

Plastics News

Compostable bag maker gets investment

By: **Bill Bregar**

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A veteran Canadian executive of film resin sales has made an investment in AL-Pack Enterprises Ltd., a blown film company and distributor of packaging supplies in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Frank LaRocque took a minority ownership stake in AL-Pack and became president of the company. He joins Louis LeBlanc, who co-founded AL-Pack in 1995. LeBlanc moves to CEO, as the company

celebrates its 20th anniversary in October.

The two owners plan to continue AL-Pack's growth in both distribution of packaging supplies like bubble wrap, tape and stretch wrap, and film manufacturing, focusing on food packaging, retail trash liners, industrial customers and compostable bags.

AL-Pack has a gained a reputation for compostable bags, used by homeowners to hold food scraps that go to municipal composting facilities.

"We are actually very well known for it in Canada. We make a great product," LaRocque said.

AL-Pack sold its Custom Packaging division, which designed custom foam and wood inserts for securing products.

"The company's changing a little bit. We want to focus on flexible packaging," LaRocque said.

LaRocque made a significant investment in AL-Pack on July 20.

After graduating from the University of Waterloo with a degree in chemical engineering, he joined Nova Chemicals Corp. as a film technical service representative. Most of his sales career was at resin distributor M. Holland Co., where he held positions in technical film resin sales, film product application development and most recently, film market manager.

LaRocque said his knowledge of materials and end-use markets will help AL-Pack to grow. He said AL-Pack is a solid company. Buying into a film manufacturer "takes all my experience and all my skills and puts them to work building a company," he said.

LaRocque said that, under the two partners, AL-Pack will get bigger and stay price-competitive by focusing on being lean and efficient. The strategy will be to continue growth in existing markets, and expand the portfolio through product design and development.

AL-Pack employs 55 people. LaRocque declined to say how many blown film lines the privately owned company runs.

He is excited to be on the film production side, after years of technical sales.

"I've always been a film guy, and I've been successful because I could quickly help customers by providing cost-effective solutions through proper material selection," LaRocque said. "I've probably been in 400 to 500 different film manufacturers, big and small. I've been intimately involved with a lot of them from how to reduce costs, or solving problems, or getting into new markets."

LeBlanc, a native of Moncton, began his career in sales at a large transportation company. He caught the entrepreneurial bug and branched out to get into packaging products, starting in his partner's living room.

LeBlanc saw first-hand the cost of goods damaged in shipment. "We were two guys who wanted to make a living for ourselves," he said.

AL-Pack forged close relationships with customers and suppliers, and LeBlanc made connections with financial institutions.

LaRocque said AL-Pack will invest in film manufacturing technology.

"Packaging has gotten very sophisticated. You've got to make film faster and better all the time," he said. "Everything runs faster and better, so really the companies that are growing today are companies that invested in good technology, and in proper equipment."

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