

EAGA Business Builder

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Today's speaker was Bob Rundle—Kolache Factory



Mr. Rundle arrived in Albuquerque early in this century as a fugitive of Houston, Texas. He had called that neighboring state 'home' for about 25 years, but was ready for a change. Bob said that he doesn't really miss much about where he used to live. Not the weather; not the traffic; not most everything else; but he did miss the kolaches that are readily available all around Texas. Hint: a kolache is a tasty bakery treat, but more about those in a minute. Mr. Rundle arrived in our state as a software engineer, working primarily for businesses in the oil industry. ('Software engineer' is not just a classy name for the standard run of the mill computer programmer - if there are any of those. It's more than that. A software engineer "is a branch of computer science that deals with the design, implementation, and maintenance of complex computer programs" ¹). When he came to Albuquerque in 2004, Mr. Rundle set up shop near UNM and, at one time, he had about 20 software engineers working there. Some were students from the UNM Computer Science Department that were acquiring on-the-job training for their future careers. At least that was Bob's intent for those folks. His experiences along those lines was the subject of part of Bob's presentation this morning. Mr. Rundle's observations are that New Mexico in general, and Albuquerque in particular, rely too much on government money. That relationship creates a market distortion in the areas of wages and of overall job satisfaction. Bob's company was paying the student workers a very competitive wage of \$14 per hour (remember that was in the market place of 15 years ago). He was also paying their tuition. Still Bob had a difficult time recruiting, and retaining, well qualified engineers. The problem was that the government money (at UNM and at the Labs) would pay the same people \$40 per hour to do work that was a sort of menial, training type of tasks that may have been beneficial on some level, but usually did not carry the same degree of personal satisfaction that comes from working in a career of generating and refining quality software, and actually seeing it benefit a particular company and industry. The government funded high wage rate was (and probably still is) the shiny object drawing a mesmerized work force away from the other 'main stream' companies and job opportunities in the area. Bob even had one of the students accuse him of 'cheating' the employees by paying such a low wage compared to what they could get if going to work at one of the government funded agencies. Of course that conversation came when the student was ready to graduate and had already obtained the free tuition and higher than standard wage that Bob had paid. Mr. Rundle is no longer in that rat race though. In 2010, he sold his software engineering company and looked for something not-software related to do. That is where those aforementioned memorable tasty treats come in. Bob missed having the ability to satisfy his appetite whenever he had a hankering to enjoy a kolache. He thought that bringing that happiness to the Albuquerque area would be a good plan. So he investigated acquiring a franchise to operate here. The application consisted of about 400 questions, including a psychological evaluation portion, and it also had a blank page where the applicant would, hopefully, have enough space to list all their prior restaurant experiences. Bob had plenty of space on the blank page since he grouped all of his prior experiences into one word... "None". Bob was approved to have the kolache franchise. At some point a few months later, Mr. Rundle asked why they would approve someone without any prior restaurant experience. The company's answer was that he actually did pretty well on the rest of the questions, particularly the psych evaluation section. All of that was rather humerus to Bob. Good software engineers have the logic and ability to read between the lines and understand the question behind the question. Certainly he was going to pass the psych evaluation. He could figure out what they were looking for. Likewise, he successfully answered most of the other questions by learning a pattern to the expected responses. In any case, Bob Rundle is now a bakery - restaurant owner. His initial business plan was to open his first shop in 2015, then proceed on to opening another one every few months until reaching the goal of five Kolache Factory stores in this area. He was immediately over the first hurdle when he did open his first Kolache Factory in a small shop near the corner of Wyoming and Paseo Del Norte. The business was going well and Bob was logging some of those previously illusive restaurant experiences, when he, and everyone else, got introduced to the coronavirus pandemic. The mandated business closings was devastating. Bob wasn't sure that he was going to make it. But converted software engineers are a determined and resourceful lot. As the restrictions are now relaxing and the customers are returning, Bob feels like he is pulling out of the very long cold spell, and just maybe his business will survive. Ever the positive thinker, Bob sees that there are some benefits to be found in coming through the darkness too. He notes, in his software engineer sort of humor, that the winter kills of the weaker critters, so as one of the survivors, he can probably expect a lot less competition -for awhile anyway. An example of that logic: Not long after the Kolache Factory opened, a man who was operating eight IHOP restaurants around Albuquerque, predicted that Mr. Rundle wouldn't survive in the bakery business. Now, after the pandemic winter is subsiding, Bob notes the karma for that man who had his prediction. So what does this baker sell? A kolache is basically a bun with a filling. The Kolache Factory currently offers about 25 varieties of breakfast and lunch items. Early morning delicacies have fruit or egg related fillings and the lunch items have more meat or vegetable type innards. All of them are quite good. Over the months of operation, Bob has discovered a few misguided folks though. Initially he was a bit irritated by someone that would intentionally go to his bakery, then question why there were not any non-bread related things for sale; or by the people that would come in and ask why he didn't have any 'healthy' items available. Bob has now realized that those people aren't going to stop coming in, and they're also not likely to develop any different way of thinking. So just have fun with it. Now when they say that his filled bread is not healthy, he asks where they heard that. The usual response is 'from the internet', and Bob lets them know that he reads things on the internet too. That is where he read that Elvis is still alive. When folks tell him that bread is bad, Bob reminds them that there are a lot of references to bread in the bible, and not any references to cranberry carrot muffins. And when preparing to feed the crowd, Jesus didn't ask them to gather the kale salad and fishes. Not likely that the Kolache Factory has gained any converts, but Bob's day is a little more fun. If you have not yet had the kolache experience, what the heck are you waiting for? Bob and his team offer the fresh treats every day from 6:00am until about 2:00pm. If you would like to hear a detailed history of the kolache, or you want to know what else he may have read on the internet, or when we can see those other four stores opening, give Bob a call at 505-856-3430. You may be able to place a pick-up order via that number as well. But really, the best way to get a kolache is by going to the shop during the early hours. That is when you will not only acquire one of the freshest kolaches, but you can also linger a bit to soak in the wonderful smell of fresh baked bread. Well worth getting up a little earlier than usual, and more enjoyable than a funky looking spinach and peach smoothie.

Leads & Business Information:

None noted this week

Reciprocity:

During the meeting there were many examples of reciprocity, and that is usually the case for our Tuesday gatherings. Those comments are appreciated, and it is beneficial for the attendees to hear about experiences enjoyed by working, and doing business, with other members. Mr. Jumisko rightfully notes, that an additional, and probably much greater benefit, would be for members to regularly go to Google and issue a '5 Star Rating' whenever they have a positive experience at another member's business. Those ratings are useful in directing internet searchers to the respective businesses.

- ◆ Welcome to our newest member: Jump 4 Fun Representative: Jack Bonsignore Email: bonsignorejack@aol.com
- ◆ Board of director Members please note: The next board meeting will be right after breakfast on February 8th.
- ◆ Thank you to everyone that signed up to be a speaker or a badge board greeter. Almost all available spaces have been filled through March .
- ◆ First announcement for a prospective new member:
Rebel Road Hot Rod Garage
Representative: Jason Cody Rockwell
Category: Vintage automotive / motorcycle restoration company
Sponsor: Scott Peck

If you have any objection to this business becoming a member, or if you have information that you feel should be considered during the review process, please contact our Membership Committee Chairman, Jack Zipper (jdzipper@comcast.net or via phone at 505-259-5959) as soon as possible.

Badge Board Greeters

Feb 1 st	Bob Rundle—Kolache Factory
Feb 8 th	Philip Menicucci—Paramount Custom Cabinets
Feb 15 th	Hass Aslami—Pizza 9 Franchise System
Feb 22 nd	John Woods—Phocus Real Estate
Mar 1 st	Frank McCallister—Color New Mexico
Mar 8 th	Lance Darnell—Darnel Cable & Fasteners
Mar 15 th	Rich Rosley—A-TECH Security
Mar 22 nd	
Mar 29 th	

Upcoming Speakers

Feb 1 st	Dale Armstrong—TLC Plumbing
Feb 8 th	Guest Speaker—District Attorney, Raul Torrez
Feb 15 th	Kit Turpen—Berger Briggs Insurance
Feb 22 nd	Gary Sanchez—The Why Institute
Mar 1 st	Nestor Romero—Payroll Company
Mar 8 th	Larry Sonntag—New Mexico Business Coalition
Mar 15 th	Mark Abramson—Los Ranchos Gun Shop
Mar 22 nd	Paul Jew—Moji Studio
Mar 29 th	

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