



NAMES:

Marty Kolpack and Richard Thorpe

TITLES:

Marty is president of the company, and Richard, chief executive officer

COMPANY:

ThorPack, LLC

LOCATIONS:

Marty works in Bryant, Wisconsin, and Richard in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

HOMETOWN (MARTY):

Polar, Wisconsin

TIME IN PRESENT POSITION:

15-plus years

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:

Has been in packaging supplies/equipment business for 31 years

SCHOOLING:

Northcentral Technical College

FAMILY:

Wife, Sandra; sons, Andrew and Matthew; and daughter, Alexandra

HOBBIES:

Hunting, fishing and hobby farming

INTERVIEW

MARTY KOLPACK, president, ThorPack, LLC

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common'Tater*

Offering packaging, equipment, parts and supplies, ThorPack, LLC was formed, in July 2005, by Richard Thorpe and Marty Kolpack.

"I had worked for another packaging company prior to that and decided it was time to venture out and start a new business, also selling packaging equipment and supplies," Marty, president of ThorPack, says.

"I knew the industry well, including growers, packers, distributors, brokers, manufacturers and vendors," he explains. "This is when I approached Richard Thorpe [chief executive officer of ThorPack] with my idea of forming a company."

Having retired, in early 2005, from his position as chief information officer for a U.S. division of Siemens, Thorpe welcomed the opportunity to continue applying his background and expertise.

"Richard brought a vast amount

of knowledge about setting up a structure for business strategy, computer systems, banking formats and assisting in marketing ideas," Kolpack says.

"Richard and I have complemented

Above: ThorPack's booth at the 2020 Grower Education Conference & Industry Show in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, was manned by, from left to right, Richard Thorpe, and Sandra and Marty Kolpack. Richard is the chief executive officer of ThorPack, LLC, Sandra an accountant/bookkeeper, and Marty fills the role of company president.



each other well throughout the years," he adds, "both bringing our different talents to make ThorPack a successful company and what it is today."

Richard and Marty branded the company using their surnames, with ThorPack being an amalgamation of Thorpe and Kolpack.

WITH A NAME LIKE KOLPACK ...

It is only appropriate and perhaps a foregone conclusion that, with a last name like Kolpack, Marty went into the produce packaging business.

An independent packaging supplier, ThorPack is not bound by one parts or equipment supplier or price.

The company offers netting, monofilament and industrial packaging, high-graphic and poly bags, multi-wall, vent-view paper bags, clamshells, jute bags and millet bags.

Equipment includes form-fill bagging and sealing machines, wicket and bulk baggers, balers, clipping machines, robotic palletizers, weighing machines, heat sealers and net rucking machines.

ThorPack supplies labels, including poly labels for mesh bags, clipping wire and wire ties, Schutte Clips® bag closures, rubber bands, ProTape and dispensers, portable bag closers and polyester sewing thread.

AC/DC motors, power supplies, gear

reducers, bearings, chains, belting, sprockets and pneumatics round out the offerings.

Marty was kind enough to answer some interview questions.

I know you were a purchasing manager for Volm Companies. How did you transition into starting your own produce bagging and packaging business and why? With

Above: ThorPack, LLC President Marty Kolpack says JMC balers, such as the PolyPaper AB3000HS model shown in its entirety, are the finest on the market today. These machines can run poly or paper bags and are equipped with sewing machines or heat sealers.

a background in purchasing of consumer supplies and packaging equipment, I was used to dealing

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Interview. . .

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with manufacturers from all around the world and not only negotiating partnerships, but also forming friendships.

When I approached my potential manufacturers and vendors, they were excited to hear that I did not get out of the packaging business, so it was not hard to establish business ventures together.

Your brother, Mick, works for Bushmans' Inc., so you're both in the potato industry. Did you grow up on a potato farm, or why the interest and involvement in the industry?

My brother, Mick, and I grew up on a dairy farm and eventually worked for the same packaging company in the area.

We both knew of all the potato farmers throughout the region, so it was not hard to develop friendships with the growers.

ThorPack, LLC is also a member of the WPVGA Associate Division. Why is it important for you to support the association as a member?

The WPVGA is a great organization, always staying on top of the issues facing potato and vegetable farmers, and trending subjects such as new packaging ideas, earth-friendly



Marty Kolpack assures that the Paper Vento bags with mesh windows run excellently on the ILAPAK VFFS (Vertical Form-Fill Seal) Vegatronic 1000 baggers.

packaging, water, diseases, fertilizers and equipment.

This allows the farmers to stay on top of all changes taking place. ThorPack is a proud supporter of the WPVGA organization.

As a produce packaging supplier, who are the largest manufacturers that you represent and why?

ThorPack sells some of the finest,

most accurate weighing and bagging machines produced today.

We are a proud distributor for ILAPAK equipment. The company has manufacturing facilities around the world with service to back them up, and everything from weighing machines with 10 to 16 scales, to Wicket Baggers, Vertical Form-Fill Seal (VFFS) baggers, and onion clipping or rucking machines.



For potatoes and onions, ThorPack offers 30- and 50-pound mesh roll stock, as well as mesh roll stock balers such as the Upmann Model 1352 UPA Mesh Rollstock Bagger shown. The mesh roll stock is available in red, orange, purple, blue, white and other colors.



In Upmann bagging equipment, we offer mesh roll-stock baggers for the onion and potato industry. These machines are primarily used as master balers and are durable and easy to operate.

Dewan heat sealers are versatile machines, and JMC balers are the finest balers on the market today. These machines can run poly or paper bags and are equipped with sewing machines or heat sealers.

We also work with Verbruggen as a sales agent. The palletizers can be seen in all the large potato and onion sheds, and they are the elite palletizers on the market today.

ThorPack supplies all potato bags such as 2-to-20-pound wicket or non-wicket poly bags capable of accepting and showcasing

up to eight-color print.

We also supply onion packers with Vexar netting—extruded net and knitted soft net mesh bags, and mesh roll stock—from coast to coast.

ThorPack offers graphic design assistance, and we have on-staff art designers.

What does ThorPack have, whether products, service or both, that is unique to the industry? At ThorPack, we offer quick turnaround on orders or will assist in lining up service if needed to get equipment repaired. We are a firm believer in service after the sale and will aggressively work with our customers to get on-time deliveries, or repairs and parts.

Do you carry products that aren't readily available elsewhere?

ThorPack offers a couple of different

Above: Schutte Clips® bag closures are available from ThorPack for poly or mesh bags.

items that are new, one being the Paper Vento through NNZ USA Inc. This is paper roll stock material with a mesh window that runs excellently on the ILAPAK Vegatronic 1000.

We also offer wicket all-mesh monofilament bags for onions or potatoes. They work excellently on all wicket baggers.

The biggest complaint we hear from the packers is that other bags stick together on the sides when the bagger tries to open them. So, we have developed the wicket monofilament bag with an up to eight-color belly band.

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ThorPack carries and stocks everything from potato poly bags to monofilament wicket bags for onions, potatoes, brussels sprouts and more.

The material is soft on the product, and the bags do not stick together on the sides. The cost of these bags is much less than the competition's,

and we have good lead times on orders.

Your business office is in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, and your home

and general sales office is in Bryant. Are those areas major hubs of your business, or did you expand to two locations? ThorPack Chippewa Falls is our corporate office and ThorPack in Bryant, Wisconsin, is a sales office. All sales are generated from our sales office in Bryant.

Presently, we are looking at opening other warehouses in areas for stocking product and quick deliveries.

What territory do you mostly serve?

ThorPack sells throughout, but not limited to, the entire Midwest. We also sell in California, Washington, Texas and Colorado, and from New York down to Florida, so we basically sell throughout the whole country.

Are potato and vegetable growers your main customers? We do not limit ourselves to supplying packaging to the potato and vegetable industry, but instead have expanded to other

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Whether lemons, limes or oranges, the ILAPAK Vegatronic 1000 VFFS Bagger can package them in Carry Fresh bags.

areas such as coffee, hemp, soils, small rocks and industrial filtration packaging. So ThorPack has targeted many other industries.

Do other members of your family work in the business, and if so, who and in what positions?

Presently there are four employees at ThorPack—Richard Thorpe, CEO, Marty Kolpack, president, Kathie Thorpe, bookkeeper, and Sandra Kolpack, accounting/bookkeeper.

Do you enjoy working in the potato and vegetable growing industry in northern Wisconsin, and if so, why?

It has always been a pleasure working with all my customers throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Red River Valley and beyond.

There has never been a time that packers or growers haven't taken a few minutes to chat with me, however COVID-19 has significantly slowed travel down since a lot of farmers are a little reluctant to have salespeople stop and visit.

Part of being a good salesperson is to always keep your face in front of them (that way they won't forget you), as well as maintaining a good working relationship.

"The biggest trend facing us today is compostable/biodegradable packaging. We work with large companies to meet the ongoing demand for more earth-friendly packaging."

– Marty Kolpack

Something that may have gone away for a long time is the friendly handshake. Social distancing seems to be the new protocol. Traveling to see customers weekly has come down to a lot of emails, phone calls, texting and Zoom meetings.

Do you also serve fruit and other produce customers, and if so, who or what types of produce? We sell packaging in just about every fresh vegetable and fruit market, such as kiwi, nuts, apples, sweet potatoes and peppers, as well as the potato and onion market.

What are your current challenges in the business? Lead times are always a challenge. Lead times can be long in some cases, and that goes for every distributor facing the same scenario.

All our customers are important, so we push hard for good lead times.

Do you have any business or customer success stories to share?

ThorPack was a startup company in 2005, not knowing if people would follow us or not. To our amazement, we were able to land sales immediately. Within the first few months, we were off and running, building a successful company from the ground up. It has taken a lot of determination and long hours at the office, but it has paid off.

Have you seen business growth in the past decade or more, and if so, in what areas? Sales for the company have soared faster than ever expected in the 15 years we have been in business.



Equipment available from ThorPack includes form-fill bagging and sealing machines, wicket and bulk baggers, balers, clipping machines, robotic palletizers, weighing machines, net rucking machines and heat sealers such as the JMC FA4 Hot Air Sealer pictured.

What do you hope for the future of ThorPack, LLC? Our goal at ThorPack is to continue to provide our customers with the best products available and stay tuned to all the new trends in a changing market.

The biggest trend facing us today is compostable/biodegradable packaging. We work with large companies that manufacture these products to meet the ongoing demand for more earth-friendly packaging.


Is there anything you would like to add, Marty, that I might have missed? ThorPack is proud to be

an associate member of the WPVGA and looks forward to serving all our past, present and future customers.



Fifty-pound multi-wall vent view bags are made available from ThorPack to potato growers, packers and shippers.

We will strive to be a great supplier for equipment and packaging supplies. **BC'T**



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