



INTERVIEW

DALE WARNER, president/CEO, Warner & Warner, Inc.

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

NAME: Dale Warner

TITLE: President/CEO
(Chief Executive Officer)

COMPANY: Warner & Warner, Inc.

LOCATION: Plover, WI

HOMETOWN: Stevens Point, WI

TIME IN PRESENT POSITION: 8 years

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: Jay-Mar, Inc.

SCHOOLING: Stevens Point Area Senior High School, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and Mid-State Technical College

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS: Stevens Point Area YMCA Board of Directors past president, Stevens Point Area YMCA Heritage Club

FAMILY: Wife, Heather, of 25 years; and children, Daley, Marlee and Gage

HOBBIES: Coaching Portage County Ice Hawks youth hockey, ice fishing, time at the lake, boating and traveling

The Warner family has invested 50 years and multiple generations delivering packaging across the nation. Beginning as a regional supplier to the agriculture industry in Central Wisconsin, Warner & Warner, Inc. has grown to serve all major markets across the United States.

The core business provides packaging to the food industry, so Warner & Warner's priority is always food safety, but the family-run business is also committed to using the least amount of packaging possible to minimize impact on the environment.

Dale Warner, president and chief executive officer of Warner & Warner, Inc., of Plover, Wisconsin, says his father, Jay, and brother, Jay Jr., incorporated Warner & Warner in August 1989.

"After college, my dad, Jay, went to work for Bemis Bag Company, based out of Massachusetts," Dale says. "He started working the plant floor, then customer service and eventually sales."

"He traveled to various agricultural centers around the United States selling paper produce and dairy bags," Dale relates.

"What he learned about paper packaging in those early years



Above: Dale Warner says, in 32 years, Warner & Warner, Inc. has grown from a regional produce packaging supply company to one that services hundreds of customers in over 35 states with multiple distributions centers.

became the foundation for Warner & Warner, Inc.," he explains.

Who currently owns Warner and Warner? Warner & Warner, Inc. is co-owned by me, my brother, Jay, and Kurt Heiman. I joined the company in 1994, and Kurt came aboard in 2003.

In 32 years, we have grown from a regional produce packaging supply company to one that services hundreds of customers in over 35 states with multiple



distributions centers.

Wasn't there a connection with Jay-Mar, Inc.? Yes, Jay-Mar was started around 1970 by Jay Sr. and Marilyn Warner. Jay-Mar's focus at that time was on bags and boxes.

Later the company's focus turned towards being a total ag supplier to include seeds, feeds and fertilizers.

Currently Jay-Mar is owned by our brother, David Warner. Today, Warner & Warner, Inc. and

Jay-Mar, Inc. are wholly separate entities.

What is your own background, Dale, and how did you eventually become president of Warner & Warner, Inc.?

At a young age, I would sweep floors at Jay-Mar. When old enough, I worked in the Jay-Mar warehouse, as well as drove delivery trucks.

This was an important part of my development, as I learned a lot from my brother, Dave, on how

to effectively manage products in and out of inventory, as well as all other facets that come from assisting in the management of a warehouse.

After a number of years working at Jay-Mar, I was invited by Jay Sr. and Jr. to join Warner & Warner, Inc. It was a difficult decision to move away from Jay-Mar, but at the same time, I was intrigued by the idea of working for a company that was a new startup.

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Above: Packaging options offered by Warner & Warner, Inc. to produce pack facilities for potatoes and vegetables include corrugated bins, display boxes, FIBC's (flexible intermediate bulk containers), paper, mesh, polyethylene, a combination poly/mesh, and 100 percent recyclable/compostable/biodegradable paper roll stock and pre-made pouches.



My first job at W&W was warehouse and inventory management. I learned the packaging business from loading dock to the front office, which, in my opinion, is a great way to develop a valuable skill set.

I have performed every position that I ask my team to perform and believe this allows me to be relatable to all our valuable employees.

Working in the warehouse environment allowed me to communicate with employees, customers, truck drivers and manufacturing partners. From the warehouse, it was a natural transition to the front office using those skills.

Does it remain a family-owned business, and if so, what family members work there, and what

Above: Jay Warner (left) and Kurt Heiman (not shown) of Warner & Warner, Inc. teamed up with Neil Bretl (right), president of The Paper People, to develop 100 percent recyclable and compostable fiber-based packaging for potatoes and other vegetables.

is Kurt's position? It remains a family-owned business. Kurt joined us in 2002, initially as a sales associate. Over the years, he has grown to become an invaluable part of our team and earned a position as one of two vice presidents, a sales leader, corporate officer and shareholder.

Family members include myself, Jay, my nephew, Nick Warner, and my son, Gage.

Specifically for area potato and vegetable growers via pack facilities, what types of bags and packages do you offer? Options include polyethylene, paper, mesh, a combination poly/mesh, corrugated bins, display boxes, FIBC's (flexible intermediate bulk containers) and 100 percent recyclable/compostable/biodegradable paper roll stock and pre-made pouches.

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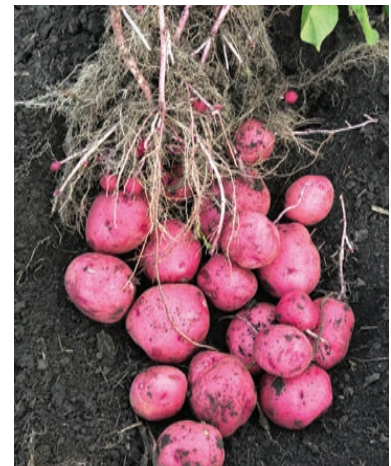


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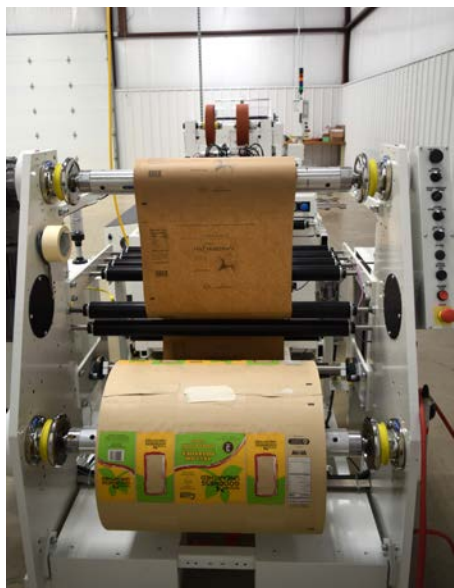


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Do you also offer equipment, supplies and services to area growers? Yes, we work hand in hand with equipment manufacturers to provide the best solutions for individual pack facility needs.

Who are your typical customers in the Wisconsin potato and vegetable growing industry? The services and products we offer are directly linked to produce packaging facilities. We work hand in hand with shippers to

manage packaging profiles.

In many instances, we will inventory large volumes of packaging so we can offer a “just in time” delivery mechanism to support their pack operations. We take the burden of inventory and inventory management away from the pack facilities.

This is beneficial for both parties, as it helps control packaging volumes and ensure no one gets caught with



Above and Left: Mark Resch and Neil Bretl from The Paper People worked closely with Hudson Sharp to develop a line of equipment specifically for the produce packaging industry. The state-of-the-art equipment produces high-quality paper packaging, including new 100 percent recyclable fiber-based bags with viscous scrim windows for potatoes and other vegetables.

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outdated packaging that may no longer be usable.

Do you also manufacture? Currently, W&W does not manufacture. We do have an ownership position in The Paper People and are intricately involved in the management of the company

Jay invited me to The Paper People plant, in Elcho, for a tour. Jay and Kurt are partners with The Paper People, is that correct? Yes,

Jay Warner and Kurt Heiman are partners with the team at The Paper People. W&W is the exclusive North American distributor of produce packaging for The Paper People.

Neil Bretl, president of The Paper People, mentioned that a major retailer approached him wanting 100 percent recyclable potato packaging. Tell me about the bags that the company manufactures.

We are working with many of the largest retail chains in cooperation



to develop 100 percent recyclable and compostable fiber-based packaging.

There were several other options that didn't fully address the total package requirements, such as working on existing equipment or 100 percent recyclable with no plastics or micro plastics.

Above: Jay Warner inspects a state-of-the-art machine that produces recyclable fiber-based produce bags at The Paper People plant in Elcho, Wisconsin.

This is where we have a distinct advantage. The mesh scrim is made from wood fiber and is also part of the fully recyclable package that is now in production.

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Contact: Jim, John or Joe

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Above: In partnership with Warner & Warner, Inc., The Paper People plant is producing 100 percent recyclable fiber-based bags with viscous scrim windows for potatoes and other produce. Even the ink of the packaging is water based.

Were there also retailers asking Warner & Warner for 100 percent recycle bags? The retailers communicated their needs through the shippers that we work with and were the conduit to our new packaging ideas.

Are the bags that you/The Paper People manufacture specifically for potatoes and vegetables? No, The

Paper People works extensively in many packaging applications outside of produce. However, produce was the first category to be selected because of its high volume and consumable single-use structure.

Is this the way the industry is going, Dale, to 100 percent recyclable packaging? This is the start of interest and demand in a fully recyclable

package. With the new laws that are now being regulated, it has created a more real demand than in the past.

States like Maine and others are charging for non-recyclable packaging, which will greatly change the landscape in which we now work.

Are there many certified manufacturers of 100 percent recyclable potato and vegetable packaging? Currently, there are very few. It is reasonable to think that many more will come in line, but we are one of the first.

Our paper has been certified through Western Michigan University, a very well-respected certification body. The Paper People is now working on TUV (a certification body authorized by European bioplastics) for home compostable certification.

Did you/The Paper People have to develop machinery to create the packaging? Yes, Mark Resch and Neil Bretl from The Paper People worked closely with Hudson Sharp to develop a line of equipment specifically for the produce packaging industry.

The equipment is state-of-the-art and produces high-quality paper packaging.

What type of volume are we talking about in packaging that Warner & Warner will distribute and that The Paper People could potentially manufacture? Currently, we are

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capable of an estimated 40-50 million paper consumables annually. This can be increased with additional equipment as we expand going forward.

What do you foresee as coming down the pike in produce packaging? The hot topic is definitely recyclable paper consumables. We are also working on heat-sealable paper balers, which would eliminate the need to glue or sew.

What are you most proud of, Dale, regarding Warner & Warner and your role and contributions therein?

I am proud of the relationships I have developed over 25 years in this industry. It has been a true pleasure getting to know customers as well as manufacturing partners.

I've always maintained that it is important to treat and respect our manufacturing partners in the same manner with which we approach our customers. This belief has led to a tremendous number of high-quality relationships on both sides of the aisle across the country.

These relationships tend to benefit all parties at the table.

I'm proud of our company's sound business practices, high quality of customer service and on-time delivery. I'm proud of how we conduct ourselves when things don't go as planned. We work hard to quickly resolve negatives and turn them into positives.

Lastly, I am proud of the success W&W has enjoyed—steady growth every year since our inception, which is a key indicator of a healthy business model.

What do you hope for the future of Warner & Warner, Inc.? To continue growing and maturing in a responsible manner, which will allow the next generation to move our business forward. **BC'T**

"I have performed every position that I ask my team to perform and believe this allows me to be relatable to all our valuable employees."

– Dale Warner



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