

# Thinking Outside The Box

## Viking Industries Marks 42 Years

The children's book "Not a Box" features a cartoon bunny that imagines a box as everything from a castle to a rocket ship.

"In a lot of ways that is what makes Viking Industries different," says Richard G. Croce, the New Paltz-based company's vice president. "There are a lot of those who view corrugated as just a box, but we think of it differently. First, we are not just boxes."

Croce said Viking Industries, a manufacturer of corrugated cardboard and other packaging products, still produces the corrugated partitions that gave the company its start.

"We also have custom-made folders and inserts that provide cost-effective protection for our customers," he said.

Croce said Viking Industries also focuses on "taking away our customers' pain."

"We find out how we can improve their business through packaging," he said. "Sometimes that is redesigning a box to make it more efficient to pack or to take up less space on a pallet.

"We also look at our customers' packaging as both advertising and a first impression they are making with their customers."

Croce said Viking Industries is also "obsessed with exceeding our customers' needs."

"That means we over-deliver on our promises of service and quality," he said. "My father [company president Richard Croce] instilled in me that our business needs to be more reliable than if we were a machine on our customers' floor and those values are in everything we do."

The Croce family has been in packaging since Ferdinand Dominick Croce began F.D. Croce Co. in Brooklyn in 1892. The business evolved and in the 1970s was providing produce crates with corrugated partitions to apple farmers in the Hudson Valley.

The partitions were difficult to source reliably and cost effectively so Russell Croce started Viking Industries to provide these partitions to F.D. Croce Co. in 1973.

"From there the business has grown by responding to customer needs and in some cases anticipating their needs," Croce said.

Viking has grown with additions in 1978, 1988, 1998 and 2006.

In 1998, Viking Industries invested in a box-making machine that allowed it to produce smaller-sized boxes than most of the other plants in the Northeast.

"It proved to be a sound investment and Viking was

the first U.S. installation of the machine to achieve their century club, producing 147,000 boxes in an eight-hour shift," Croce said.

When it comes to feedback, Croce said clients have told him Viking is the "standard" by which they evaluate their other suppliers.

"We have become known as the company to call when it seems like it is impossible to get what they want," he said. "We have always taken that approach that we are problem solvers, and the fact that we make corrugated packaging, is simply the method with which we solve the problem.

"We talk to our customers about their businesses and how we can help them achieve their strategic objectives with packaging. They often tell us that we allow them to focus more on their business because they know they don't need to worry about packaging."

Croce is the third-generation Croce at Viking and the fifth-generation in packaging. Growing up, Viking was a summer and after-school job.

He attended Union College to study engineering, but "couldn't escape the packaging in my blood." He returned

### MEMBER PROFILE

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**– Richard G. Croce**

to the company in 1998 as a customer service rep and has climbed the ladder to vice president and general manager.

"I have always been drawn to the problem-solving parts of the business," he said. "Figuring out ways to help our

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Richard G. Croce

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Each New Member will have an opportunity to talk about their business and hand out business cards.

Reservations required. Call the Chamber office at 338-5100 or reserve online at [www.UlsterChamber.org](http://www.UlsterChamber.org)



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customers pack their products more efficiently, faster, with less cost, or in a way that better presents their product, is what I really enjoy about our business.

"I tell our new employees that making boxes for a living may sound a bit boring, but this business is never dull. We are presented with new challenges every day and it is a thrill to figure out how we can rise to them."

Croce said Viking Industries has made a lot of connections through the Chamber to help his business grow.

"I think the Chamber is an excellent organization for supporting economic growth in our community," he said.

"Whenever we face a business issue, I can immediately think of another Chamber member who I know I can talk to and get help navigating that challenge. If I don't immediately know of one, [Chamber President] Ward [Todd] and his team will always point me in the right direction."

*Viking Industries, Inc., 89 S. Ohioville Road in New Paltz, can be reached at (845) 883-6325 or [www.vikingindustries.net](http://www.vikingindustries.net).*

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