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## Markets: „Sustainability as a key issue“

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**(April 2010)** It is no exaggeration to name the Marble Institute of America (MIA) the „firefighter for the worldwide stone branch“. It has proved this role in the last years when rumors appeared in the US about an alleged health danger resulting from radon emissions from granite. Since January 2010, a new president has the leadership of this 65 years old institution with nearly 2000 members, 250 of them outside the US: Brett Rugo, founder and chief executive officer of Rugo Stone LLC in Virginia and, by the way, grandson of an Italian stone carver. *BusinessStone.com* (ssS) spoke with him.

**ssS:** *Which new ideas do you plan to implement during your presidency?*

**Brett Rugo:** One of the things in my strategic plan is a real emphasis on the Marble Institute's publication of technical knowledge for the stone industry. We are having monthly bulletins about such topics. The first one was just issued. It is about stone anchor design for exterior cladding. Technical education for the stone sector is one of the key issues.

**ssS:** *What are some other themes involving technical training?*

**Brett Rugo:** We are going to touch on all kind of associated products that stone fabricators or stone installers use in their daily work. For the future, I want the Marble Institute even to be even more esteemed as a source for knowledge in respect of all the products that are used together with stone.

**ssS:** *So is it your aim to ensure a higher standard of quality for the stone industry and its products?*

**Brett Rugo:** Absolutely. Another thing we are working on in this field is expanding the list of Marble Institute accredited companies. With our accreditation program, we continue to promote the quality of our members to the construction community.

**ssS:** *One distinguishing factor of the Marble Institute lies in the fact that it is a North American Institution but nevertheless accepts foreign members. What is your aim here?*

**Brett Rugo:** We continue to increase the number of our international members. Recently, we gained 11 new such members and we are now working on 70 more. Especially for them, we launched a new website about all the issues involved in importation and exportation as this relates to the US market. That is certainly an interesting tool to attract new members from abroad.

**ssS:** *But if you strive for global members, you must surely also integrate the various cultures...*

**Brett Rugo:** The Marble Institute is very interested in enhancing the networking opportunities for the new players on the world market to interact with our members. Parallel to that, we will probably start developing standards in terms of business ethics and technical prowess for the firms that wish to import into the United States.

**ssS:** *Let us cast a glance at the US stone branch. What are your ideas relative to US-Companies?*

**Brett Rugo:** I think sustainability has to be the number one issue in the marketing

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of domestic firms. By that I mean a lot of different aspects reaching from short transportation ways or quarry restoration over water recycling to human right issues like the lack of child labor usage and other ethical standards in the production.

**ssS:** *What about the scope of products currently offered by US-Companies – is it wide enough?*

**Brett Rugo:** In many firms there is not enough diversity. As today's markets are changing very fast a successful company has to offer a wider range of products then, for instance, only slabs. In that context design is a very important topic. Here, the stone industry does have to be in a fruitful communication with the design communities to inform them that stone is an entirely 'green' and, more than this, a beautiful material.

[Marble Institute of America](#)

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**Latest news:** The Marble Institute has just started an initiative for security in handling slabs. Recently, even fatalities had been reported in the US. A group of experts from 8 US-companies was established to create new training materials. [MIA-publications about security](#)