

Managed Growth

Walk through the doors of HESCO's new location at 13421 St. Albert Trail, NW a prime industrial strip in North Edmonton, and you'll find yourself in an impressive showroom. There are shelves of gleaming pots and pans, plus every cooking utensil you can imagine. There's an alcove displaying sparkling china and glassware. There are coffee makers, rice cookers, and pizza ovens. Yes, HESCO remains true to its roots, and in its 90th year continues to

be a supplier of virtually everything non-food to the foodservice industry. But, the designing and supplying of commercial kitchens is the heart of the business today. Larry and Adam Ungarian – father and son – have taken a successful supply-only company and turned it into an even stronger player in the foodservice industry.

From One Family to Another

In 1921, entrepreneur R.J. Talbot saw that railways were changing the face of the prairies. Towns were springing up along railway lines, and each new town needed – in addition to the obligatory

grain elevator or two – a hotel with rooms to rent, a café, and a tavern. These hotels needed supplies, and the insightful Talbot founded Hotel Equipment and Supply. The company distributed everything a hotel could possibly need: Dishes, beer glasses, shuffleboard supplies, floor wax, ashtrays, guest soap... and, of course, the railway was the carrier.

Talbot set up shop in downtown Edmonton, next to a grand dame of a hotel (today the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald) built by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The business eventually outgrew this location, and in the 1950s moved to a larger space on 96 Street and 102A Avenue. The business also moved down the Talbot family line, from R.J. to his son



HESCO celebrates 90 years
 - Alberta-based kitchen design and supply company hits its stride.

and then to his grandson, who sold it to long-time employee Ken Millar. In 2006, with retirement beckoning and no succession plan, Millar asked Larry Ungarian if he'd consider purchasing the business.

"Millar suggested that it would be a good fit for me, and that it would offer a great future for Adam," says Ungarian, who had already accumulated 38 years of experience in the industry and was working for a competitor at the time. Adam, a graduate of the Engineering Design and Drafting Technology program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, was working for the same competitor, in the contract department, designing kitchens. The two decided to go into business together, and became co-owners of Hotel Equipment and Supply.

Redefining the Business

Drawing upon their combined expertise, the Ungarians quickly turned the focus of the business to designing and building commercial kitchens. They take a project – a new restaurant or other foodservice facility – from the conceptual planning stage all the way to equipment installation and start-up. The company then supplies all of



Adam and Larry Ungarian.



The Ungarians understand that the supply aspect, which was the foundation of the business decades ago, is still extremely important because it provides continuity with clients and serves to maintain a loyal client base.



the "smallwares" – the kinds of items that fill the company's showroom shelves – for that kitchen. The Ungarians understand that the supply aspect, which was the foundation of the business decades ago, is still extremely important because it provides continuity with clients and serves to maintain a loyal client base.

The Ungarians also decided to develop "HESCO" (the acronym for Hotel Equipment and Supply Company), as the company's brand, so that's the name on their new signage and

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HESCO designs and builds commercial kitchens, starting from the planning stage through to equipment installations.

their new building, which officially opened in January of this year. It's an impressive building with a fittingly vintage-style façade, an airy showroom, and a massive warehouse, necessary because all of the smallwares and equipment are inventoried and stored on-site.

HESCO's boardroom, just inside the building's entrance, is actually a walk-in cooler showcasing an intelligent control panel and options such as reach-in doors and kickplates. At the back



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It's an impressive building with a fittingly vintage-style façade, an airy showroom, and a massive warehouse, necessary because all of the smallwares and equipment are inventoried and stored on-site.

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of the showroom is a demo kitchen. "This is like a servery that you'd see in a restaurant," Adam Ungarian explains, "and it's great because people can see what would work for them in their particular applications."

Today, the bulk of the company's clients are restaurant owners. HESCO designed, installed, and now supplies Century Hospitality Group's restaurants: Lux Steakhouse + Bar, Delux Burger Bar, Century Grill, and Hundred Bar + Kitchen. The company is designing the B.C. and Alberta locations of Chopped Leaf and Press'd the Sandwich Company, two up-and-coming, healthy fast food chains. "But, we've also designed and installed kitchens for hospitals, jails, churches, seniors' residences, recreational complexes, colleges . . . the whole gamut of foodservice applications," says Larry Ungarian. And the contracts keep coming in. HESCO is currently working with Dub Architects Ltd. on the new Alberta Hotel being built in downtown Edmonton, and with Barr Ryder Architects & Interior Designers on Provident Place Theatre in Redwater, a town located just north of Edmonton. They have also worked closely with CK Design on the Canadian Brewhouse chain and the company has also been very active in the North serving mining and other temporary camps. HESCO has also successfully designed and installed restaurants in Victoria to Halifax.

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HESCO's new building features an airy showroom.

A Firm Grasp on What Matters; a Modest Vision for the Future

Larry Ungarian attributes HESCO's success to three aspects of the company. "The first is the dedication and training of our staff. The second is that we strive to provide the best service. The third is that we back up that service with technical knowledge and assistance."

As Adam Ungarian points out, "This industry is unique because there is no school for it. Training comes from companies like ours that bring people in and educate them." He says there aren't many people who truly understand restaurant design – about flow and walk spaces, where exhaust canopies should be placed, or what the mechanical and electrical considerations are – but HESCO prides itself on the design expertise of its staff,

"This industry is unique because there is no school for it. Training comes from companies like ours that bring people in and educate them."

and on producing some of the most detailed drawings in the industry.

The Ungarians are often heading to trade shows and factory tours. They've visited the Cambro factory in Huntington Beach, the Ice-O-Matic factory in Denver, the Montague factory in San Francisco, True in St. Louis and have trained with Garland Canada in Toronto. They also provide opportunities for their staff to attend events and engage in in-house training. "The only way we improve is by keeping in touch with trends, new styles, and new designs," says Adam Ungarian. "Staying ahead is about being educated."

HESCO's staff now numbers 18 – eight more than when the Ungarians bought the business. A key staff member is Office Manager Doris Ungarian (Larry's wife, Adam's mother), who, as her husband points out, "is more passionate about the business than anyone."

As for the future, the plan is simple. "Our goal is to maintain our position in the industry and to continue with our long-range plan of manageable growth," says Larry Ungarian. The foodservice industry will definitely be watching to see what the future holds for HESCO.

For more information visit: www.hesco.ca



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