



Each month, we recognize one of the region's top manufacturers with the aid of NEPIRC, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center. Since 1988, NEPIRC has been working with manufacturers to improve their productivity, profitability, competitiveness and long-term viability through consultative services.



Paper box manufacturer growing in Plains, Luzerne County

The cardboard box manufacturing factory, built in 1954 in Plains, Luzerne County, had been out of business and was sitting idle in 1999 when David A. Frank of Haverford, near Philadelphia, decided to purchase it and relaunch production.

Frank was no stranger to paper box manufacturing. In fact, he grew up around it. His late father, Carl, along with several relatives, had operated a box factory in Southwest Philadelphia from the 1950s to about 1990.

Frank, who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1982 with a degree in business, worked with his father at the factory for about five years until he left to start his own package brokering business in Philadelphia. Several years later, a company from Tennessee made him an offer to purchase his business that Frank's accountant said he shouldn't refuse.

"I didn't know what to do. I didn't have any plan in place to sell my company and do something different at the time," Frank said.

A while after he sold the brokering business, a real estate broker told Frank about the box manufacturing factory in



David A. Frank poses in front of large rolls of cardboard that will be converted into boxes for his clients.

of equipment and just three employees. Today, we have seven production lines and 20 employees," he said.

Growth was not always easy, however, and Frank struggled through some tough times. Some of the issues he faced were actually caused by advancements in technology – not printing or manufacturing technology, but the growth of popularity of emails and faxes, and changes in department stores' use of boxes for purchases.

Just a few years after he started his company, Frank became the one of the largest manufacturers of envelope boxes on the east coast. "We had five warehouses and business was strong. But as more and more people stopped using envelopes for mailing and began doing everything on computers, the business 'imploded,'" he said.

So, Frank turned to the bakery and pizza industries and those customers have kept Midvale in business over the years. Frank said investments he made in adding the additional lines have given his company the ability to produce full-color packaging and that he is looking to expand his business into a more sophisticated market making boxes for products typically found on grocery store shelves. "The bakery and pizza business has been good to us for many years but we really want to expand our business into the market of printing the more sophisticated boxes."

Recently, Frank was one of many vendors that exhibited their products at a National Manufacturing Day event in Scranton that was sponsored by the Northeast Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC).



Employees at Midvale Paper Box Company take Bon Ton boxes off the production line.

Plains that was up for sale.

Frank said he had contacts with companies that he represented with his father's firm and he called several of them. One of the companies, a large envelope manufacturer, agreed to have Frank produce its boxes and Midvale Paper Box Company, Inc., was born.

"We started with three pieces

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