

Farrow excels in acquisition

Russell A. Farrow Limited

www.farrow.com
Location Windsor, Ont.
Size 167 employees
Sector International trade services
Market Canada and the United States

Since 1984, Farrow, a diversified, full-service customs broker to importers in Canada and the United States, has successfully managed the integration of no less than 14 acquisitions. "Many of our current clients, and several of our senior management positions, including our executive vice president of operations, began their relationships with us through acquisitions," says Richard Farrow, the company's chairman and CEO. "This is an example of success through careful growth management."

The almost-100-year-old, family-run company also takes pride in the longevity of its relationships. Thirty per cent of its employees have been with Farrow for more than 10 years, and nearly 10% for 25 years.

"This long-tenured staff adds a depth and continuity to our knowledge base," Mr. Farrow says. And some of its clients and suppliers have been with the company for more than 40 years.

The longevity of its relationships and success can be partly attributed to almost a century of Farrow adhering to its core values and principles, Mr. Farrow says, but as well, "Our commitment to, and investment in, technology contributes in a huge way toward our success. My father was



The province of Saskatchewan provides namesake Saskatchewan Minerals the raw material for its products.

one of the first to recognize the trend toward automation in the industry; he invested in one of the first IBM mainframes in the city of Windsor," he says.

"This commitment to technology solutions that benefit our clients continues today."

Farrow was the first Canadian broker to move to centralized processing of after-hours shipments by implementing kiosk technology at remote locations.

"And we recently introduced a customer activity report that provides a customized report card for our high-volume clients and exemplifies our approach to superior customer service," says Mr. Farrow, whose company is determined to become the largest independently owned customs broker in North America. *Alexandra Lopez-Pacheco, Financial Post*

From small operation to industry leader

Saskatchewan Minerals Inc.
www.saskatchewanminerals.com
Head office Chaplin, Sask.
Size 42 employees
Sector Sodium sulphate producer
Market Global

It's an exciting time at Saskatchewan Minerals Inc. (SMI). Sixty-one years in, the one-time small crown corporation has demonstrated an ability to change and grow into a North American leader in the production of high-quality natural sodium sulphate used in detergents, pulp and paper, glass, textile, starch, carpet deodorizers and livestock mineral feed.

"Sodium sulphate is our business

— and we do it better than anyone else. Our customer focus is more than just our approach to sales and marketing, it permeates every aspect of our business," says Rodney McCann, president. "Our long-term plan for SMI is to realize sustainable growth. We have two distinct strategies to achieve this goal: geographic expansion and product line expansion."

To stay ahead of the competition and remain the supplier of choice, SMI stays focused on its five core competencies. Superior quality: It consistently exceeds 99.4% purity. Exceptional service quality: With its natural reserves and technology investments, including state-of-the-art GPS and logistics, SMI can readily adjust both the production and delivery of product to meet clients' needs. In fact, in 2008, when competitors were unable to fulfill supply commitments, SMI

was the only company able to increase production on the spot. Lowest cost natural producer: "We operate 24/7, and continuously adjust variables to improve our product quality and optimize plant efficiencies." Drive value from key alliances: "Our affiliated companies and management allow us access to new expertise, markets and technologies to keep us ahead of the competition." Social responsibility: "SMI is an important and vital part of our community," says Mr. McCann. "Our management and staff support and are actively involved in the community through local programs, environmental initiatives and volunteer opportunities."

Because so many of SMI employees are devoted to serving their community as part of the volunteer fire brigade, local fire drills are broadcast at the Chaplin plant with the support of SMI management. "My management philosophy is based on empowerment," Mr. McCann says. "At SMI, we believe in the importance of training and mentoring employees to succeed in leadership roles. Once these individuals are in place, we encourage them to ask questions, to do the work it takes to understand our business, our vision and our customers. We want them make their own decisions based on research and input from stakeholders." *Mary Teresa Bitti, Financial Post*

Family values show in caring company

Sifton Properties Ltd.
www.sifton.com
Head office London, Ont.
Size 900 employees
Sector Accommodation industry
Market Ontario

When asked to describe Sifton Properties Ltd. in 10 words or less, Richard Sifton, its president and CEO and the third generation to head this family business, replied: "Sifton is a caring, environmentally conscientious, innovative and diverse family company."

In fact, says Mr. Sifton, "We are very diverse." Its five divisions reflect that diversity: new homes, neighbourhood development, commercial leasing, residential rentals and seniors living. "These sectors do not have downturns at the same time. For example, when our new homes and neighbourhood divisions are slower our residential rental, seniors living and commercial leasing business units are thriving. This, combined with our long-term assets and little or no debt, allow us to have the flexibility and control to move quickly in a changing economy." And that is exactly what the family-owned and operated business has done since it began in 1923 as a home builder, building two or three homes a year. What has not changed in all that time is the company's commitment to quality and building long-term relationships with suppliers, customers and employees.

"We are unique in that we have people who rent from us, then buy a house from us, then move into one of our gated communities, and from there to our seniors living division," Mr. Sifton says. "Throughout that period they may have worked in some of our office buildings."

In recognition of that loyalty, Sifton has created quarter-century clubs celebrating its long-term customers. Employees who have been with the company 25 years are recognized with a three-month paid leave.

"Our people enjoy working with us. They take pride in saying they work with Sifton and not for Sifton," Mr. Sifton says. "They know they are not just a number and that we trust them and keep them well informed about what's going on in the day-to-day business."

Now in its 87th year, Sifton Properties continues to be focused on the long-term and that means a clear, unwavering commitment to the environment.

"Sustainability for us is ensuring we are around for the next generation and the next. When we build subdivisions, we believe in leaving more trees than we take out. We have a family foundation geared to environment, children and health-care — all three of those areas, in our minds, are what will aid the communities we live in to be better as time goes on." *M.T.B., Financial Post*

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