

TECHNOLOGY & BUSINESS ENTREPRENEUR MAKES FREMONT COUNTY HIS HOME



Barna Kasa is not someone who can sit still for very long, if at all. His mind is always churning to identify his next entrepreneurial project. When he was a student at Ohio State University (OSU) working on a degree in computer science, he decided to buy a house and remodel it. "It took me three years," he says. "I had no money, no skills, no tools, nothing. But I figured it out, and it turned out that I was actually really good at it. Thus, every time that I would move, I would remodel the property that I purchased."

DESIANT TAKES OFF

Barna got his first taste of running his own business when he and his best friend launched KDWeb Design, a web design company. When his business partner took a full-time position with another company, he and another friend started Desiant, a website design company specializing in helping small business owners create and maintain an online presence with superior design that is functional and easy to use.

The company had offices in Columbus and Memphis. At one point, Desiant had grown to over 200 customers and 6 employees. "We determined to take the business in a different direction, and I bought him out," Barna notes. "I scaled back the business to a small group of customers so that we can focus on building web solutions for some of our other business ventures."

While running Desiant, Barna and his girlfriend moved to Memphis. Of course, the house they moved into was a remodel. "I did a remodel of both bathrooms, and the kitchen," he comments.

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**Barna Kasa, Entrepreneur,
Fremont Count, CO**

QUILTING TO PERFECTION

Barna inherited his entrepreneurial spirit from his dad, who is an engineer and relocated the family from Hungary to Ohio back in the 1980s working for a very large company with locations all over the world. Years later, he struck out on his own and formed his own business. "One of his inventions is a stitch regulator for long-arm quilting machines," Barna notes. "He scaled up the business—which is branded IntelliStitch—to over 30 units a month. These upgrades sell for thousands of dollars and are used by people who are very serious about quilting."

To take on EdgeRider Wheels, Barna moved back to Columbus. "In order to help the company scale globally, I went from selling to retailers one at a time to selling wholesale to 17 dealers," he explains. "We also assumed management of the product line for IntelliStitch, working with the management team to streamline operations and production."

At the time, Barna and his girlfriend were spending a lot of time in Colorado. "We found ourselves spending three months a year in Colorado—skiing and mountain biking," he says. "All of our different businesses were optimized, and it wasn't necessary for me to be in Ohio all of the time. We decided to buy a house in the Denver area."

In addition to IntelliStitch, he also invented a product called EdgeRider Wheels. The wheels manufactured by EdgeRider Wheels are the only ones engineered specifically for the quilting industry. In 2005, Barna's dad decided to spin EdgeRider Wheels off from IntelliStitch as a separate company and give it to Barna. "He had his hands full managing IntelliStitch and wanted me to take it on," Barna says.

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the Great Recession

Running all of his different businesses means that Barna has traveled not only the U.S. but the world. His different trips have taken him to all but one of the states in the U.S., and he has visited over 40 different countries. One of his more interesting trips took place when he visited his family in Hungary shortly after moving back to Columbus, Ohio to take over the management of IntelliStitch when his uncle entered him in a Masters Swimming competition.

"I placed second and third in the two races he entered me in," Barna says. I ended up going to the European Masters Swimming Championship, which was held in Cadiz, Spain the following year.

In addition to competing in the races, my girlfriend and I took the trip as an opportunity to see even more of Europe. We traveled all around the area for a couple months—Morocco, Portugal, and Spain. It was a great experience."

DOUBLING DOWN INVESTMENTS DURING THE GREAT RECESSION

As it was in the midst of the 2008-09 Great Recession, Barna had a wide choice of options. He settled on a condo in Lakewood. But he didn't stop at buying just one. He ended up buying six and launched KDevelopers, a company focused on investing and improving real estate and offering web-based solutions to market the real estate for sales and rental. "Because of the recession and housing crisis, the condos were in various stages of development," he says. "The windows were boarded up, all landscaping was dead, wires were hanging out of the ceilings and walls, there was water damage from leaky roofs, the HOA was broke. They were a mess."

Having fixed numerous properties before, Barna had found his new home. Over the next several years, he completely renovated all of them and worked with the HOAs to build solvency. He continued to use technology as a business enabler, developing a landlord web platform

that makes it easier for property owners to manage service calls and the renting process. It includes online rental applications, a texting system for contracts working on plumbing, electrical, and other maintenance projects, as well as webpages for property listings.

It was also during this time that his other business ventures took off. In addition to IntelliStitch, EdgeRider Wheels, and Desiant, he and business partners started several other business ventures subsumed underneath a company he launched called KasaWorks.

Included among the businesses is Puckerfish, a premium e-juice microbrewery with over 30 employees in eight retail locations in Ohio—plus, an online store. “The business has been a big success,” Barna indicates. “We are able to manufacture bold flavors to the precision of our customers’ exact specifications.” Nearly all of the technologies used to run the business were developed by Desiant—everything from the flavor-making kiosks, to the inventory management system, to HR systems, to marketing and sales systems.

Other businesses started underneath the KasaWorks brand include The Scuba Tank Rack and Custom Storage Boxes. During this time Barna further honed his manufacturing approach to make it more extensible and scalable.



GETTING OUT OF LAKEWOOD FOR FREMONT COUNTY

Barna’s long-time girlfriend worked as a raft guide and spent time in Cañon City about five years ago. “It was about five years ago when the Denver real-estate boom was really gaining momentum, and traffic and the quality of life was declining,” he remembers. “She told me that we needed to check out Fremont County. We drove down and decided to relocate.”

The choice for the couple was quite distinct. “We could remain in Lakewood stuffed into an 860 square foot condo with four-feet of storage space in the basement and driving in traffic all day, or we could relocate to Fremont County to the playground that both of us love—hiking, rock climbing, biking, skiing, and rafting,” he says. Another factor for the move was Barna’s desire to build a workshop space for his burgeoning businesses.

“We found a small house built in the 1920s that had everything we wanted, including a workshop that was double the size of the house,” he continues. “We put our remaining condos in Lakewood on the market, and we had multiple offers within a day or two. What’s more, we more than doubled our investments in them.”

"SALVAGING" A VINTAGE MOBILE HOME PARK

Through KDevelopers, Barna began to think about new real-estate investment opportunities and has made a series of acquisitions. One is a small vintage mobile-home park. “I really like mid-century modern décor, furniture, and homes,” he conveys. “There were five homes in a small park just outside of Cañon City, and I decided to buy them.”

To date, Barna has remodeled four of the five—spending upwards of \$40,000 on some of them—and rents them out on Airbnb. “I completely remodeled them to the era when they were built—down to the paneling, flooring, and furnishings,” he says. “As an Airbnb Superhost and VRBO Premier Partner, I’m getting around \$1,200 per month each for those four.” As the remaining one is rented by the son-in-law of the original owner, he has no plans for it.

THINKING "TINY" - THE INDUSTRIAL

The mobile home park, which he branded The Rosedale Vintage Mobile Home Park, was just one of several acquisitions made in Fremont County. "I've also purchased two industrial lots," he says. One is much smaller than the other one and has a creek running through it."

One of the first stops Barna made before buying anything was the city planner in Florence. "I was very impressed with the reception," he indicates. "Not only did I meet with the city planner, but he proceeded to introduce me to the city manager, chief of police, and building inspector. This is one of the reasons most of my real-estate investments have been in Florence. I bought four properties—the two industrial lots, a four-unit Victorian, and a downtown retail store."

For the two industrial lots, Barna has "tiny" plans for both. "Another entrepreneur in Florence wanted to store some shipping containers on the property, and I said, 'Sure!'," he relates. "We started playing with the idea of using them to build out tiny houses. Real estate is in high demand in Fremont County, and there simply isn't enough to accommodate everyone." Currently, Barna and his business partner have a prototype of a tiny home for the industrial park built, and they are planning to add three more—the maximum number the space can accommodate. If these prove to be a success, then they plan to develop tiny homes on the larger industrial space. "It is much larger and can accommodate 50 to 70 tiny homes," he explains. For the name of the first park,



Barna doesn't plan to come up with a name that doesn't relate to the location. "We're going to call it 'The Industrial,'" he says. "That is exactly what it is."

Just as he has done so for the mobile home park, Barna plans to leverage the technologies Desiant developed to market the rentals on Airbnb. "Our marketing technologies and consulting practices are an important foundation for the success of our real-estate ventures," he comments.

RECYCLING & SALVAGE BUSINESSES TAKE ROOT

As is always the case with Barna, he is thinking about additional businesses that he can develop to facilitate the construction of tiny houses. One is the development of a plastic recycling business that will recycle plastics into décor, furniture, and other exteriors and interiors in the tiny homes. “There is a company in The Netherlands that released their plastic-recycling technology to the public,” he says. “Using this open source system, it is possible to make all of their different machines. I’m planning to take my box truck out to Oregon, where there is a company that makes plastic recycling machines, and pick up a custom machine.”

For the 7,000 square feet downtown location in Florence, Barna is running his architectural salvage business out of it. Salvage Antique Vintage Etc. is the retail front end of Cañon City Architectural Salvage. “Contractors and homeowners typically throw away old fixtures, windows, flooring, trim, and so forth,” he comments. “We do part of the demolition to reclaim them and sell them in our antique shop in Florence.” Just as is the case with Puckerfish, the technologies used to run Salvage Antiques Vintage Etc. are those developed by Barna’s company Desiant.

For EdgeRider Wheels and IntelliStitch, Barna secured a space in the Emergent Campus. “I knew about the Emergent Campus, as my business partner for The Industrial has a space there,” he says. “For the fulfillment office of EdgeRider Wheels

and IntelliStitch, it is the perfect location. We’re very excited to be part of the campus.” He currently has three part-time people working from the Emergent Campus, and they are already significantly ahead on schedules.

Barna never approaches challenges and opportunities tentatively, and he always practices what he preaches. For his home in Cañon City, as an example, he used a reclaimed fence. “It’s a large lot, and we wanted to have it assume the nature of the architectural salvage business,” he says. Indeed, the house and grounds are designed to mirror his grandmother’s house in Hungary. “I grew up in a town about the size of Cañon City and recreated the grounds of my property to reflect that of my grandmother—down to the fruit trees,” he quips.

INVESTING IN LOCAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

Not surprisingly, Barna is quite active in the local community of Fremont County. "We have an annual car show," he says. "Historically, the car show would attract a little more than 200 cars each year. Using some of the marketing and online technologies we developed such as building a website, advertising on Facebook, and online registration, we grew it to more than 500 cars."

One of the big successes of the car show was getting Dennis Gage from My Classic Car to showcase the event.

"And naturally, when it came to where he would stay, we didn't have to look very far—he stayed in one of the mobile homes at The Rosedale Vintage Mobile Home Park," he adds. "They also were featured in the episode."

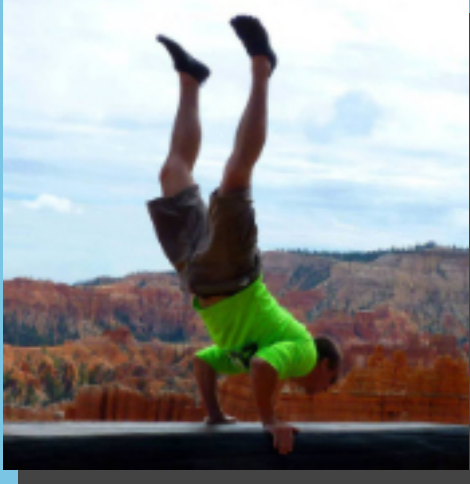
Another community project in which Barna has gotten involved is Junktique antique festival. "Previously, the show had around 10 vendors with booths," he recalls. "We leveraged our marketing resources and grew it to 120 booth spaces with over 5,000 in attendance. Many of the local restaurants and businesses reported record revenues. It was a huge success."



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ENTREPRENEURIAL "PLAYGROUND"



At this point, Barna's various business ventures in Florence are just getting interesting. "Fremont County is my home, and I want to see it succeed," he concludes. "Florence has been a great place to think outside-of-the-box, and the outcomes will help the city continue to grow and flourish." And this will certainly be the case with entrepreneurs like Barna leading the charge.

FEDC TechSTART

Fremont Economic Development Corporation is a 501(c)6 professional economic development organization focused directly on business attraction, retention and expansion in Fremont County, Colorado. With an established and growing network of business, academic and governmental partners, we directly assist companies with competitive location or expansion projects by connecting them with the right people, the appropriate resources and the most meaningful and relevant information. FEDC's TechSTART program is an award-winning tech sector co-working community, creating an innovation catalyst for rural Colorado.

FEDC TechSTART is a proud supporter of the Upper Arkansas Technology Sector Partnership, the second tech sector partnership in the state of Colorado.