

EAGA Business Builder

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Michael Kocurek—Atmosphere Commercial Interiors

Michael was born in Spur, Texas which is just a hefty horse shoe throw from the famous Four Sixes Ranch. There are quite a few other well known people that also grew up around Spur, but for today we are only interested in Mr. Kocurek. Growing up, Michael was a member of FFA (Future Farmers of America); raised hogs, chickens, etc. but always felt as though he was a City Boy trapped in the country. After high school, Mr. Kocurek made a break for it and headed toward the city life. He went to Texas Tech University where he received a Business Degree and from there just kept on going. He didn't go alone though. At college Michael met Michelle and have now been married for 33 years. They have four children: Alexandra is a Russian Linguist in the Air Force; Addie is a Psyc student at UNM; Ben is in management with What-A-Burger; and Briana is a TA in Graduate School. Over time, Michael has worked his way into becoming a member of the other FFA group (Furniture and Files Aficionado). For the past nine years, he has been Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Atmosphere Commercial Interiors. That company has a long history of "...partnering with clients to design, furnish and deliver beautiful places to work." They provide high quality office desks, chairs, furniture, file cabinets, fixtures, flooring and all the modern amenities, in a nearly limitless variety of materials, layouts and designs to make their client's employee's workspace and customer facing areas professional, attractive, functional, efficient and enjoyable. This morning, however, Michael wanted to spend less time talking about all the specific products that his company has available and more time discussing a tangential issue that they are working through. In these post-pandemic days, Michael quite often gets the question "Is the work-from-home employee arrangement going to kill his business?". Michael and his company have done a lot of research and analysis about the subject and are pretty comfortable that the pendulum is swinging back toward a hybrid form of the arrangement where employees are allowed to work from home a day (or maybe two) but are required to be physically in the office for the rest of the work week. The work-from-home plan was actually a big thing during the economic down-turn in 2008 through 2010. and by 2013, almost all employees had returned to the physical office. The same sort of thing is happening now. During the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, a vast majority of the workforce were actually required to stay home and participate from there. Now, in late 2024, the mandates no longer exist and businesses are beginning to decrease the number of days that employees are allowed to work away from the office. Big companies like Yahoo have announced that early next year they will require staff to be completely in the office. Atmosphere Commercial Interiors has also been monitoring their dealers' activities and projections to get a feel for what the industry is projecting for the near future. A majority of those dealers indicate activity increases within the next few months. Two-thirds of the 206 Industry CEOs questioned expect business increases in the vicinity of 21% next year and most of those CEOs also predict that all employees will be working strictly from the office within the next 3 years. However, additional analysis indicates that there are advantages and disadvantages with both extremes of the scenario. In the case of complete work-from-home: Employees say they like the lack of commuting and the ability to work in their own environment. The company has the general problem of being able to monitor or manage time actually being spent on work, and they also have the more serious issue that work-from-home makes it much easier for competing businesses to poach employees. In the case of complete work in the office: It allows staff to fulfill a social need to personally interact with other humans on a regular basis and allows them to have the feeling that they are an integral part of a beneficial team. Being in the office on a regular basis does do that...but employees don't want to be required to be there every day and their attitude may not always be as good as the employers would like. From Michael's perspective, a hybrid arrangement of working from home one day a week will be the most beneficial option. Atmosphere is allowing their employees to work from home one day of the week. The employee can choose any mid-week day. Mondays and Fridays are for planning, prep and 'clean-up' so everyone has to be in-house. Michael also offered suggestions for those businesses that are having employees come back to the office. Space is always a prime commodity and some companies have already adjusted in-house configurations to accommodate storage or other requirements during the pandemic. It is probably not the best idea to now bring back employees to work into an area that has been severely pared down. A shared desk scenario will not likely be beneficial. A Steelcase survey found that to be the #1 disconnect expressed by workers. Shared desks take away the employee's feelings of 'ownership' and 'connection'. And when conserving space be aware of a couple of potential drawbacks: Open work areas can hinder productivity unless there are sound mitigation procedures and things like restrictions for speaker phone use; and you should provide specific areas for hybrid collaboration and customer interaction. High wall cubicles could give feelings of confinement and restrict needed socialization opportunities. Providing an inviting and productive work space can be beneficial for attracting and retaining good workers. Its considered to be an integral piece of employee compensation, right along with pay, benefits and other work enhancements. Even things like buying durable (though slightly higher priced) chairs with individual adjustments are benefits. Michael's team will come and do a individual 'chair fitting' for each user to show how much you care about them. You don't have to remember all these suggestions and details because they are only a small portion of what you should know for making your employees' work area (and customer facing areas) the most beneficial and impactful for your company. Just contact Michael at 505-830-7862 and he will help you with everything. If you would like to assist Michael with his success, please provide referrals for businesses that are wanting to install, improve or upgrade their office furnishings. There is no need to discuss pro football though. Michael is still a Cowboys fan. He isn't in Spur Tx anymore, but just like the old days when he walked around the farm yard—when you leave, you just can't shake some things off.

- ◆ We are very sad to note the passing of Lionel Specter. Lionel has been a long-time member of EAGA and a great personal friend to many of us. He will certainly be missed. We offer our condolences to Lionel's wife Barbara and their entire family. A graveside service for Lionel will be held at 2:00pm on Wednesday, December 4th at Fairview Cemetery, 700 Yale Blvd., SE.
- ◆ Welcome to our two newest members:
 - LD Supply Company Representative: Dan March email: dmarch@ld-supply.com Phone: (505) 247-2246
 - Schriber Designs Representative: Josh Schriber email: info@schriberdesigns.com Phone: (505) 362-0088
- ◆ Second announcement of two new member applications:
 - Rio Rancho Regional Chamber of Commerce
Representative: Jerry Schalow
Category: Chamber of Commerce
Sponsor: Laurence Saban
 - Jinja Bar & Bistro
Representative: Jarrod Taylor
Category: Polished Casual Dining
Sponsor: Dr. Nathaniel Roybal
- ◆ If you have an objection to either of these companies becoming a member, or if you have information that you feel should be considered during the review process, please contact Membership Committee Chairman, Jack Zipper (via telephone 505-259-5959 or email jdzipper@comcast.net) as soon as possible.
- ◆ See you at our next meeting on December 3rd and hopefully you are on the list for our Holiday party on December 7th.

Badge Board Greeters

Dec 3 rd	Tim Stewart— Impact Nations
Dec 10 th	
Dec 17 th	
Dec 24 th	No meeting because of the Christmas Holiday
Dec 31 st	No meeting because of the New Year Holiday
Jan 7 th	
Jan 15 th	

Scheduled Speakers

Dec 3 rd	Jack Thompson—Legacy Mortgage powered by Guild
Dec 10 th	John Rockwell—RLX, LLC
Dec 17 th	Robert Schuerman—Medical & Commercial Communications
Dec 24 th	No meeting because of the Christmas Holiday
Dec 31 st	No meeting because of the New Year Holiday
Jan 7 th	Nestor Romero— The Payroll Company
Jan 15 th	Glenn Felty—SunState Solar

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