

MIDLANDS **Business Journal**

LOCALLY OWNED SINCE 1975

February 2, 2024

Vol. 50 No.05

BY DWAIN HEBDA / PHOTO BY DEBRA S. KAPLAN



MIKE BATTERSHELL, PRESIDENT OF BERGMAN.

New Era

BATTERSHELL TAKES BERGMAN TO NEXT LEVEL

There are few things more daunting in business than taking over a longstanding firm, but that was precisely what Mike Battershell did with promotional merchandise supplier Bergman in 2017. Battershell had been on board with the promotional products company for 17 years at that point but one look at the business today reveals the new president wasn't about living solely on past merits.

"We are a 135-year-old company that has evolved many times," he said. "I think allowing your personality to come through has been a business shift in the last 10 years or so, but I also think, certainly in our business, knowing who you are so that you can take care of clients appropriately is really important. That's become more forward-facing than it probably had been in the past."

Battershell didn't throw everything to the side, but the things that did change were equally foundational.

"As I took over company leadership, we added core values that we were able to define. Among those is being passionate about relationships, something I definitely hold true," he said. "The other core value is to own it, which is simply how you live. If you say you're going to do something, you do it. If you make a mistake, you own it and if you do something great, you own it."

Battershell said he'd maintained an entrepreneurial mindset before formally stepping into the leadership role.

"The entrepreneurial spirit was always what I loved," he said. "I loved being in business, problem-solving, taking care of client needs. At the time, it came into my life where I was just ready to take the next step and fortunately, that step could be taken inside of the company that I worked for. It was a natural progression."

With the additional responsibility, however, also came more complex decisions. Three years ago Battershell joined Entrepreneurs' Organization Nebraska for the group's leadership development and the opportunity to learn from other business owners' lived experiences.

"I was looking for a way to have conversations and share time with people who were facing the similar complex decision-making that I was faced with as a small business," he said. "In my time there I've been able to experience that through the regular meetings and with my forum. They've provided me with the invaluable ability to solve problems faster and to communicate better and to be a better leader as a result."

In 2024, things haven't slowed down much, but experience and the continued support of EO have equipped Battershell with the tools needed to survive

in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

"My mantra over the last few years is 'Go fast, don't die,'" he said with a laugh. "I think that shines through exceptionally well as a business owner, the idea that you've got to move, man. At the same time, there's a balance where you've got to go fast enough but you can't die in the process."



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