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Baldor legend Michael Muzyk retiring

By

Keith Loria

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After 27 years in the produce industry, Michael Muzyk, Baldor Specialty Foods' longtime president, is saying goodbye.

Muzyk announced earlier this year he would be retiring at the end of 2023. Over the course of his career, he's made a huge impact on the business. Baldor had just a handful of trucks when he first started, and today it has 2,400 employees with 420 routes, serving 13,000 customers, from Maine to Virginia — much of that success coming from his leadership.

Muzyk is leaving to spend more time with his family — which includes son, Zachary, who is disabled and needs special care.

“Being a parent to a disabled child and running a company that is a 24-hour operation has been like having Baldor attached to one hip and Zachary attached to the other hip,” he said. “I’m looking forward to having a little bit of peace and enjoying retirement while I still have my health. I want to be able to spend more time with my kids, my step kids, and my beautiful wife.”

One of the things Muzyk is looking forward to in his last month in the job is one more visit to the New York Produce Show this December, where he is set to take part in the ribbon cutting to open the show, and will receive a lifetime achievement award.

“When this show first started, the Hunts Point Market was probably over 50 percent of the show, and as the show has taken off, every banner that Hunts Point sells has its own booth,” Muzyk said. “It brings quite a bit of traffic — of customers or potential customers — to New York. We were the first booth they sold, and we will always be part of it.”

Current CEO TJ Murphy and Muzyk decided that the future of Baldor would not include another president. So, rather than rely on one leader to replace the produce vet, Baldor is expanding its C-suite team, which will include a chief revenue officer, chief human resources officer, and chief innovation officer.

“If one individual came in to try and do what I’ve done — and this is not coming from an egotistical place — it would be hard,” Muzyk said. “I’ve had my fingerprint on this for 27 years. So, we chose to add some new positions.”

Seth Gottlieb joined as senior vice president of logistics, from an 11-year career at Fresh Direct, and will be responsible for inbound and outbound logistics, everything from inbound delivery from vendors to last mile to the customers. Andrew Howell joined as senior vice president of operations, where he will be responsible for operations, including warehouse management in all four distribution centers (Bronx, NY; Washington DC-area; Boston; and Philadelphia).

These hires, partnered with Baldor's exceptional legacy talent, have already accelerated business improvements and created major efficiencies in day-to-day operations and customer experience.

While he's looking forward to the time off, Muzyk doesn't consider his retirement a full break from the company.

"I'll always be available to Baldor; there are lots of relationships that just don't go away," Muzyk said. "I'll answer my phone, that's just who I am."

He knows he will miss the people who he has worked with for so long, but also knows now is the time for him to call it a career. "I've walked this building every day for 27 years, and I can stop by people's office for two minutes or 22 minutes — I'm their therapist, pastor, counselor, parent and boss," Muzyk said. "I'm proud of what we've built."

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About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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