

# THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19

HOW THE MANAGERS AT ONE LARGE INDEPENDENT ARE ADJUSTING TO A 'NEW NORMAL.'

**J**amestown Container Companies is a large family-owned independent corrugated manufacturer with facilities in New York and Ohio. Founded in 1956, the company provides products for customers throughout the Northeast. *Corrugated Today* asked several of the managers to provide their view of lessons learned as a result of COVID-19. Following are their responses.

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**Brian Storms**

Corporate Environmental, Health & Safety Manager

I believe the changes made in the wake of the novel coronavirus at corrugated facilities worldwide will have a positive impact going forward. COVID-19 has taught us that we are vulnerable to infectious diseases and need to have cleaner facilities, better personal hygiene, and improved recognition of sick employees and visitors upon their

arrival, preventing them from infecting the workforce. These three basic changes will lead to better product quality, higher production efficiencies and less returned product due to a healthy workforce and minimal absenteeism. Additionally, COVID-19 has taught us that it's not always necessary to spend precious time traveling, in order to be face-to-face, for a productive meeting or a friendly interaction. Modern communication technology such as Zoom, Teams, and various webinar platforms exist and are very effective, saving companies time and money. People generally don't like change. A year ago, I don't think any of us could have foreseen the changes that have been made. COVID-19 has forced us to change "the way we have always done it." These changes in the corrugated industry, and all industries for that matter, are for the better. Going forward, we will be more healthy, more productive and less wasteful.



**Jim Reminder**

Regional General Manager Lake Erie Region

COVID-19 has helped emphasize the importance of the health and well-being of our employees. Every flu season we used to just accept some employees would get sick. The old-school mindset was even to look at those who "toughed it out" as having a great work ethic... barely considering the fact they were likely passing it to those around them. We did very little during flu season to minimize its spread. Now, we do things like: checking temperatures, spending extra time sanitizing work centers and common areas, and reducing seating in cafeterias. We've adapted to minimizing exposure and I see this continuing, at least through the fall and winter months. And rather than appreciate employees for coming in sick, we appreciate them for staying home.



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The COVID-19 situation certainly brought to light the need for us to be capable of working remotely to service our customers. It forced us to quickly adapt and find new ways to process work electronically.

As we adapt to office employees working from home we are also learning that traditional brick-and-mortar offices really aren't necessary. I don't see that changing either. This opens all new doors in hiring, as we aren't just limited to a local pool of candidates anymore. Given our essential business status, I believe we will have greater opportunity to attract talent to our organizations.



**Dave Saraney**  
Regional Sales Manager  
Lake Erie Region

The COVID-19 situation certainly brought to light the need for us to be capable of working remotely to service our customers. It forced us to quickly adapt and find new ways to process work electronically and not hinder the manufacturing process or our customer's supply chain. I believe this will definitely shape the way we do business in our industry. Our customer service and sales teams will need to continue to adapt to electronic transfer of information,

web-based conference calls and less direct contact with customers. Ultimately, I believe this will be a positive for us as we will become more streamlined and efficient.



**Chris Marsh**  
Regional Sales Manager  
Lake Ontario Region

The pandemic and ensuing quarantine has definitely changed the way our account managers engage with current and prospective customers. Despite the re-opening of businesses, COVID-19 has made in-person meetings and on-site visits limited, if not impossible. In order to be successful, our account managers must embrace and utilize technology more than ever before. Our team has been very

active in sales training sessions, taking advantage of our valued relationships through industry groups, LinkedIn, and manufacturing organizations, and will continue to do so as the "new normal" evolves.



**Ryan Seagraves**  
Regional General Manager  
Lake Ontario Region

Being upfront with people on what has happened, what is happening and what is going to happen in the future is critical. Your people need to see that you are taking their health and general work needs seriously. When they know you care they will care that much more. The work environment of the future will have more impact in retaining workers than an extra dollar an hour when people know you care.

In order to be successful, our account managers must embrace and utilize technology more than ever before.

Communication has always been essential for any organization but this outbreak has magnified its importance.



**Todd McPherson**  
Corporate Human  
Resources Director

As an organization we have learned many things from the COVID-19 outbreak. Communication has always been essential for any organization but this outbreak has magnified its importance. Having a clear, concise and consistent message has been key during these difficult times. We tried to be as honest and open with our employees as possible. We

were receiving information and guidance that changed daily but we did our best to create guidelines to keep our employees safe while meeting our customers' needs. As an organization we created daily and weekly communications to keep everyone informed and to relay to our team how important they are to us and how important they are to their communities and our customers. ■

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