

# EAGA Business Builder

November 10, 2020

## Today's speaker was Roger Linn—i9 Sports



Mr. Linn (and wife Jamie) are the owners of i9 Sports franchises in Albuquerque and in California. "i9 SPORTS® is the nation's largest multi-sport provider focused solely on high-quality, community-based youth sports program." That is presuming a 'normal' world. In the current atmosphere of a pandemic functioning existence, they are actually a scheduling, rescheduling, financial juggling, do anything you can to safely get the kids a bit of sane sports related activities—kind of operation. During his presentation today, Roger noted a couple of visuals that he intended to show, had there been projection equipment available (that is how his world has been going these days). One of the graphics would have been a picture of Marty and Doc from Back To The Future. Marty is saying: "Doc. Whatever you do, don't go to the year 2020". This year has definitely been a crappy nightmare type of year for Roger's operations. His business, and the i9 Sports activities, have been affected more than most by the ebb and flow, and actually falling off the cliff, sets of restrictions, concerns and everything else related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Early in 2020, Roger's youth programs were doing quite well. Their first quarter activities were on a record pace. Best in their 9 year history. Registrations were highest ever in both New Mexico and California. About 2,200 kids were registered in Albuquerque. All the equipment had been purchased. The locations were pretty much set. Teams had been formed, coaches were assigned and training was about finished. Everything was set for the upcoming spring sports season. But...in March, one week before i9 season was to begin, a pandemic got in the way. And it got in the way big-time. Schools were closed. Governmental mandates, and general concern for what was, at that time, a very unknown situation, closed businesses and restricted all sorts of social activities. In an amazingly short blink of an eye, the spring sports season was entirely shut down. No events; no practices; and actually, no team oriented activities at all. In addition to the halt in their season, i9 was next deluged by parents that, understandably, wanted to know when they were going to get a refund. Also understandably, the funds were not available for refund. All the aforementioned plans, purchases and general preparation had used up the registration fees. The i9 Registration Agreement explains that would be the situation, and Roger's group provided a full season credit (that was good for two years) in place of a refund. That, however was not necessarily an agreeable situation for some parents, so the next hassle was to file all the various explanations, documents and required forms to mitigate the credit card charge-backs that began appearing in the i9 account. Then there were the 'residual costs' that began hitting the bottom line. The i9 national franchise coordination program was answering the calls from parents and other interested parties, then relaying them to the local entities. The cost for that 'service' was \$0.89 per minute. The 'usual' cost of about \$200 per month, ballooned into \$2,000 during the pandemic. Roger was finally able to figure out how to reroute the phone activity to minimize the middleman and get the cost back down—somewhat. It wasn't until June that New Mexico finally allowed some youth activities to resume (California was still closed entirely). Mr. Linn's organization had 221 registrants for those second quarter activities, as compared to 1,500 the prior year. Similar decreases have also been experienced in quarter three (422 registered versus 1,800 in 2019) and quarter four (127 versus 1,025 last year). Even though some participation was allowed, the operation just became a week to week sort of adventure with developing teams, verifying coaches, securing venues and becoming ready for the weekend athletic activities...just in time for the Governor's Thursday announcements that would regularly disrupt everything with different, or more strict limitations on what could happen. The allowance of 10 per team, plus a coaching staff would be changed into 5 allowed, plus 1 coach. That meant Roger and Jamie had to quickly split teams, find additional coaches and find more venues. They had to re-do the re-do. Then with the minimized team sizes, a single player becoming unavailable caused more disruption in planned events or training. There couldn't really be any games with so few on a team. Social distancing requirements eliminated the ability to have part of a field used for practice while the other part was used for the actual event. Everyone had to completely vacate a venue and everything had to be cleaned and sanitized before the next group could be allowed in. Actually accomplishing the goal of having a place for the kids to play became more and more unrecognizable. There could not be any tournaments, or even very effective games. Roger's group decided to schedule sort of 'field days' where the kids could participate in something. There were sack races, and other 'out of the ordinary' events for them to at least get a bit of fun. But it is not over yet. The annual fund raising golf tournament also had to be cancelled, so there goes that unrecoverable revenue loss. Maybe January will start things heading back in the right direction. It is currently projected that schools will re-open at that time....But don't get too optimistic. The pandemic appears to be on the rise, and the governor is scheduled to speak again this coming Friday (after she already proclaimed that November is down the tubes. Initially it was thought that i9 stood for 9 key differences to their approach to youth sports (imaginative, innovative, interactive, integrity-driven, impassioned, inspirational, instructional, insightful and inclusive. After all that has happened this year, perhaps the "9" may actually be used to construe a similarity to a cat's nine lives, of starting over again and again after severe setbacks. Or maybe the "9" is just a visual reference to the German word for "No" - you can't do that; or that ; or that either. If you want to contact Roger to find out more about how they are surviving, what are their current (this week at least) plans, or how to get someone involved in their program, give him a call at 505-209-2000. If you want to add your name to their "Let New Mexico Kids Play Games" petition that they intend to send to Governor Lujan Grisham, you can find that at <https://bit.ly/3nU9BZk>.

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◆ **Notes from Executive Director, Mario Hernandez:**

1. There will not be a holiday party this year.

2. Board elections will take place on Dec 8. There is 1 board position available. If you are interested, or if you would like to nominate someone, please contact Steve Douglas- The Printing Guy (steve@theprintingguynm.com)

◆ Because of the Governor's new orders that restrict indoor dining, and travel in general, our meeting on November 17th will be via the virtual format. The link is:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/940475581>

You can also dial in using your phone. Call (646) 749-3112 Access Code: 940-475-581

◆ There will not be meetings on November 24th, December 22nd and December 29th to allow for celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Day holidays.

◆ We will have meetings on December 1st, December 8th and December 15th, however the format (virtual or in person) has yet to be determined. Additional details will be provided as soon as more information is available.

◆ Upcoming speakers:	Nov 17th	John Mead—John Thomas Jewelers
	Nov 24th	<b>No Meeting</b> Thanksgiving Holiday
	Dec 1st	Michael Predika—Black Briar
	Dec 8th	Gregg Zanetti—Guest Speaker
	Dec 15th	Tom McMahon—Fenix Corp (The Premium Shopping Guide)
	Dec 22nd	<b>No Meeting</b> Christmas Holiday
	Dec 29th	<b>No Meeting</b> New Years Day Holiday

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