

pany's chief operating officer, explained. "We consider ourselves a printer that makes its own substrate. That might sound subtle, but it's actually quite huge."

By making its own films, PolyCello can exercise greater control over the quality of the finished product and drastically reduce delivery turn-around times for its customers.

John Emmerson capitalized on an opportunity for PolyCello to begin extruding its own polyethylene (PE) film back in the 1970s, effectively marrying the film making side of the business with the company's printing and conversion capabilities. The decision was a wise one and ushered in a period of rapid growth for the company.

While PolyCello has a range of in-house expertise at its disposal, the company has deliberately chosen to narrow its focus to maintain its high service standards. "We're not trying to be everything to everybody," Stephen, PolyCello's president and CEO, said. "We only deal with a select market. When you look at flexography as a printing process, there are a thousand different markets you could be in and we're in three."

A FATHER'S LEGACY

Both Stephen and Bryan attribute this business philosophy of narrow casting to their father, who had a clear vision for the company: Simply put, for PolyCello to be the best at whatever it chose to do.

With more than 40 years in the business, John has been involved with PolyCello almost from the beginning. John's own father, Philip Emmerson, started a paper distribution business, which in turn spawned a small flexible packaging company called PolyCello Bag Ltd., in 1956.

Following a period in the Royal Canadian Navy, formal business training and a stint managing a paper carton production company, John joined PolyCello in 1966 and has been a driving force behind the company ever since.

"I'm at a point right now where I can really step back," John said of his current role as PolyCello's elder statesman. Stephen and Bryan have been at their current posts at the head of the company for the last two years, after completing

masters degrees in business administration and working in various branches of the company. In fact, as Bryan recalled, his first job at PolyCello was assisting the janitor during summers off from school.

PEOPLE SKILLS

Comparing the size of PolyCello's operations back in the late '60s and early '70s with today, John said the company now accomplishes in any 10-day period what used to take a year. He said his early days at PolyCello allowed him to get in on the ground floor and "have a lot of fun with the business and grow it and bring in people that were really great to work with."

The experience of working with great people has stuck with John and is reflected in the PolyCello's hiring practices. "I'm of a strong mind that our most important customer is our internal customer, our people," he said, noting that while PolyCello's pursuit and use of cutting-edge technology is one of its strengths, having the right people in place to run its operations is what sets it apart from the rest of the pack.

The company is focused not only on finding the right people, but also on placing them in jobs that make the most of their individual talents, preferences, and personalities to ensure employees are in roles that both they and the company are happy with. "We have spent a lot of time in our hiring process for as long as I can remember, and it has paid off over the years," John said.

Despite being situated smack-dab in the middle of the Maritimes in a town with a population of about 10,000, PolyCello is not content to sit back and wait for potential employees to come knocking. The company offers a range of programs to attract and retain staff such as rebates for employee gym memberships, on the job training and scholarships for employee family members to help defer the costs of post-secondary education.

"We are probably one of the largest employers in the area and we take that responsibility very seriously," Bryan explained. "As a family, we could have decided to just invest in a stock portfolio, but we've chosen to have a direct influence in peoples lives." As a reflec-

tion of the Emmerson family's strong ties to spirituality and community, the company makes generous donations to faith-based organizations and other groups engaged in community-building initiatives, big or small. The company gave generously to a Sackville Memorial Hospital Foundation campaign to raise funds for new equipment, and is always willing to invest in the health of its staff by sponsoring recreational sports teams for employees.

KEEPING CLEAN

PolyCello's sense of responsibility towards the community extends all the way to the environment; from photographic film to ink buckets to wood pallets to printed material, the company recycles everything it can.

PolyCello is ISO 14001 certified and has been ISO 9000 certified since 1996. Since achieving the newer 14001 standard for environmental management systems, Bryan said the company has been able to further reduce their solid waste stream by half.

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

Additionally, PolyCello is strongly committed to the industries it is involved in.

The company maintains active memberships in not only the CPIA but also in other groups such as the Flexographic Technical Association (FTA), an organization aimed at advancing flexography and developing and maintaining standards for the industry. Their close involvement with the FTA has led to the development of the industry's first apprenticeship program as well as advancements in flexography printing software.

Success can be measured in many ways and when it comes to business, success is measured by money in the bank. Held against this ruler, PolyCello certainly has done well. Yet, it's the firm's close ties to industry, good relationships with employees, active involvement in the community and environmental-consciousness that makes PolyCello's Emmersons true leaders. **CPL**

For more information about PolyCello visit www.policello.com.