, magnetic particle inspection, dye penetrant inspection, hydrostatic inspection; welding of carbon steel, stainless steel, aluminum and industrial blasting, painting, lining and tank car cleaning, they can do it all. Cleaning, repairing and maintaining railcars that haul products ranging from corn, soybeans, flour, sugar, salad oil, corn syrup, ethanol, gasoline, diesel fuel, jet fuel, crude oil and almost every-

thing in between. They perform Kosherization of railcars right here in Brandon, S.D., that allow those cars to haul Kosher products. In fact, the next time you treat yourself to M&Ms or any other Mars Candy, know that the skilled employees of Midwest Railcar Repair are maintaining the railcars hauling that delicious chocolate.

As an integral member of the South Dakota economy — with an annual payroll exceeding \$8 million — the company understands the importance of building strong communities. The company and employees donate time, materials and funds to area youth sports and community organizations. Carmon, himself, is past chair and board member for the Brandon Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, a board member for the Brandon Community Foundation, Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation and Build Dakota Scholarship program.

Midwest Railcar Repair, Inc. believes in rewarding employees for their skilled work by offering a full suite of benefits coupled with excellent wages and opportunities for advancement. Join our team today!





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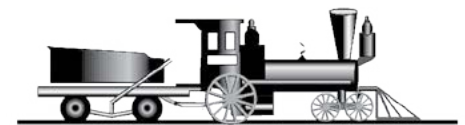
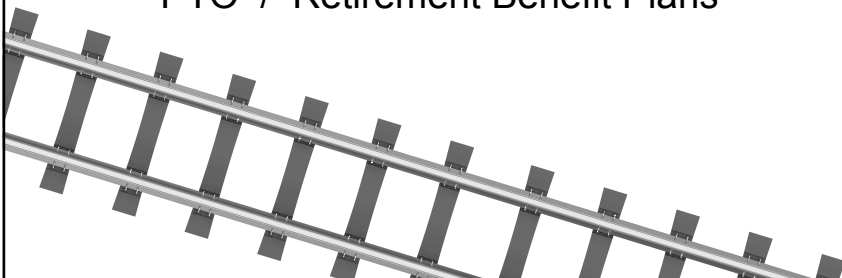
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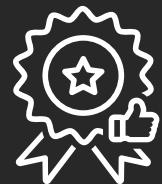


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Around the U.S. and South Dakota alike, the manufacturing industry continues to evolve at a rapid pace. With most manufacturers seeing sales climb in the past year, the challenge has become keeping up with demand. Issues like workforce shortages and supply chain challenges are lingering, so growth opportunities are becoming limited. Those challenges have uncovered how necessary it is to maximize manufacturers' current resources.

South Dakota Manufacturing and Technology Solutions (SDMTS) exists to help manufacturers within the state maximize their potential. As the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Center for South Dakota, the group has ties to both a federally-supported national network and local resources to help meet the evolving needs of the industry. The statewide team of business advisors at SDMTS strives to help manufacturers learn how to save time, reduce waste, and increase their bottom line, helping them thrive in their local communities. The group often provides services in Lean manufacturing, leadership development, automation, and quality for manufacturing companies.

The current workforce shortage has nudged many manufacturers to focus specifically on automation and leadership development within their

companies. For example, by utilizing technology to assist with repetitive tasks within a production facility, employees who once were responsible for that task are available to assist with other jobs needed on the floor. Pair the use of automation with a com-

pany learning Lean manufacturing principles like reducing wastes, and suddenly lead times start to decrease, and output starts to increase. That can all be possible without hiring additional people, which is often great news to companies in the current hiring landscape.

With employees being the foundation of company success, SDMTS also created leadership development programming dedicated to helping new supervisors. The new program has helped with retention issues for manufacturers of all sizes by giving supervisors the tools to be an asset to their employees and the company. With topics like conflict resolution, time management, delegation, goal setting, and leadership styles, participants of the program have flourished in their leadership roles.

While leadership development, automation assistance, and Lean Manufacturing education are essential pieces to helping manufacturers, they are just a portion of ways SDMTS is currently helping area manufacturers stay

competitive and grow. Manufacturers in South Dakota who believe they need help are only a phone call or email away from the assistance they need. To learn more, go to SDManufacturing.com.





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Looking back and ahead, The First National Bank embraces next generation, family business best practices

Prairie Family Business Association

A bank doesn't reach 136 years old without learning to evolve, transition and plan for the future.

So, it's probably not surprising that the Baker family of The First National Bank in Sioux Falls became early members of the state's first and only association dedicated specifically to supporting family businesses.

"From very early in our history, the Baker family has been engaged and involved in connecting with and supporting other family businesses while working on positioning their own for decades of continued success," said Stephanie Larscheid, executive director of the Prairie Family Business Association.

First chartered in 1885 as Minnehaha National Bank, the bank's fourth- and fifth-generation members recently reflected with us on how they're continuing to evolve and strengthen the culture behind their success.

What are some of your early memories of the original Sons of Bosses group, now Prairie Family Business Association? How did you get connected to it?

Bill Baker: As the oldest of the fourth generation, I was the first to get involved after my father brought the group to my attention. By then — about 1985 — the founders had updated the brand, so we were the South Dakota Family Business Council instead of the Sons of Bosses.

It was an all-volunteer group, and activities revolved around regular board meetings and programs for the membership. My earliest memory is of attending a board meeting at Howalt-McDowell, hosted by Jeff Scherschligt, who was the group's president at the time.

What were those early sessions like?

Bill Baker: Early programs tended to focus on member "spotlights," usually a tour of a member's family business, coupled with a dinner at a local restaurant or one of the country clubs. Attorneys, CPAs and other estate-planning professionals were frequent dinner presenters on the legal and tax aspects of successfully transitioning the ownership of your family business.

The art and science of family business transitions was, however, still in its infancy, and established speakers on the important topic of generational leadership (as opposed to ownership) transitioning were harder to find. During election season, we hosted candidate debates amongst gubernatorial or statewide candidates for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. SDFBC also had a healthy social component, with annual summer and holiday season parties. We were a young group of about 50- to 60-member family businesses, about half of which were active.

In the years that followed, have you continually been part of the family business organization as it evolved? Over the years, what value have you found in connecting to it?

Bill Baker: Thankfully, in about 1990, the USD School of Business received a major private grant to promote the vitality of family business across the state. I received a call from Dean Jerry Johnson, who invited me to meet Tim Habbershon, who would become the first paid professional to lead the group. I think Tim was in a doctorate business program at USD at the time, with degrees in counseling and divinity already to his credit. Tim proved to be a perfect pick to transition the SDFBC from a local Sioux Falls-area all-volunteer group to a professionally led statewide organization.

Membership swelled to over 100. We became the South Dakota Family Business Initiative, operating as a major-grant funded outreach initiative under the USD School of Business umbrella. Given his background, Tim focused not on the legal/tax/accounting aspects of family business transitions, but rather on the family dynamic and leadership aspects — a focus that was missing in earlier SDFBC programming.

Two years ago, Bill Baker officially transitioned the CEO role to a nonfamily member, Chris Ekstrum, after a very intentional transition. Looking back, are there things you did that helped or anything you did that you might do differently if you could go back?

Bill Baker: Yes, Chris and I took a very intentional approach to the transition, starting with Chris' election by the board to the FNB presidency in August 2016, well before my announced retirement date on Dec. 31, 2019, and leaning heavily on our extraordinary corps of outside independent FNB board members.

We also enlisted the guidance of a Minneapolis-based leadership consulting firm experienced in bringing structure to organizational transitions. I highly recommend to family businesses anticipating leadership transition to get experienced, competent outside help. Chris is doing a wonderful job! I wouldn't change a thing.

Chris Ekstrum: I can't think of anything I would do differently. One of the best decisions we made was to engage a third-party consulting group to help us navigate the transition. I highly recommend a competent consultant to help manage a leadership transition; having an experienced guide can be invaluable.

Other members of the Baker family continue to evolve their roles within the family business. How does that look today?

Bob Baker: I have transitioned out of business banking and now serve as senior vice president and director of corporate affairs. I am a member of the bank's executive team and focus my time within the bank's holding company, Minnehaha



Chris Ekstrum, President & CEO and Bill Baker, Chairman & CEO

Banshares Inc.; the bank's main real estate holding company, Minnehaha Properties Inc.; and overseeing the bank's charitable work. We also have a family business partner, the Kuehn family, that continues to be involved in the business. While they no longer have family members involved in the day-to-day operations of the bank, they remain active as shareholders, with Kristina Kuehn and Andrea Kuehn serving on the bank's holding

company board of directors.

Maggie Groteluschen: I am managing the personal wealth division of our wealth management department. My team works with clients to ensure their individual wealth accumulation and financial objectives are being met. Our services include financial and retirement planning, investing, personal trust administration and estate settlement. I continue to attend the Prairie Family Business Association annual conference and have enjoyed the opportunity to network and learn from other families.

Your family utilizes a family council in assisting with your governance. How is that structured, and why is it effective for you?

Bob Baker: We have just started the process of forming a Family Ownership Council within the last two years. The FOC has a balanced representation of nonemployee family members from each family line. The FOC has helped to set agendas for annual family meetings as well as help to select new family business consultants to help perpetuate the family legacy.

The median age of your fifth generation is 19, so what are you doing to help integrate them into the business? How are you handling their interest in working there, if they have it? Or how would you describe the potential for a sixth generation to enter the business?

Maggie Groteluschen: For those a little older in G5, we have been keeping them apprised of FNB happenings via a quarterly shareholder connections newsletter where we share news relating to teammate milestones — promotions, years of service, retirements, etc. — bank volunteering events and well-being initiatives, charitable contributions the bank is making, our current building renovation project and any other info they may find interesting. We have also brought some of our G5 college students in for job-shadowing days and summer internships so they can get a feel for the culture of the bank and learn about different career paths available here. One of my fondest memories was a job shadow day my dad (Bill) lined up for me while I was in college where I met with women in leadership roles all across the organization. It

was an awesome way for me to get an idea of the different opportunities available should I choose to pursue a career at FNB, which I ultimately did.

Culture has always been at the forefront of FNB as an organization. How are you helping nurture that in your up-and-coming family leaders?

Stephanie Gongopoulos: Over time, the values of the Baker and Kuehn families have become the values of the business. The bank's culture revolves around those values which we call our FIRST Values:

- F – Family
- I – Independence and Innovation
- R – Relationships
- S – Stewardship
- T – Teamwork

We have been engaging the next generation by focusing on our values. For example, some of the fifth-generation family members don't know each other that well due to age and geographical differences, so we decided to work on the Family, Relationships and Stewardship values by giving each fifth-generation family member \$100 to donate to a charitable cause of their choice. The only caveat was that they had to share with the group where they donated the money and why that cause was important to them. It was a fun way for them to build relationships with one another as they researched charitable causes and experienced stewardship first hand.

What has 2021 been like from the bank's standpoint? What have been some of the highlights, and what are you anticipating will be key in the coming year?

Chris Ekstrum: 2020 and 2021 seem like they blended. Of course, our construction project has created logistical obstacles for our teammates, but everyone has been understanding, and we are all excited about our new work environment.

For the most part, our economy is strong, and our customers are doing well. All of our business lines enjoyed an excellent year in 2021. A sign of our local prosperity is the significant growth in our wealth management department. Additionally, improved agricultural commodity prices are helping our producers and the businesses and communities that serve the agricultural industry. While most companies are doing well, workforce scarcity and supply chain issues are causing stress for many businesses. That said, the positives far outpace the challenges for Sioux Falls and surrounding communities. I am very optimistic about 2022.

What would you say to other families considering connecting with the Prairie Family Business Association?

Bob Baker: The PFBA is a great way to meet other family businesses from across the Upper Midwest. No matter your size or if you're a second-generation or fifth-generation business, we all run into similar ownership situations and dynamics, and we can learn from each other.



F I R S T

values

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Independence & Innovation

Relationships

Stewardship

Teamwork

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