



Lincoln Growth Report — inside

Midlands Business Journal

Founded 1975

"Any government big enough to give you all you want is big enough to take all you've got."

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AAA Nebraska looks to innovation for membership gains

by Richard D. Brown

At AAA Nebraska, a nonprofit organization historically known for its emergency road service network, the focus is on not only growing its membership base from about 200,000 members, but also to launch new products and services that will benefit its travel-oriented clientele.

Regional President for Nebraska/North Dakota Mark E. Grieb said AAA Nebraska's holding company, The Auto Club Group, is the second largest AAA Club in North America and through affiliates is focused on providing membership, travel, insurance and financial services offerings.

While road service for motorists is the staple by which AAA Nebraska is judged, Grieb said innovative thinking is crucial to the future growth of the organization.

"Our short-term goal is to grow our membership at least at the rate of the population growth and in doing so to increase our penetration of insurance/financial services prod-

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Regional President Mark Grieb ... Expanding offerings, such as in banking, driver education and technology tools, to retain and attract members.

(Photo by MBJ / Becky McCarville)

Investors Realty embarks on 40th year with increased staff, remodeled space

by Michelle Leach

Investors Realty is going into its 40th year with investments in people, technology and bricks and mortar, represented by the hiring of nine employees in 17 months, the rollout of an overhauled website and a remodel to its offices in Omaha.

"We're proud to be working with the children and grandchildren

of our clients, and that's certainly a measure of being successful," said Vice President Tim Kerrigan.

Founded in 1975 by Steve Farrell and Jerry Heinrichs, Investors Realty helps businesses and investors buy, lease or manage properties, taking the headaches out of the process, President R.J. Neary noted

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Vice President Tim Kerrigan, left, and President R.J. Neary ... Investments in staff and processes converge with post-recession momentum as clients seek new or expanded facilities.



From left, President and CEO Calvin Jones and owner Joseph Hodges Jr. at Aksarben Cinema ... Concentrating on services specializing in training and strategic emergency plans for clients.

Lion's Gate Security Solutions focuses growth on strategic emergency plans

by Richard D. Brown

While the four-year-old Lion's Gate Security Solutions offers a full range of security services for a variety of clients, the Omaha firm that is nearing \$750,000 in annual revenues is leveraging much of its growth strategy by specializing on helping businesses write and execute strategic emergency plans.

Lion's Gate Security Solutions, with owners both of whom

are retired Omaha police officers, now has 89 employees — 30 new positions have been created in the past year — and while most are part-time, the total number of full-time positions is nearing 15.

The firm's multi-bay headquarters, showroom and training facility is located at 5404 N. 99th St.

"Our goal is to reach \$1 mil-

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KEVIN STRATMAN 06/01/2015
INVESTORS REALTY
11301 DAVENPORT ST
OMAHA NE 68154-2629

Investors Realty embarks on 40th year with increased staff, remodeled space

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in a video developed following the selection of the firm as the Greater Omaha Chamber's January Small Business of the Month.

Sales and lease transaction value is not really an indicator of business viability, according to Neary, who noted one year values may be up, another year they may be down.

"We look at that as a trend line," he said, to its taking a longer view.

Neary noted the best indicator of its growth is client satisfaction.

"If you take care of the client, the revenue will take care of itself," he said. "We've never been one to say, 'We'll increase our sales by 10 percent.' We've never followed that. We've just watch our costs and serve our clients."

Its focus has been on a continuous improvement, via input garnered by annual and mid-term meetings to facilitate tactical and strategic conversations.

"How do we compete in the world? And basically in a business like ours, it comes down to how do you improve upon your people and processes?" Neary said.

Investors conducted a cultural survey, investing time and monies to identify ways to build better teams.

For instance, Kerrigan said conversations among professionals in designated areas (not solely companywide) found "great interest in the investment sector," with resulting partnerships among successes noted as the result of this strategic focus in the past 18 months.

In December 2012, Investors Realty reportedly employed 40 people — nine people fewer than the figure noted in early August.

"We added a new position in 2013 with Tim Langan, our chief operating officer," Neary said.

Along with JP Raynor and John Heine, Langan is one of three licensed attorneys in the firm.

Neary also noted Langan's title experience, which he said "speaks to the sophisti-

cation within our business."

The position itself was created for business development and client relationship management purposes (in addition to overseeing the property management portfolio's compliance).

Neary also highlighted the expansion of its brokerage team, with the recent addition of former summer intern and current licensed broker Ryan Kuehl.

While Neary acknowledges there are a number of "gray hairs" within the office for a company approaching four decades of operations, the majority of its team is under 40 years old.

"One of the advantages of a little larger size is we do have in-house opportunities for

Investors Realty

Phone: 402-330-8000

Address: 11301 Davenport St., Omaha 68154

Services: buy, sell, lease and manage commercial real estate on behalf of corporate, institutional and individual clients

Founded: 1975 by Steve Farrell and Jerry Heinrichs

Employees: 49

Goals: Identify other services to offer to clients with more of a consultative versus transaction-based approach.

Industry outlook: Wind at back, thanks partly to continued, attractively low interest rates, significant liquidity, need for expansion into new and/or better spaces. More buildings occupied with higher rental rates, and transactions on the brokerage side are easier to close than during the downturn.

Website: www.investorsomaha.com

Boundaries between supervisor-employee must be honored

by Marie G. McIntyre

QUESTION: Two weeks ago, my husband "Barry" unexpectedly came home from work with a large flat-screen television. He explained that one of his employees gave it to him as repayment for a loan. I was shocked, because I had no idea that Barry was lending people money.

Since we have absolutely no need for another television, I called Barry's office and asked the employee if he had any plans to pay the money back.

WORKPLACE

He became defensive and said this matter was between him and my husband. When I related this to Barry, he angrily replied that

it was none of my business.

After I expressed the opinion that loaning money to employees is inappropriate, my husband said that he considers this guy a friend. Now Barry isn't speaking to me because he felt my phone call was embarrassing. What do you think about this?

ANSWER: Two wrongs may not make a right, but sometimes they cancel each other out. If you and your hubby can acknowledge that you are both guilty of bad decision-making, perhaps you will be able to break this stalemate.

You are absolutely correct that managers should never, under any circumstances, lend money to employees. If tragic events inspire

a group collection or company fund drive, the manager can certainly contribute. But a personal loan is always out of bounds because it changes the nature of the relationship.

Your husband's fundamental misconception lies in viewing his mooching staff member as a friend. While managers should always strive to have friendly relationships with employees, supervisory responsibilities create a power differential that makes true friendship impossible.

At the same time, however, your call to Barry's office also represents a boundary violation. Although you have every right to question your husband's behavior, you do not have the right to interrogate his employees. Your concerns about this transaction should have been expressed only to Barry.

To restore household harmony, begin by apologizing for your inappropriate phone call, then suggest a mutual agreement whereby you and Barry will consult each other about future financial decisions. That simple marital courtesy should help to prevent a repeat performance.

Q: Everyone knows that our company is slowly going under. Several division heads have been ousted, and massive layoffs have occurred. But while most people are worried about losing their jobs, I would actually like to be laid off.

At my age, I could easily end this misery by taking early retirement. Yet despite the fact that many far more gifted colleagues have been dismissed, I never seem to wind up on the layoff list. Is there any way to discreetly volunteer for the next round of cuts?

A: If your skills and experience are critical to the continued operation of the business, management may be reluctant to let you go. But if not, an early retirement deal might be possible. To find out where you stand, have a confidential discussion with your human resources manager. When extensive downsizing is underway, HR usually knows who is considered expendable and who is not.

MCT Information Services

Wolf Brothers ushers in 90 years of service

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Horse Association.

"They have a big horse show every year and he manages the horse show," he said. "That's another way we tie our business in with our prospective customers."

Kirshenbaum said the typical Wolf Brothers clients are people that ride horses and ranchers.

Many customers have been buying their western wear from the store for years, and to get to know his customers' roots, Kirshenbaum has planned to visit several longtime clients throughout Nebraska this month, reaching to the Sandhills, to take a look at their ranches.

While the store carries all kinds of western apparel, boots continue on as best sellers. And as far as competition is concerned for Kirshenbaum, he said that not too many newcomers are entering the market.

"The old companies that have been in business for a long time are still taking care of the market," he said, noting the niche clientele. "They are not inexpensive boots, they're anywhere from \$79.95 to \$500."

As far as future plans go, he indicated that Wolf Brothers is concentrated on perfecting the flagship store.

"My sons are content to have one store and do it right," he said, noting that future expansion of square footage could be on the horizon.

For now, when entering the store, it's apparent it is rich with history, featuring photos of the 1975 tornado that caused extensive damage to the store.

"This store was about 2,500 square feet; after the tornado, we expanded to 7,500 square feet," Kirshenbaum said.

He also listed several celebrity customers that have come to the store, including the Sons of the Pioneers, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy, Clint Walker, Johnny Cash, Hank Williams and Patsy Cline.

When Kirshenbaum took over the store, it was located in the former Hill Hotel on South 16th Street — which attracted several cattle ranchers who stayed in the area, ultimately leading him to change the store's inventory from menswear to all western wear.

Nearly 95, Kirshenbaum only recently quit playing tennis several days a week.

In regards to the store's history with celebrities, he said the only mistake he made was in the 1950s, when he turned down a chance to see an up-and-coming musician by the name of Elvis Presley.