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Sev-Rend focuses on relationships while looking to the future

September 30, 2020

Recent years have been good for the produce packaging company Sev-Rend.

Jeff Watkin, the St. Louis-based company's director of marketing, and Art Vega, vice president of sales and marketing, recently spoke with The Produce News about the company's position and outlook for the future.

Watkin noted that Sev-Rend is meeting environmental interests with a new and expanding strong line of sustainable packaging materials. This, combined with suddenly heightened retail interest in merchandising packaged produce, substantially accelerated sales to grocers in these months of the coronavirus pandemic.

Beyond these factors, Watkin noted a more subtle, but strong, driver behind Sev-Rend's success.

Internally in the firm's modern offices and sleek manufacturing facility in Collinsville, IL, "it's like working with family. We're not a huge company but we're growing. We work very closely," said Watkin. "We've proven in the industry that what we offer works. We're trusted.

"Now, we're adding personnel and we have the capacity for more accounts," Watkin continued. "We have proven that we can be trusted. We're legit. We've used outside-the-box thinking and we've been very adaptable. It's not a canned process."

Watkin noted that Sev-Rend's packaging products are "drop-in ready." This means that the materials will suit any type of packaging machinery without expensive adjustments in the machine to suit the material.

Vega added, “We are tested and proven on customer’s machines.”

Watkin noted that Vega, who joined the firm earlier this year, came from a large competing packaging company, so he was aware of the adaptability of Sev-Rend products before joining the company.

Vega, now 49 years of age, started his produce career as a teenager buying and selling produce at the Los Angeles Produce Market. He sold his produce company when he was 22 and then developed produce sales for large foodservice distribution companies in the West.

“I consider myself a true produce guy,” said Vega, who appreciates the high character of the produce industry. He now works at Sev-Rend to develop more relationships and build on the firm’s high reputation.

Vega said many in the industry have suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic, adding urgency to the need “to be the trusted adviser for them,” he said. “We can only succeed if they succeed. We know there is competition out there, but we do care and will fight for the customers’ best interests by focusing on the details and urgency of their positions.”

He added that it’s most rewarding to work on a personal level with customers. “If we help them, they will help us. This business doesn’t need to be so hard. There are too many difficult things. I want to be an easy part of their day,” he said.

Watkin emphasized that product development goes on and this fall Sev-Rend will be expanding its sustainable packaging line with game-changing products.

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