


October 2009

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McDOWELL

Label and Screen Printing



One Team

Chairman of the Board David H. McDowell has built a focused team at McDowell Label and Screen Printing. His strong leadership and dedication to the industry has earned him *packagePRINTING's* 2009 TLMI Converter of the Year honors.

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Industry Champion

With a career dedicated to the tag and label industry, Dave McDowell, chairman of McDowell Label and Screen Printing, is honored as *packagePRINTING*'s 2009 TLMI Converter of the Year.

The TLMI Converter of the Year membership constitutes a proud, exclusive club. Its members come from a wide variety of backgrounds, some literally cutting their teeth in a family business and others entering the industry when opportunity knocked. Although their backgrounds vary, they share a number of traits, including superior talent, an uncompromising work ethic, and a total dedication to the industry.

This year's honoree, Dave McDowell, chairman of the board of McDowell Label and Screen Printing, fits easily into this mold. TLMI Chairman Frank Gerace, president and CEO of Multi-Color Corp., says, "Dave has spent essentially his entire career in the label industry, committing his life to promoting our industry's value to its customer and supplier base. His standards and integrity are beyond reproach; he represents what is best about our industry."

Gary Smith, VP of sales for RotoMetrics, has known McDowell since 1979. "Nobody is more dedicated to the label and narrow-web industry," says Smith. "He's the best salesman I've ever been around. He's always looking for a competitive edge and is never satisfied with the status quo."

It is these qualities—high standards, integrity, and dedication to the industry and TLMI—that have earned Dave McDowell a seat in the "club" as *packagePRINTING*'s 2009 TLMI Converter of the Year.

Getting started

McDowell is a graduate of Texas A&M University, an Aggie through and through. Early in his career while working in Kansas City, a friend asked him to interview with Avery



Label, which happened to have an opening in its Dallas territory. Longing to move back to Texas, McDowell told his family he would work for any company that would move them back home, and then he would get a "real job" if need be.

As it turned out, the position at Avery Label turned out to be a real job, lasting ten years. More importantly, it provided him with solid knowledge of the tag-and-label industry—knowledge that he used to branch out on his own.

In 1981, he founded McDowell Label and Screen Printing as a broker-style company. Starting a company is always a challenge, but within the first year of business, McDowell had to deal with a divorce, along with the bankruptcy of the fledgling company's largest customer. However, relying on perseverance and salesmanship, he overcame these

challenges. During the 13 years McDowell Label operated as a brokerage he counted the Dallas Cowboys and Apple Computer as two noteworthy customers.

In March 1994, the company began a significant new phase in its evolution with the installation of its first press, a 10", 7-color Rotopress. "Those early days were a lot of fun—learning about Murphy's Law—always having one fewer plate cylinder than required and battling dot gain and striations in the printing," notes McDowell.

As in many small companies, the owner wears many hats and early on, McDowell helped with press washups and scheduled all of the production, while managing company sales. In 1997, his son John came on board and immediately relieved much of the burden and contributed to the growth of the company, says McDowell.

By 2003, McDowell Label had expanded as much as possible in its original building. The company decided to buy land and build a new facility. In October 2004, the company moved into its new building with twice the space as before.

McDowell continued to support the company's growth with key additions to the management team. In 2006, Jay Luft joined McDowell Label as vice president. "Jay's operational talents have become a valuable asset to our company's growth and success," says McDowell.

McDowell Label & Screen Printing has come a long way since its days as a broker company. Today it supplies high-end pressure-sensitive labels, flexible packaging, heat sleeve labels, and product identification products to markets that include cosmetics, health and beauty, nutraceutical, wine and spirits, beverage, food, and pet care.

The company's vision statement is: "We are one company, one team, with one purpose—to provide innovative brand packaging solutions for those who demand excellence." McDowell knows that it is important for a company to stay focused, with a clear identity. "There are many very successful companies in our industry, and early on we realized that the very top-level ones were companies that knew who they were," he observes.

For McDowell Label, the focus is on top-quality printing. "Our company culture is one of quality from top to bottom," he says. "We focus on extraordinary graphically intensive labels that allow our customers the brand identity that sets their products apart in the marketplace. Every day we run high-end jobs, providing a very creative, challenging, and rewarding experience for our team."

The team is very important to McDowell, and today his team includes more than 50 employees, many with 5, 10, 15, and 20-plus years of service, he notes. "We have been able to create an atmosphere that breeds employee continuity, resulting in very low employee turnover. In fact, in 28 years, we have only lost four people that we didn't want to lose and I am happy to report that two of them have returned. This is a statistic of which I am most proud."

McDowell sees a bright future for the industry. "We have many young faces emerging within the industry that will

"Dave has been a champion for our industry, the TLMI, and its members."

—Frank Gerace

continue to innovate and serve," he observes. "The technology of the future will continue to push the envelope of quality and capabilities available to meet the ever-growing requirements of tomorrow's brand owners."

McDowell Label joined TLMI in 1995 and McDowell, himself, has been an active member. He has been involved with the environmental, liner recycling, and health and safety committees, and is currently the chairman of the Membership Committee. He has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2004 and now serves as TLMI's vice chairman.

His contributions to TLMI have been numerous, and clearly recognized by Gerace. "Dave has been a champion for our industry, the TLMI, and its members," he says. "As TLMI's Membership Committee Chairman, he has been tireless in expanding our membership, especially over the last difficult year. I can always count on Dave to give me a straight perspective. I am honored and proud to call him a friend."

As much as he has contributed to TLMI, McDowell credits TLMI membership with playing an important part in the success of his company. "TLMI has been a valuable resource to McDowell Label, being a conduit to bring information to a growing company that otherwise would be much more difficult to access," he says. "I know that our membership in TLMI has played a significant role in the success of the company."

Home on the range

While Smith calls Dave McDowell the best salesman he's ever been around, McDowell says the most important deal he ever closed was with his wife, Elaine. In retrospect, those difficult years in the early 1980s were "some of the most enjoyable in my life," he says. "During this time, I closed the biggest deal of my career; selling Elaine on quitting a very good job and working for a self-employed dude with no money, a lot of debt, and three teenage boys living with him. Elaine, as my partner and the company's CFO has always kept my feet on the ground and as a result, kept the company on a solid financial footing."

McDowell says Elaine is his best friend, and together they share the enjoyment that comes from "four loving sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, and five beautiful grandchildren." They enjoy traveling in their motor home with their two Shelties, and spending time together and with their grandchildren.

McDowell is also active in his church and in Rotary. If he's not riding his prized 1964 Cushman Eagle, he might be found cheering for his favorite team, the Aggies. He calls himself "an avid fan of all things Aggie" and especially enjoys attending all home Aggie football games with his son John (also an Aggie) and their families. ■