

Shell Lake Session Young Professional Panelists

Facilitated by:
John Will, President
Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College



RISE

Regional Insights on the Economy

A Look at Young Professionals, Talent, and Attraction in Northwest Wisconsin

Gordon Hodgett, President - Quality Tool Service, Inc. - Shell Lake, WI

Gordon Hodgett has been a growth-minded entrepreneur in the Northwest Wisconsin area for 18 years.

Gordon started by working for manufacturing companies in the area while pursuing a degree from WITC in Accounting and Finance. His Father, John Hodgett, stated Quality Tool Service, Inc. in 1998. Gordon eventually joined the team, running machines, assembling tools and dies, and helping in the office. As he continued to develop his business acumen, he began taking over the financial aspects of the company.

Gordon eventually bought the company from his father in 2010, and has since more than doubled annual sales and has blazed innovative paths into new product markets while keeping the company's core services on the cutting edge.

Always the entrepreneur, Gordon has expanded his businesses to include forays into real estate investing and capital management.

"Whether you think you can or you cannot, you are right." - Henry Ford

Daniel and Tamara Herskovic - Mayana Chocolate - Spooner, WI

Mayana Chocolate is run by husband and wife team, Daniel and Tamara Herskovic, who are as in love with chocolate as they are with each other. Daniel takes world class chocolate, adds his culinary finesse and creates the edible treasures of Mayana. Tamara brings her interior architecture schooling and event planning career to design and radiate the experience of Mayana. She fashions the chocolate packaging and custom designs and brings warm communication to all clientele.

Daniel began building a chef career in some of the top restaurants on three coasts of New York, San Francisco, and Chicago. He launched his own private catering business and later, with Tamara, began to create elaborately orchestrated dinners for Chicago's well known clientele.

After several years in the business, he decided that his catering customers would enjoy a post-dessert memento to take home. He loved the challenge that chocolate presented: difficult to temper, mercurial in texture, an living ingredient, changing character due to agriculture and processing techniques like conching.

After spending many hours of training with the great chocolate luminaries of the U.S. and France, Daniel developed truffles richly focused with inventive flavor and texture. Tamara helped Daniel adorn his creations with beautiful designs and they entered the Chicago Luxury Chocolate Salon in 2008. They went home with 7 awards that day including "Best in Salon" and "Most Gifted Chocolatier". Mayana was officially a company.

Chris Ruckdaschel - Executive Director, Hayward Area Chamber of Commerce - Hayward, WI

Chris Ruckdaschel joined the Hayward Area Chamber of Commerce (HACC) as Executive Director in September of 2015. He is responsible for directing all activities of the HACC, including marketing, economic development, advocacy, event execution, membership communications and continuing education for the HACC membership.

Prior to joining the HACC, Ruckdaschel was an Associate Director with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in Indianapolis, an Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist at the University of Iowa in Iowa City and a Human Resources Specialist for Systems Unlimited, Inc. in Iowa City.

Ruckdaschel earned a B.A. in Communications Studies at the University of Iowa and an M.B.A. from Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana.