

# 94 years

## and COUNTING

*Hotel Equipment and Supply Co. (HESCO) has been supporting the hospitality and food service industries for nearly a century. The Edmonton based company was launched in 1921 during a booming era of new construction, as new towns began sprouting up across the prairie in the wake of expanding railways.*

### Written by Claire Suttles

**F**ounder R.J. Talbot recognized that these new towns would need hotels and eateries and he jumped at the chance to supply them with an inexhaustible list of products, from stoves and floor wax to cooking utensils and linens.

When Larry and Adam Ungarian bought the business in 2006, HESCO was still the go-to store for a dizzying array of food service products. But the father and son team realized that there was a new gap in the market that needed to be filled. While still focusing on the supply aspect of the business, the Ungarians turned their attention to designing and building commercial kitchens. "That is what we specialize in and that is what has taken us to the next level," Adam explains.

From kiosks and hospital cafeterias  
to mining camp and  
restaurant

kitchens, "We design and supply everything." The team has taken on projects ranging from \$20,000 to \$5 million and they are not afraid to tackle challenging, out of the box assignments. For instance, HESCO is currently transforming an airport hangar in Edmonton into a banqueting facility.



# HESCO



The team is able to deliver a complete solution, starting with the initial design phase and ending with the final delivery and installation. From architectural details to government regulations, no stone is left unturned. “We have to take into account if it is an eight foot ceiling or a 20 foot ceiling – it changes the whole HVAC system,” Adam points out as an example. “We have to be sure we meet code, and the codes in Alberta are different from the codes in British Columbia.”

Designing and building a commercial kitchen is a complex process and expert guidance is essential. “It comes down to the concept planning, to utilizing the space most efficiently. If somebody puts a kitchen together that is too big or too small, or that doesn’t have the right walk spaces, that screws everything up.” From food prep to plating, flow is everything. The latest CAD (computer aided design) technology enables the team to create quick, clear, and precise drawings, so customers know exactly what they are getting before the first brick is ever laid. Selecting the right equipment is also crucial and the team makes sure the selection matches both the kitchen’s purpose and the client’s budget.



All of this requires special talent and know-how, which can be hard to come by. “There is no school to take commercial kitchen design,” Adam points out. “You can’t just go to school and say you want to be a kitchen designer.” Commercial kitchen designers must receive special training from their employers in addition to getting a degree like ▶▶

**“We put a lot of time and effort into investing in our staff.”**

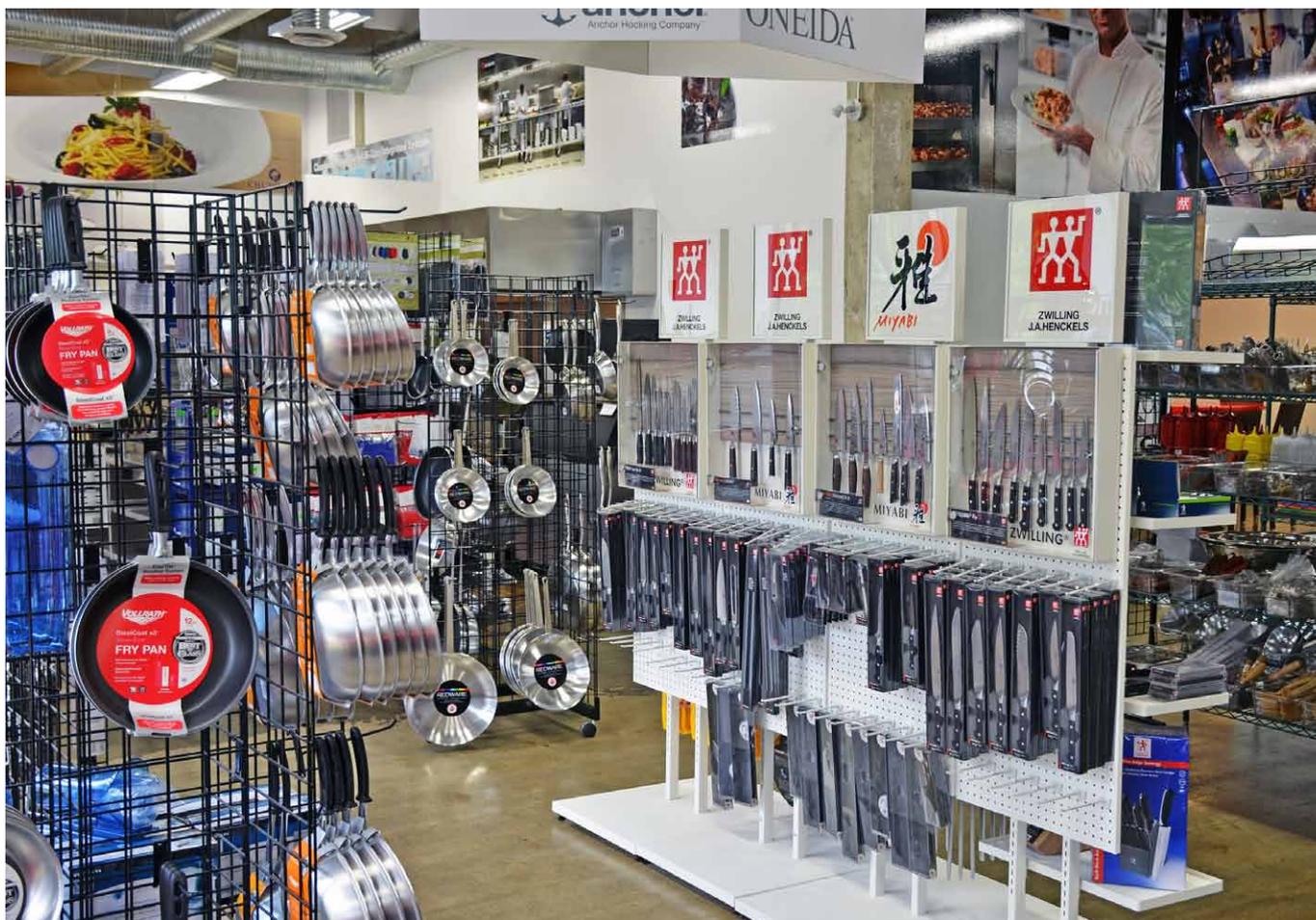


**“HESCO’s expert sales staff continues to grow, as does the company’s geographical reach.”**

▶ the Engineering Design and Drafting Technology degree that Adam earned at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). “We are able to train [employees]. We send people all over North America for training seminars. We put a lot of time and effort into investing in our staff.” Currently, HESCO employs four designers who are experts in the field, an unusually high number of in-house commercial kitchen design specialists, particularly for the size of the company. “There is no one else in the industry that would have four designers in one little outfit like this.”

HESCO’s design arm is taking off, but the company also remains a major player in the supply side of the business, maintaining an inexhaustible supply of smallwares, janitorial items, and furniture across its Edmonton and Calgary locations. The company maintains a whopping 10,000 skus and \$3 million worth of inventory in its warehouses, ensuring that customers can get what they want when they want it. “We could get an order for a thousand-man camp and we would be able to ship it out within a day and a half,” Adam shares. “We would have all the product in stock – everything from janitorial, to tabletop, to cutlery, to salt and pepper shakers, to small equipment to major equipment.”

HESCO’s wide range of products is on display at its two state of the art showrooms. The brand new 6,000 square foot Calgary



location features soaring ceilings, ample lighting, a walk-in cooler, and plenty of interactive displays including a demo kitchen and scullery, as well as a unique boardroom modeled after a bar. Shoppers are dazzled by the showroom's selection, which covers everything from china and convection ovens to bar stools and coffee makers.

With such a wide array of choices, customers can easily become overwhelmed. That is where the team's broad knowledge base comes in. "We have the experts," says Adam. "Both [locations] have large showrooms with all the products displayed, but what it comes down to is that we have educated people." With between 10 and 20 years of experience apiece, employees understand exactly what the customer needs. "Our staff knows how to answer the questions; they are able to put together the package." The employees are not the only ones who know the business inside and out; co-owner Larry Ungarian has been an industry insider for decades. "My dad has been in the industry forty plus years," says Adam. "He grew up in the industry."

HESCO employees are careful to match customers with the best deal, rather than pushing them toward the most expensive items. "We ask the questions: where is it going, how is it going there, what is the usage? We want to get the best fit for the customer. We take real pride on [giving them] the best ▶▶

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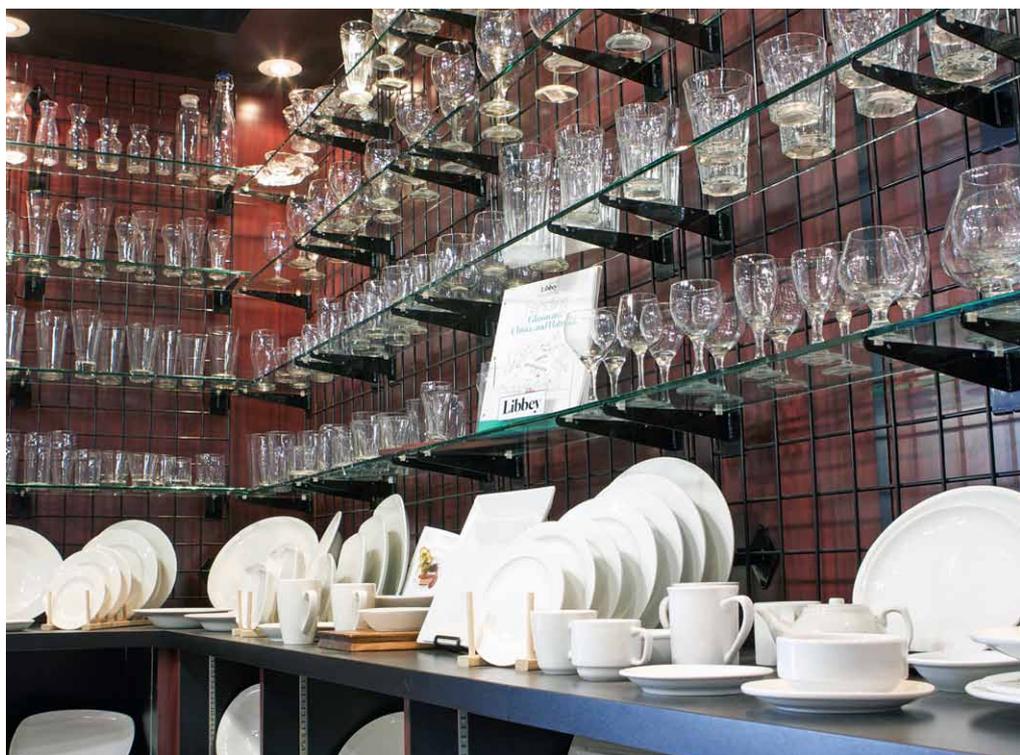
**“The team has taken on projects ranging from \$20,000 to \$5 million and they are not afraid to tackle challenging, out of the box assignments.”**

▶ dollar value.” As a result, customers do not waste money on fancy extras that they will never use, nor do they undershoot, only to discover too late that their new equipment lacks the features they need.

The team’s hands-on approach does not end when products leave the warehouse; HESCO takes responsibility for shipping the goods to ensure that everything arrives

as promised. “We have our own delivery truck system... We are not using a secondary service. We are giving the customer that end service. We want to ensure that our product is delivered to you and you are satisfied.”

Indeed, HESCO’s customer-driven culture goes right back to its owners. “We are a family owned, family run company,” Adam explains. “We really keep those values. We invest in and take pride in keeping that essence of family.” From family style lunches every Friday to golf tournaments, barbecues, and Christmas parties, the team works hard to maintain a high level of camaraderie and communication. “We are really only as strong as the team,” Adam points out. “Larry and I couldn’t do it without everybody else, and that goes from shipping to purchasing to the outside sales.” The family-ori-



"We do all our meetings together so we really have a feeling of camaraderie between Edmonton and Calgary."

Business keeps expanding and HESCO's expert sales staff continues to grow, as does the company's geographical reach. "We go all the way up to Yellowknife," says Adam. "We work in Whitehorse. We do camps all over Saskatchewan and Manitoba, supplying everything from major equipment to janitorial supplies – the whole caboodle."

ented company is eager to support any member of the team, regardless of the situation. "Our doors are always open, whether it is a personal or a business matter. We are here to listen and assist each other." Staying in touch is so important to the team that they have just invested in web cameras so that the two branches can videoconference each day.

Even though HESCO boasts a brand new Calgary showroom, the team has no plans to slow down and is already anticipating their next move. "We do have future growth plans; we are not just stopping at Edmonton and Calgary. We are looking to invest and to bring new talents into our building." The company has its sights set on Saskatchewan in particular. "We are doing a ton of work in Saskatchewan right now," Adam points out. "We are building four projects in Saskatchewan as we speak. We are really putting our claws into that market." Armed with bold new ideas – and 94 years of success on which to build – Adam and Larry are ready to take HESCO to the next province, and to the next level. ■



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