

January 11, 2017

Ref: 2017 Des Moines 40 under 40 applicant: Ben Handfelt

**40 under 40 Nomination Committee:**

As President and CEO of Aureon HR I am pleased to offer an unqualified recommendation of Ben Handfelt for nomination as a member of the 2017 Forty-Under-40 class. I am in the business of employment and encounter thousands of individuals each year. My knowledge of, and experiences with Ben give me confidence in characterizing Ben as a "can-do", solution oriented, collaborative, civic minded young(er) leader of Central Iowa.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Ben over the past few years. I've had a front row seat in observing him as an instrumental partner in the rebranding of our company, a workload not to be easily overlooked. I have been impressed with his level of competence, sincere character, and commitment to the tasks at hand.

From my experience with past Forty under 40 recipients, two of whom currently represent our organization, I am confident that Ben would carry the recognition with the same commitment level to represent Central Iowa and Des Moines with pride. Ben's dedication, experience, and passion give him qualities that set him apart. Ben's career accomplishments and his civic involvement exemplify attributes consistent with Forty under 40 alum.

I am happy to speak to any committee member and elaborate on my endorsement and recommendation of Ben. My contact information is included.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel D. Duncan".

Joel D. Duncan  
President / CEO  
Aureon HR  
Joel.Duncan@aureon.com



Re: Ben Handfelt  
40 Under 40 Nomination  
Submitted by LightEdge Solutions marketing team

January 12, 2017

Ben is a consummate professional and a delight to work with. He's terrific at understanding LightEdge's goals, guides us with confidence, and tackles all obstacles that arise. He brings a great deal of creativity and curiosity to our relationship, and his advice is unique and always usable.

His professionalism and diligence have helped LightEdge build meaningful media relationships in our markets. We understand those relationships would not exist if Ben wasn't a respected voice on our behalf. His consistent and clear communications style keeps us informed, keeps projects moving, and bring new light to challenges.

He is always engaged, curious to learn, and strives to understand our objectives in order to provide the best service to LightEdge. The LightEdge marketing team very much view Ben as a trusted advisor and leader.

Not to mention that he's a diehard Cubs fan!

Tom Prosia  
SVP, Marketing and Business Development  
LightEdge Solutions

Molly Moody  
Marketing Specialist  
LightEdge Solutions

Jessica Gurney  
Senior Marketing Specialist  
LightEdge Solutions



January 10, 2017

Re: Forty Under 40 nomination for Ben Handfelt

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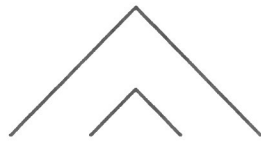
To Whom It May Concern,

I am honored to recommend Ben Handfelt for The Business Record's Forty Under 40 Class of 2017. Ben and I worked together for over seven years on over 70 film campaigns and dozens of publicity tours and events. As the lead point person for over twenty field offices across the country, his tireless work ethic certainly helped launch our films in the Midwest and bring joy to countless moviegoers. Ben is a dedicated and creative professional who approaches each campaign with a clear eye and unique vision.

Warm regards,

Debbie Goldberg

Director, Western Field Publicity and Promotions  
Fox Searchlight Pictures  
Los Angeles, CA  
[Debbie.Goldberg@fox.com](mailto:Debbie.Goldberg@fox.com)



January 12, 2017

Re: Forty Under 40 nomination for Ben Handfelt

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To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing to nominate Ben Handfelt for your Forty Under 40 Award.

I've known Ben for over 12 years and worked with him at entertainment PR agencies for nine of those years.

During that time, Ben has always stood out among his peers. His ability to manage high profile events and their associated crises while remaining calm and in control was unfailing. Given he was managing multi-million and billion dollar clients at the time, that wasn't always an easy task.

He always led by example and helped to train junior staff to give them that same confidence. He's always been incredibly creative whether it be on a promotion for a film or project, publicity pitch or even just using creative problem solving skills in an unexpected situation. His writing and ability to bring words to life are unmatched. During his time working with me at HNOW and Allied Integrated Marketing, Ben was one of my top Senior Publicists.

He always gives his all in everything he does, he finds the fun in life and his personality conveys that to others. In addition, he is an amazing husband and father to two beautiful little girls.

Ben is by no means finished with all he will accomplish during his career, but he has done a lot in his 39 years and it's for that reason I think he makes a perfect candidate for your Forty Under 40 Award.

I've watched him grow in his career and in his personal life and couldn't be happier for him.

Thank you for your time and if there is anything else you need from me please don't hesitate to reach out.

Jill Wheeler



**Jill Wheeler, Director**

**Allied Integrated Marketing**

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January 10, 2017

To: Business Record's 40 under 40 Jurist Panel

From: Mike Schreurs  
Chair, Strategic America

Re: Endorsement of Ben Handfelt's Nomination

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You certainly can't blame a young Iowan who graduates from UNI and heads to the 'big city' to prove himself and pursue his dreams. But one also needs to recognize when that young Iowan proves his worth and comes back to his home state to build his life. That's the story of Ben Handfelt, a talented young marketing professional who I am pleased to endorse for consideration to your esteemed Forty Under 40 class of 2017.

Ben joined Strategic America in the summer of 2016 after having spent a dozen years in Chicago promoting some of the entertainment industry's most powerful studios. HBO, WB, Fox and Universal, just to name a few. He organized and successfully executed media tours for celebrity talent including Will Ferrell, Quentin Tarantino, Drew Barrymore, Ben Affleck, Forrest Whitaker and others. You may have heard of a few of them. He also led the North American PR efforts for a London based market research company, Mintel, whose list of Fortune 500 companies is just as impressive as some of the big-name Hollywood types he handled.

His work with national media outlets including the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg News*, *USA Today*, *Ad Age* and *CNBC* resulted in industry honors and recognitions.

So how does Iowa compete and win back one of our sharp native sons? A great community and work environment, creative culture, and client opportunities as significant as what Ben left.

Ben serves as Strategic America's Media Relations Director and has continued delivering his major contributions for clients including Aureon, Foster Group, Catch Des Moines and others.

His strategic skills are evident in many ways beyond just PR, media relations and branding. His creative mind has made him a go-to resource within the agency, and his easy-going style belies an intensity that is always at work for SA and our clients.

For these reasons and others, I am proud to endorse Ben Handfelt for your consideration to Business Record's Forty Under 40.

Thank you.

Mike Schreurs  
Chair, Chief Strategist  
Strategic America



January 11, 2017

To: Business Record's Forty Under 40 Jurist Panel

From: Dawn Buzynski  
Executive Director of Public Relations, Strategic America

Re: Endorsement of Ben Handfelt's Nomination

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I am proud to endorse Ben Handfelt for your consideration to Business Record's Forty Under 40 Class of 2017.

Ben is an Iowa native and graduate of the University of Northern Iowa. He moved to Chicago in begin his career in marketing and public relations. Over the next decade, Ben gained substantial experience and expertise in PR strategy. Ben developed a high level of media relations and publicity acumen by managing regional promotional campaigns for many high profile theatrical films. Working with A-list talent was just another day at the office for Ben.

As much as Ben loved Chicago, he left his heart in Iowa and decided to move his family back in 2014. Ben joined the Strategic America team in September 2014 as Media Relations Director and immediately applied his Chicago savvy to advocating for Des Moines businesses on our PR roster. Those businesses have included Broadlawns Medical Center, American Equity and LightEdge Solutions. Most notable, Ben was instrumental in the brand launch of Aureon (formerly INS Family of Companies) and is currently working with the Greater Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau to refresh the Catch Des Moines brand. Clients are continually impressed with Ben's hard work and creativity and have reaped the benefits on both a local and national level.

Ben's contributions to Strategic America clients have been outstanding, and additionally I have seen firsthand how his leadership skills directly impact the growth of our PR team and the agency in general. Whether Ben is helping hone writing skills internally here at Strategic America, or providing insight and mentorship to undergraduate PR students (he served as a professional liaison for the Waldorf PRSSA chapter), Ben has helped guide and nurture future PR professionals here in Central Iowa.

We are proud to call Ben a true Iowan and he is eager to speak to how cool Des Moines really is.

Thank you,

Dawn Buzynski