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Change In Leadership, Direction:

Founder's Planning Provides For Central Florida Box

by Jim Curley

The turn of the last century proved to be a turning point for Central Florida Box. At that time, its President and company co-founder Tom Ramsey said that he would relinquish day-to-day responsibility at the Orlando, Florida, sheet plant, and the company continued to shift its product mix from brown box to graphics, point-of-purchase displays and fulfillment.

In the decade since, the company has transitioned to the next generation of leadership, which includes three of Tom's children, and has moved its manufacturing to Lake Mary, about 20 miles north of Orlando. Sadly, Tom Ramsey passed away in 2010, after complications from surgery.

Fortunately for the management and employees, Ramsey had decided to relinquish control of the company after heart surgery in the late 1990s. "I did a succession plan with Mitch [Klingher] and some second generation people," Tom Ramsey told fellow AICC members during a panel discussion of succession issues in 2007. "They told me I had to get the hell out of there."

"The thing that helped me tremendously was giving [the next generation] ownership," Ramsey told his audience. In the first decade of this century Ramsey moved 80 percent of ownership in Central Florida Box to his son, Jeff, daughters Alisa and Angela, and Joe Magliaro, now the company's Vice President of Operations.

The process began when Tom bought out his partner Ed Rivera. "After that, Dad decided to move much of the operation into our hands," remembers Jeff, then Central Florida Box's General Manager and now company President.

"Then he bought a motor home and left for three months," Jeff adds with a chuckle. While Tom might have enjoyed an extended vacation after he and his family gained total ownership of the company, he didn't stay retired long, as he began a new career doing philanthropic work for the local community.

This was no baptism by fire for the new managers of



Years before his death, Tom Ramsey, left, provided for the assumption of leadership to the next generation at Central Florida Box. These executives include, from Tom's left, Angela Ramsey, Alisa Hoskins, Joe Magliaro, and Jeff Ramsey.

the company in Tom's absence, however. Except for an 18-month stint when he was in his late teens, Jeff had worked for the company since its inception in 1979. "I had helped my dad put the first machine in the plant," he remembers. In addition, Magliaro had a wealth of production experience, Angela left a successful career in biochemistry to head up Central Florida Box's sales staff, and sister Alisa Hoskins who has been involved

since she graduated high school and served as the AICC Florida chapter president, recently returned to the family business to head up HR and office administration after taking several years off to raise her children.

Of her own journey to the family business, Angela says, "After college, I had very little interest in working for the company, but when Dad asked me if I wanted to join Central Florida Box, I saw it as a good opportunity."

Today, Central Florida Box's one-shift operation grosses about \$10 million in sales annually. Angela heads a sales staff of four.

AICC Aids

"In college, you 'learn how to learn,' and that has helped me pick up knowledge quickly," Angela adds. "In addition, I've taken sales training courses and gotten involved with AICC to continue to learn. Dad strongly believed in AICC, and urged each of us to take part in the Association at some level."

AICC's CEO Groups proved particularly valuable to Jeff, as he faced crucial leadership decisions. "It's the best thing that's ever happened to me in my professional career," he says. "When I started [with the group], I didn't know a 'P' from an 'L' in a P&L statement." Jeff is currently in his eleventh year in his AICC CEO group, which includes seven other boxmakers and a group leader.

"Also, after the transition, Dad kept a watchful eye on the company," Jeff adds. He attended all our board meetings and would occasionally visit with the guys in the plant. In addition, he too remained involved in AICC."

Tom also had made sure that Jeff would have the decision-making authority in the company. "I was real clear that we didn't want indecision amongst the family and the business," Jeff says. "When the rubber meets the road, you have to be able to make a decision." Jeff added that although he has voting control of the company, ownership of Central Florida Box is shared equally among the family.

"Our relationship with each other and with Jeff had remained strong," says Angela. "We are committed to supporting Jeff as we grow our company."

Growing Graphics

Central Florida Box's movement to more graphics had actually started under Tom's leadership. "We realized that nobody in the Orlando area was really good at it, and the purchase of our Automatän 4260 labeler in the mid-1990s gave us the opportunity to land several accounts," remembers Jeff. The Automatän 4260, which can apply full or spot labels up to 40 inches by 60 inches to singlewall, doublewall, or chipboard, replaced a Potdevin spot laminator.

A key piece of graphics equipment in the plant is a 66-inch by 115-inch four-color Hycorr rotary diecutter with in-line varnish, purchased in 2008. The machine gives customers maximum impact for their displays at the retail level, the boxmaker reported. The diecutter



In the past 15 years, graphics has formed a greater part of Central Florida Box's product mix.

features a Hycorr feeder, bottom print unit to reduce dust on printing surfaces, a dual blade system, vacuum transfer wheels to ensure tight registration, a sheet vacuum cleaner and Hycorr's own AutoComp, which improves diecut accuracy and increases the life of the anvil blanket.

"As we moved deeper into the display and fulfillment market, the Hycorr provided us with the increased efficiencies and work flow throughput that we needed," Angela said.



The company's Hycorr rotary die cutter is the major graphics printer.

"We had pushed our McKinley rotary diecutter to its limits," says Jeff. "We had done some modified process printing on the McKinley, we had already installed an ink kitchen, and we had the right people in place to upgrade. So we were ready for a bigger challenge. It was time to step up." The Hycorr, he added, is capable of process printing up to a 100-line screen.

Other machines at the plant include two flexos: a 66-inch by 141-inch Tecasa two-color and an older 38-inch by 80-inch S&S ZLM two-color. The company also utilizes a 64-inch Post specialty folder gluer, which can handle auto bottom cartons, four-color trays and dis-

play bases as well as regular slotted cartons, and a Marumatsu flatbed die cutter with auto-stripping.

Recovering From Recession

By 2008, Central Florida Box's CFB Display Group accounted for 60 percent of Central Florida Box's business, Jeff says. When the Great Recession hit, the company's mix tilted back towards brown box, which by 2010 accounted for 70 percent of the plant's business. "I've seen graphics coming back in recent months," Jeff says.

"We saw about a 20 percent drop in sales during the recession," Angela says. "This forced us to work hard on both our sales strategies and our production efficiencies. It's paid off since the recovery began." Still, she describes the economic recovery within the last year as "slow and cautious."

Tom's death and the economic downturn made 2010 very difficult for the Ramseys. "Our employees were exceptional in helping us through the grief we were dealing with," Angela adds. "They really stepped up."

In 2006, Central Florida Box moved to Lake Mary, where it purchased a 190,000 square-foot building. "In Orlando, we had been in three 25,000 to 30,000 square-foot buildings," Angela recalls. "The move to Lake Mary brought us to the next level of efficiency and gave us the ability to expand our display and fulfillment work." The company also found that most of its Orlando workers were able to continue at the new location, a fact that helped the move go smoothly.

With the move and its increasing graphics capabilities, Central Florida Box has positioned itself nicely in its marketplace. "Our point of purchase graphics capabilities, combined with our fulfillment expertise has widened our range beyond that of being a local supplier," Angela says. Jeff adds, "Our range is really mid-to large-size companies. We can do high-volume work with timely deliveries, as well as handle the short-run items that the big boys don't want to do."

Central Florida Box has all the capabilities that a box company focused on graphics should have. These include a three-person design staff, including two structural designers and one graphic designer, Mac computers, two CAD tables, a platemaking system and a 42-inch HP digital printer to deliver box mock-ups for quick project approval.

A Bright Future

Tom Ramsey's legacy was that, while the business was important, the family should never be overshadowed by the family business. "He often said, 'You may disagree on the business side, but that shouldn't stop you from having dinner with one another,'" Angela remembers. "I think he would have been very proud of the way we performed during the downturn in the economy."



'What Dad did when he stepped back from the business was to encourage us, and that meant a lot,' Jeff Ramsey said of his late father, Tom.

"What Dad did when he stepped back from the business to us was to encourage us, and that meant a lot," Jeff says.

Jeff Ramsey is optimistic about the recent upturn in the economy and his company's future. "In the past three months, we've gotten more business opportunities than in the previous 18 months," he says. "We've gotten more aggressive in the marketplace. With all our customers, we want to be their sole source for boxes and displays. Once we're in the door, we're going to be very difficult to move out."