

EAGA Business Builder

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Today's speaker was Ben Hoffman—Kinney Brick



Mr. Hoffman is a New Mexico native. He grew up in Sandia Park and attended Manzano High School where he played on the baseball team all four years and was involved in various other athletic teams as well. Next it was off to UNM for three years. Ben wasn't enthused with the prospects after finishing that degree, so rolled the "U" over to a "C" and went to CNM where he became a Certified Med Tec. But that hasn't been Ben's only non-Kinney Brick professional career. He was a waiter for two years (Ben feels everyone should work in the service industry for a bit to learn friendly social interaction and the general patience required in the industry); he was a clerk at Buckles Clothing Store (where you can still buy an already worn out looking pair of Salvage brand Havoc Slim Boot Stretch Jean for only \$104.95); and he was AT&T's top sales rep in New Mexico for four years and a member of their VP Club (top 2% nationwide). But those were all in 'the old days'. Now Ben spends his time with inventory control, payroll, electrical repair work, and other 'whatever is needed' jobs (including overseeing construction of a brand new 100,000 brick capacity kiln) at the family owned Kinney Brick Company. It sounds like Ben got his "I can do that" attitude from his parents. Ben's mother is an Oklahoma native and a nurse by profession. She is retired now, but spent most of her amazing career as an Oncology Nurse making home visits to care for children with cancer. Her work took her to foreign countries as well as other states like California and Florida. Ben's father grew up in a Minnesota farmer family, but Ben classifies his very intelligent father as a 'Mad Scientist'. The elder Mr. Hoffman actually completed qualifications for an MBA degree before he had finished his regular college degree. Then in a display of out-of-the-box wisdom and knowledge, he moved to New Mexico to manage hair cutting salons before taking a job at a company named New Mexico Clay Products. That company was established in 1928 to make bricks and other clay related items. In order to assist their employees, the company built the homes and stores that now comprise a large portion of Albuquerque's south alley. The original owner sold out in 1970 and along the way the company name was changed to Kinney Brick. Through the years, Ben's father worked his way up the ladder (or brick stairway), and in 1996 the Hoffman family purchased the business. Kinney Brick has come a long way from its 1928 origin when bricks were fired in a small coal and wood burning kiln to today's operation that uses two huge gas powered kilns (with 100,000 and 300,000 brick capacities) to manufacture more than 12 million bricks per year. Ben's presentation this morning included a brief summary and a kind of tour through how they produce their bricks. Noting that bricks are basically lumps of clay that are formed, colored and modified as needed, he started at the clay pit. Mined clay is ground into powder and stored in a silo. From there, it goes through a pug mill (has nothing to do with a flat-faced dog) where all the air is extracted and slurry, color and texture are added. The material then goes through a series of processes where it is formed into bricks. The bricks are stacked on pallets before being moved into one of the kilns to be fired. The bricks are dried by heating them to 450 degrees for four days. The bricks get so hot they glow for two days after that process. The cost of fuel is by far the biggest cost of for the operation, and the company has actually had to stop production for a few days when the cost of gas gets prohibitive. But the Hoffman ingenuity has allowed the company to save a bit of money by recycle some of the kiln heat into other uses at their facility. Kinney Brick's specialty is creating new bricks that match old bricks. There continues to be a high demand for bricks of that nature. Sometimes for repairing an existing but very old brick building; sometimes for building a new structure within a community of old buildings; and often for just creating a new facility that has the look and nostalgic nature of the old-time construction. Ben's family, and their team, have become experts in matching whatever old brick the customer comes up with. Most of the bricks manufactured at Kinney's facility here in Albuquerque are actually shipped to customers in other states. New Mexicans seem to prefer stucco type structures. But if you do have a need for some well crafted bricks, or patio pavers, you can contact Ben at 505-877-4550 and he can get you fixed up. If your need is something that Kinney Brick doesn't actually manufacture, contact Ben anyway. Their company is the distributor for nine other clay and brick manufacturers, so he can possibly get you hooked-up that way. Remember that when you are trying to contact the younger Mr. Hoffman he may be in the middle of something else at that moment. Ben noted that he and his father often take trips together (like to the National Hot Rod events; the Moto Grand Prix for motorcycles; skydiving trips, stuff like that). And Ben has other non-work related activities too. He regularly rides one of his cycles (around 200,000 miles during the past 13 years); he plays on three softball teams; has taken up Olympic Style Weight Lifting; is into building gaming computers; and most challenging—he tries to keep up with (or out of the way of) his girlfriend, Stacey. She is Marine Corp Veteran (served tours in Afghanistan and Iraq) and currently works for the DOJ. If you are interested in other rare opportunities, you can also talk to Ben about fossils found at the Hoffman's clay pit. Apparently there are regular discoveries. Ben says that the most noteworthy so far is the 6 foot Godzilla Shark fossil discovered a few years ago. It is apparently a major paleontological find. The shark was determined to be a new species, so the scientific community named it "Dracopristis hoffmanorum" (Hoffman's Dragon Shark). It's on display in the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. You may also get a glimpse of some of the cockroach fossils that intrigue foreign archeologists so much that they (the scientists) visit periodically to see any new discoveries.

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Leads, Reciprocity & Notes:

None noted this week

- ◆ Those of you that like to make fun with high-pitched, squeaky voices, or have a desire to receive a non-X-Ray stimulated medical scan may be interested in the following: On Jan. 30, 2023 a notice was posted to the Federal Register by the U.S. Geological Survey seeking public comments regarding “whether there is an increasing risk of helium-supply disruption.” This seems like a rather mundane topic, but it is actually rather important. In the 1920s there was an increasing need for helium for the blimp industry, so the Federal Helium Reserve was established. The reserve operation consists facilities for “mining” the helium in Texas and transporting it through a 500 mile pipeline to an underground storage facility in Kansas. The storage area is a unique and natural dolomite structure, a massive cave-like formation situated beneath two layers of salt that act as a cap, that enables the reserve to do what virtually no other known place in the world can do: store helium long term. At one point that reserve supplied 40% of the world’s helium. Because the operation was not tax-payer funded, it operated on revenues that it generated for itself. In 1996, congress decided that the Reserve was not cost effective and should be sold. There was a deadline of 2021 for the process to be complete, but the Bureau of Land Management delayed the sale and turned the assets of the Federal Helium Reserve over to the General Services Administration, which scheduled an auction for last year. That sale has yet to materialize. Scientists have been objecting to the sale from the beginning. According to the scientific experts, there are only a handful of significant sources of helium in the world — the U.S., Qatar, Algeria and Russia, chief among them. But due to geopolitical situations elsewhere in the world, the U.S. supply is considered the most reliable. Why does all that matter? Can’t we just blow up balloons with air if we run out of helium? There are more critical uses for helium. The Defense Department uses helium not only for missiles, but also for surveillance balloons. NASA and SpaceX need helium for liquid fuel rockets. And probably an even more important concern is that MRI machines need helium to work properly. An MRI can’t function without some 2,000 liters of ultra-cold liquid helium keeping its magnets cool enough to work and keeping an MRI’s magnetic current superconductive requires extreme cold. With a boiling point of minus 452 degrees Fahrenheit, liquid helium is the coldest element on Earth. Pumped inside an MRI magnet, helium lets the current travel resistance-free. According to Sophia Hayes, a professor of chemistry at Washington University in St. Louis and one of the nation’s leading helium experts, “For the last century, we’re the only ones who have had a container like this one for helium. It makes no sense to sell off this infrastructure.” To see the entire article “The fate of America’s largest supply of helium is up in the air”, and related sub-articles, go to <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/science-news/fate-americas-largest-supply-helium-air-rcna69309>. and <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/real-estate-services/real-property-utilization-disposal/property-sales/federal-helium-system-at-cliffside>

Badge Board Greeters

- Apr 04th Rich Rosley—ATEC Security
- Apr 11th Nestor Romero—The Payroll Company
- Apr 18th Michal Kocurek—Atmosphere Commercial Interiors
- Apr 25th
- May 2nd
- May 9th
- May 16th

Upcoming Speakers

- Apr 04th Guest Speaker—Kurt Roth - 505 Sport Venture
- Apr 11th Kit Turpen—Berger Briggs Insurance
- Apr 18th Tyler Niedermeyer—Buildology
- Apr 25th Guest Speaker—Herman Leproski - Delancey Street Foundation
- May 2nd Jack Thompson—Legacy Mortgage
- May 9th Nestor Romero—The Payroll Company
- May 16th

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