

RACING TOWARD Diversity

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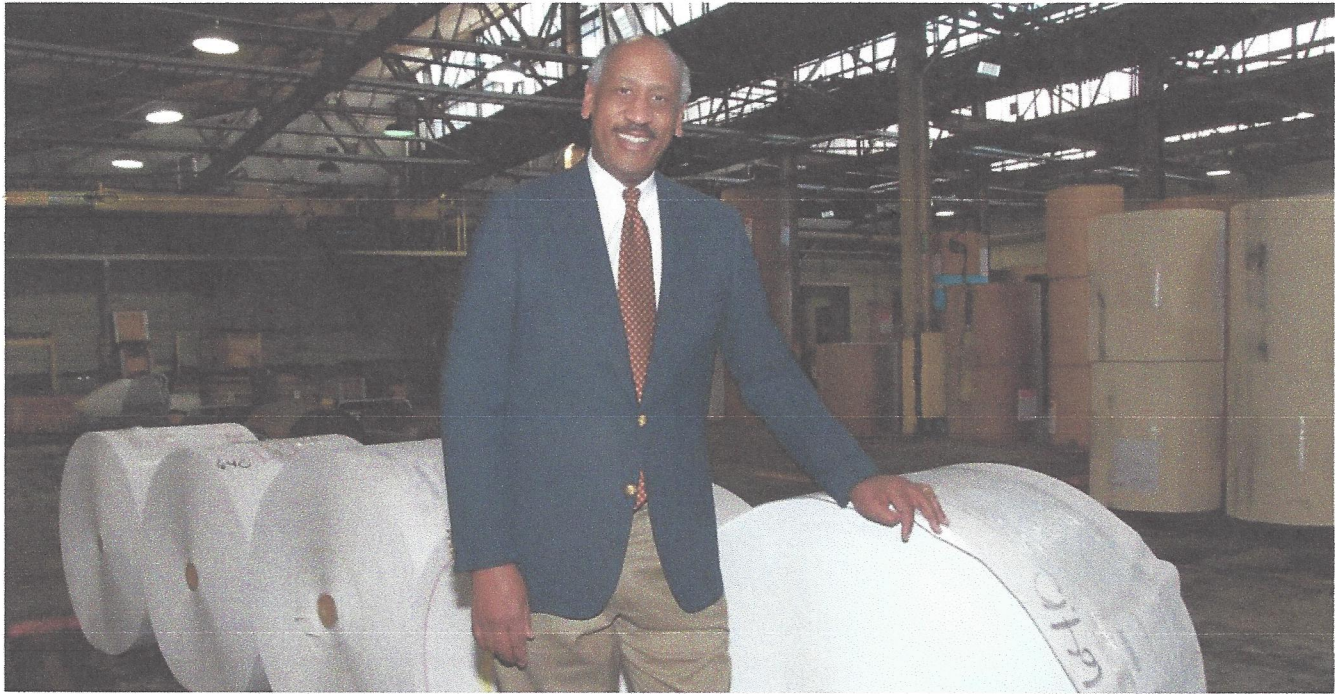
Jennifer Brown

Social shifts open diversity doors.

Introducing our new global discussion format featuring women leaders from General Motors

- Julia Steyn
- Isela Russell
- Rita Kavashé Nariangai

Sue Henderson lifts the vision at New Jersey City University.



OUT OF THE BOX

World Pac Paper is a top minority supplier

BY GENE STOWE

In the decade since Edgar Smith started World Pac Paper, the company's revenue has soared to approximately \$70 million and the global leader was sponsored by Macy's, Inc. in 2011 to become a member of Corporate Plus®, which is an unprecedented membership program for minority business, in the National Minority Supplier Development Council, Inc.® (NMSDC) that represents the highest caliber minority business enterprises that have proven capacity and capability to handle and execute national contracts for major corporations. It includes less than 100 of the more than 12,000 certified Minority Business Enterprises (MBE's) in the United States. The company has been recognized by The Procter and Gamble Company as one of their Top Performing Global Partners. The external business partners receiving this distinction represent 0.1% of P&G's global suppliers. World Pac Paper is an INC.500, BE100 and IC100 company. He and his company are the recipient of numerous business awards and community honors.

Smith's diversity engagement reaches into his board service and community activity – especially the arts, the Boy Scouts of America

(he's an Eagle Scout) and the American Red Cross – as well as his company. He learned the business-value dimension of diversity when he was a Senior Sales Representative at Monsanto in the late 80's and early 90's.

"The company started doing diversity training to create a culture of diversity," Smith recalls. "The company had successfully recruited top qualified minority and female new hires and increased the diversity of the workforce. But, cultural changes were needed to retain those promising employees and turn the issue of workforce diversity into a business advantage.

"It was really all about managing a diverse workforce, turning 'the right thing' into a competitive and key business advantage. Customers, partners, and suppliers were becoming more and more diverse. The company and its markets were becoming more global and diverse culturally. A diverse workforce provided greater acceptance, which was key to building effective teams, to increase productivity and responsibility. If you have a reputation and culture of diversity and inclusiveness it will most surely enhance your ability to recruit and retain top talent."

Smith, an Iowa native who grew up in the Detroit metropolitan area and attended Morehouse College in Atlanta, is a second generation Morehouse Man. His father, a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, a 1952 Morehouse College graduate, received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2012. Upon graduation, Smith had his pick of job offers from such companies as Nestlé, Owens-Corning, The Quaker Oats Company, Monsanto, and Marriott Corporation when he graduated with a marketing degree in 1983.

Given his options, he selected and went to work, as a Sales Representative, for RR Donnelley & Sons, the nation's largest commercial printer, in Chicago at their headquarters and, then was later relocated to New York City where he sold web-offset and gravure printing and handled the R.H. Macy & Co. account and noticed, early on, the high volume of paper consumed by his account at the company's printing plants – over 30,000 tons a year.

"At that point, I said I'd like to get into the paper industry," Smith recalls. He acquired the entrepreneurial drive at a young age, growing up surrounded by his parent's small business ventures.

First he was re-recruited by Monsanto, where he sold food and industrial chemicals, on the East Coast, for eight years, then in 1992 he was recruited by James River Corporation, a large paper company where he was a Senior Packaging Specialist selling paperboard packaging/folding cartons representing the company at major accounts with large volume sales such as Pepperidge Farm and Dixie. In 1994, he went to work in the Midwest for Georgia-Pacific Corporation as Sales Manager for the paper firm's corrugated packaging division where he directly managed their Cincinnati container plant sales/sales team and co-managed an area marketing concept to sell packaging/corrugated containers. He also personally sold the Wal-Mart account and became their largest supplier of corrugated boxes and created Wal-Mart into a national account for GP. He then was recruited to Smurfit-Stone as a National Account Manager on Procter & Gamble and a few other national accounts in 1998, a job with account responsibilities that took him to locations around the world, from China to Thailand to Ecuador to Mexico, among the multitude of other global destinations.

His last corporate job was Vice President, National Sales for Coca-Cola North America in the Foodservice and Hospitality Division, the fountain side of the beverage company's business with such customers as TGI Friday's, Yum Brands, Inc. (Long John Silver's and A&W), White Castle, Texas Roadhouse, Perkins/Marie Callenders, Steak n' Shake, and Bob Evans.

In 2004, Smith established the paper/paperboard marketing & solutions company, World Pac Paper, LLC, whose business concept and idea he had carried for two decades while he gained experience in the commercial printing, industrial & food chemicals, and paper and packaging areas, working with industry leaders provided the diverse industry knowledge base to start a global independent and progressive distribution and solutions company. His various professional experiences enabled the company to interact with industry veterans, and when ready, he recruited skilled individuals to his management team. This company was built from the ground up by industry experts, combining the best entrepreneurial management to create the dynamic, fast growing and award winning World Pac Paper, LLC.

"Our business model is performance based and we are a mill-direct, global distributor of high-quality printing & packaging papers and innovative packaging solutions with smart, strategic focused warehousing," he says. "We pride ourselves on being able to

bring together the required sourcing, service, market knowledge and financial resources needed to secure and maintain availability of the right paper products at the right place, at the right time and always at the right competitive market price."

"We are real paper people! We have a clear direction. Paper & packaging is our business. We move and market paper and packaging. We are very excited to be involved with products that are so versatile, so woven into the way we live our lives and communicate with each other, while still being natural, recyclable and sustainable.

"We serve the Fortune 500/1000, commercial printers, catalogers, book and magazine publishers, integrated and independent corrugated converters, folding carton/rigid box manufacturers, tube winders, laminators, paper converters and the retail, foodservice, healthcare and entertainment industries. Our connections to over 70 paper mills around the world provide a wide array of products, whether it's coated or uncoated, freesheet or groundwood, paperboard, containerboard, core paper, specialty paper, etc..."

"We're going directly from the mill to the end user, whether that's a commercial printer or a paper or packaging converter," Smith says. "It's not just paper that's used in printing magazines and books."

World Pac Paper products can show up in a variety of places such as catalogs, national magazines, pharmaceutical packaging, direct mail paper, paper shopping bags, toothpaste cartons, business envelopes, temporary corrugated point-of-purchase displays, brown boxes and the cores for leading brands of towel and tissue.

"One of the things that helped us through the years is our product mix... diversification was key," says Smith, who has come back stronger than ever after a 20 percent downturn during the Great Recession of 2008. "The market is a very competitive marketplace. There have been a number of shutdowns, consolidations, and mergers & acquisitions that have taken place in the paper and packaging industry. This trend will likely continue."

Diversity of workforce and supplier base, like diversity of product, is vital to success, he says.

"I would say diversity is important to me because we are all in an era of unprecedented change. We must all not only look at the way we conduct business - we also have to think

about the way we think about business. Within this new world and environment, we must be open to thinking differently. We must be diversity stewards! By 2043, the nation's minority population will be the majority. In other words, new business, new jobs and new products will be strongly influenced by, if not created by, the minority community. The only thing we can count on is change. Reality is always in motion. If we take the long view, the really long view, we can see that everything is in process all of the time. Life is a process."

Smith promotes diversity in his own company's culture as well as educating others on the important values that inclusion brings. He feels success is not defined by conducting business with the same network of suppliers, partners and customers time and again. He emphatically states, "Success is realized by branching out and investing in diversity, resulting in a future competitive edge. Our future's national competitive advantage will depend on the quality of the U.S. workforce and the vitality of our entrepreneurial economy, both of which will be dominated by minorities. It's in our economic interests to have successful minority participation and economic inclusion in U.S. businesses. This needs to be seen and treated as a national priority."

"As a leader, I feel it's critical to me to have a full awareness and sensitivity toward diversity in terms of the workplace as well as supplier diversity," he says. "As a certified minority supplier, I'm convinced we bring a very competitive business model, added skill sets, strategic advantages over competitors, we bring innovative and creative solutions, proven tactical advantages in the global marketplace, cost savings with unique and different perspectives and voices."

"We also need to continue to appreciate the whole intersection of diversity and innovation, as it creates more opportunities for robust interactions and conversations about ideas, innovation and how to really look at opportunities or challenges and how things can come together to truly create even more exciting solutions. There's an absolute need for a much stronger connection as it relates to diversity and innovation. We need to recognize, celebrate, and promote differences if our nation is to continue to be globally competitive and have a competitive advantage. We must seize opportunities for diverse collaboration."

Diversity creates opportunity! 