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JOHN KING

J. Kings Food Service Professionals

It has always been important to John King to get his employees to believe in his company and, more importantly, to believe in him. The founder and chief customer officer of J. Kings Food Service Professionals, King has been involving his workforce in the company's strategic planning since 1974. In that span, J. Kings has grown from a part-time venture into a multi-faceted food service distribution business with more than 400 employees and annual sales of about \$200 million.

"We always talked about where we want to go and what we want to be when we grow up," he said. "The interesting part is that we had no idea that we were going to build a business the size that it is."

King's loyalty to his team is reflected in the fact that so many employees have been with the company for many, many years, which he acknowledges has been the reason behind the company's strength.

Always focused on being more than a distributor, King helps his clients grow their businesses. He has won numerous awards and received accolades for his innovative ideas and services to his customers, including value-added marketing services and educational seminars.

Offering new programs never gets old with him, as he recently introduced an innovative program, Independent University, where J. Kings offers training to independent restaurateurs/retailers that aim to fine-tune their business skills, with topics including strategic planning and how to hire and train people.

He is also interested in implementing cooking classes inside popular restaurants to bring customers into the eateries during the often quiet weekday nights.

King, known for making frequent personal visits to his clients' offices, is continually developing new products and ideas to better serve his clients.

"We opened a manufacturing facility in Bay Shore and are now doing manufacturing for people like Trader Joe's, Stop and Shop and Shoprite," he said.

J. Kings is also obtaining liquor and beer distribution licenses and plans to sell Long Island beer and wine to New York City restaurants. Additionally, King is expanding into the tracking and storage area, offering local farmers "farm to the fork" tracking services.

"We will pick it up, bring it to our building, mark it, track it and make it suitable to sell to the market," he said.

He is a forward thinker and his insight of independent businesses has led him to create companies that fill the needs of other independent businesses, including Polar Crossing in Bohemia and Grapes & Greens in Calverton. These units provide food processing, dry/cold storage and logistics. He's also expanded his reach with Green Apple Foods, a successful popcorn manufacturing and fun food business in Holbrook. Digital Motion, another venture of King's, is a full-service marketing agency in Bohemia, providing J. Kings' customers with marketing, web and signature promotional items. He is also a managing partner in Crown Royal Ventures, a commercial real estate business in Bohemia.

He supports local agriculture and further promotes the use of local produce by distributing it to local retailers. He has also been instrumental in arranging customer tours of local farms.

He serves on the board for the Southside Hospital Community Board, the Police Athletic League, Boys Hope Girls Hope of New York and Telecare TV.