

Saval's 85th Anniversary

When you think 85 years old, you might think aging, static, slowing down. But none of these words apply to Saval Foods, celebrating 85 years this October! Change, innovation, and adaptation are more appropriate adjectives to describe this family business.

The firm was started in Baltimore in 1932 by Harry and Flora Saval. Grandson and current President/CEO, Paul Saval, notes that his grandparents started out as a small niche deli distributor. "Our heritage was making corned beef and distributing products like pickles, salami, condiments, and other such items to local delicatessens." Now, it is a full-service broad line supplier of food and food-related products to restaurants, schools, caterers, and country clubs.

The company has two operating divisions, employing 285 people between them. Saval Foodservice ("SFS"), located in Howard County, Maryland, is a distributor of food and food-related products to the Mid-Atlantic restaurant trade. Deli Brands of America ("DBA"), located in Baltimore, Maryland, is a processor of delicatessen and other meat-related products. DBA has a diversified portfolio of customers, including foodservice distributors, retail supermarkets, and chain restaurants.

Challenges of growth

Paul Saval notes that one of the major challenges in the history of his family's company has been generational transfer. In 1955, Albert E. Saval, Harry and Flora's oldest son, joined the business on a permanent basis. Three other brothers, Leonard, Howard, and Murray, followed over the next decade. In the 1980s, the third generation joined the company and started to take over its management.



Jeff and Paul Saval (middle l-r) receive congratulations on Saval's 85th anniversary from Mike Gill, Secretary, Maryland Dept. of Commerce, and Allan Killeman, Howard County Executive

Now, a fourth generation has joined the company and is starting to make a difference.

Another challenge, Paul Saval notes, is building an organization that can sustain itself. That includes bringing in great talent and providing an environment that fosters personal growth and inclusive decision-making. "Jeff and I don't know it all and can't do it all, so we've brought in smart people and let them do what they do best!"

Technology transfer

Through the years, Saval Foods Corporation has embraced technology to enhance its business. "There is no downside to technology in business," Paul Saval notes. "We are in a low-margin business. We need to be very efficient because

an error is a loss. We try to minimize our errors. Technology allows greater through-put with increased accuracy and a better understanding of our transactional profitability, plus it allows better communication."

As an example, Paul Saval cites the firm's online order entry system, "My Saval." This portal allows customers to place orders online, access the product catalogue, chat with customer service, review invoice and accounts receivable history, and access product delivery timing.

The firm has also adopted ideas from other leaders in the field. "We learn from our peers. We see what things make sense and have the largest ROI and adopt these best practices to keep us competitive."



For example, he cites FedEx and UPS as the first signature capture and real-time transactional operations in the field. Saval is implementing similar proof-of-delivery systems "that allow us to capture activity in real time. Implementing proof-of-delivery and signature capture, which has drivers scanning items off the truck to the customer, will lead to real efficiency, with a positive impact on our customers as well."

SAVAL'S 85TH cont. pg 7