

EAGA Business Builder

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Today's speaker was John Mead—John Thomas Jewelers



This morning, Mr. Mead spoke to us about business challenges, personal challenges and diamonds. And those all actually relate to each other. To be successful in business you have to understand, and embrace, the fact that success does not come by itself. It always comes with challenges and adversity. In order to succeed you have to endure the late night work, the public pressure and the sometimes overwhelming scrutiny of everything you do. It doesn't matter the industry, or your expertise, being a leader is different. The higher you advance, the more lonely it gets. And you will have the constant strain of knowing that decisions you make will affect the lives of employees or associates. Growth is exhausting. If you say that you want to be great, you are actually saying that you want more stress. So as you work on becoming a more successful businessman, don't forget: when you see all the pressures and challenges - you are asked for it. But you also have the satisfaction of knowing that having the biggest problems is a sign that you are 'in the game'. Mr. Mead is no stranger to challenges. He began encountering them very early in life. John showed a picture of him with his brother and sister. The photo was taken on John's fifth birthday and he was meeting his siblings for the first time. One evening just after John was born, his father had another violent drinking tirade and fell asleep in the bedroom where John's sister and brother were staying. John's mother handed John out a window to his aunt and they left the house. It was 5 years before they returned. The family was back together, but the domestic violence had not ended. Their family's situation continued to be a stressful ordeal full of uncommon challenges. John and his siblings lived in constant fear at home and endured regular ridicule from other kids when away from home (John actually didn't get a set of new clothes until he was 12 years old). At the moment the referenced picture was taken, the three youngsters were obviously quite happy, but as is always the case, no one can accurately predict the future. The successes, or failures, that one achieves depend on how they deal with their challenges. John's sister has struggled with handling life. She uses food to 'self-medicate'. She currently weighs about 300 lbs. and endures a variety of medical issues that go along with her situation. John's brother was never able to figure out how to handle the stresses and challenges that he had to endure, and at age 48 decided to give up on trying. John's method of dealing with things began with aggression. By the age of 13, he had been in and out of jail a few times. He was ready to fight anyone, anytime, anywhere and for any reason. Fortunately for him, that path crossed with the paths of a couple of influential (in a positive way) people and those encounters morphed the aggression into determination. Mr. Mead now has the mind-set of expecting challenges as he pursues his goals and he is confident that he can find a positive solution to overcoming those challenges. As an example: In 2013, John and his wife, Janelle, decided that it was important for Janelle to go back to school to finish a particular piece of education. But for that to work, they would have to find a way to compensate for the financial challenges it would cause. The Meads sold one of their cars (the one that was still requiring monthly payments). Janelle used the remaining vehicle to take the kids to school then go to her own classes. John rode his bike to work (from their home in Rio Rancho to his jewelry store in the uptown area of Albuquerque) every day. Some winter days, he was the only biker on the road...but he was going to make it work. The family's sacrifices, and the wise decisions fostered by their achievements, experience, training and determination, have paid off. John and Janelle are very successful and widely respected businesspeople in the community. Their stores' revenues have increased from \$360,000 in 2016 to just over \$6 million in 2024. John Thomas Jewelers has been recognized as the fastest growing business for three years now; it has received a "Best of Albuquerque" award for a fourth straight year; and was recently declared the "Coolest Jewelry Store" by In-Store Magazine. And that brings us to the third topic of Mr. Mead's presentation today—diamonds. John and Janelle are going to Antwerp, Belgium again in a few days. More than 80% of the world's rough diamonds pass through Antwerp so the selection and pricing that is better there than in any other diamond district in the world. The value of diamonds in Antwerp at any given time is greater than the value of gold held in Ft. Knox. By physically going to Antwerp, the Meads are able to see a very large quantity of excellent diamonds and are able to select some that are far superior in quality to any that would be available via just sourcing items located in the US. And since they will arrive in Antwerp carrying pre-orders worth more than \$129,000 (as compared a maximum of \$35,000 of other buyers that will be there), John and Janelle receive 'special treatment' for reviewing available inventory at the largest diamond dealers there. If you are (or will be soon) in the market for a quality diamond, you have to get your order to John before they leave on April 11th. John is also offering a promotion—if you buy a diamond worth \$3,000 or more, JTJ will give you the ring (gold ring, settings, etc) for free. That is a really good deal. This morning, John also told us about the huge amount of initially intimidating, but now sort of cool, security around the diamond district in Antwerp. Buying is by invitation only and Interpol verified ID is required. AK-47 carrying security people at the building entrances, behind multiple barriers of bullet-proof glass, and on the elevators. It is a very secure place. John also provided some insight to the comparison of lab grown versus earth-mined diamonds. The lab grown variety are increasing in popularity primarily because of their price and the fact that they are visually quite similar to the much more expensive earth-mined diamonds. There are actually only a couple of ways to determine a lab grown version. The most common method is to check the nitrogen content of the item. About 98.5% of earth grown diamonds accumulate nitrogen during the development process. Lab grown diamonds have no nitrogen. A caution though—that means about 1.8% of earth-grown diamonds do not contain nitrogen, so it is possible to inaccurately declare a very rare earth-mined diamond to be lab grown. If there is a question about the accuracy of the nitrogen test, it is best to have the diamond analyzed by the Gemological Institute of America. They have ways to quite accurately determine a diamond's classification. If you want to find out more about diamonds—or other kinds of gems—ask John Mead. He has the training, knowledge and experience to provide you with whatever information you need. And you can probably check with Mr. Mead if you want to get some good advice about handling some of your constant challenges (even though you realize that you've asked for them). He has trained himself to be very good at tackling even the greatest of challenges.

- ◆ Board members please note that the next meeting will be right after breakfast on April 8th. If you have any questions, please contact Mario or President Jerry.
- ◆ The EAGA golf tournament will be May 10th and that is not too far off. As of April 1st, there are 32 members and 3 guests signed up. There is room for more. The event will be held at Santa Ana Golf Course with a starting time of 1:30pm. EAGA members play for free. Guests are \$85.00. You are also welcome if you don't want to golf, but want to tag along anyway. Just sign up and note that on the sheet. You only have a couple of weeks left to get on the list. The sign-up sheet will be available at every Tuesday breakfast. John and Mario are working on being able to offer a \$25,000 Rolex as a hole-in-one prize. If you have any questions, please contact Mario or this year's event organizer John Mead (505-342-9200).
- ◆ Second announcement of a new member application:
 - Duke City Cages
 - Representative: Calvin Shrader
 - Category: Baseball and softball training facility
 - Sponsor: Terry Roberts

If you have an objection to this company becoming a member, or if you have information that you feel should be considered during the review process, please contact our Membership Committee Chairman John Menicucci (Email: jam@bergerbriggs.com or Phone: 505-379-7083) as soon as possible.
- ◆ We need Badge Board Greeters for May. The sign-up sheet is available at the badge table each Tuesday so you can sign up when you come to breakfast.

Badge Board Greeters

- Apr 08th Robert Schuerman—Medical & Commercial Communications
- Apr 15th Johnny Carroll—ABQ Headshot & Portrait
- Apr 22nd Randy Allen—Next Level
- Apr 29th Rick Shubert—Lifetime Green Coatings
- May 06th
- May 13th
- May 20th
- May 27th No Meeting—Memorial Day Holiday

Scheduled Speakers

- Apr 08th Guest Speaker from Workforce Solutions
- Apr 15th Tim Stewart—Impact Nations
- Apr 22nd Mark Tobiassen with guest UNM head football coach Jason Eck
- Apr 29th Guest Speaker—Dr. Tracy Bower—Steelcase
- May 06th Guest Speaker—Colonel David Wyrick, Deputy Commander 377th Air Base Wing, Kirtland AFB
- May 13th Jerry Schalow—Rio Rancho Regional Chamber of Commerce
- May 20th Lawrence Herrera—The Performance Ranch
- May 27th No Meeting—Memorial Day Holiday

EAGA Contact information for Executive Director: Mario Hernandez
Phone: 505-239-0259 email: eagaed@gmail.com
8100 Wyoming Blvd NE; Suite M4 #345 Albuquerque, NM 87113