

METRO BUSINESS ...

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**Hunter Lansing
taking family's
building supply
business to
new heights**

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Vision drives Lansing Building Products

Longtime Henrico firm focuses on service as it sets billion-dollar goal

BY JOHN REID BLACKWELL
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Henrico County-based Lansing Building Products has been on a rising business trajectory in recent years.

Its leaders have set ambitious goals for the next six years as the company, founded in 1955, pushes toward its 70th year in business.

After the lean years of the Great Recession, the wholesale supplier of specialty building products has seen sales grow from less than \$350 million in 2014 to surpass the \$500 million mark in 2017 and nearly reach \$600 million last year.

While the overall economy has been a factor in that growth, the company's president and CEO, Hunter Lansing, said the success comes down to "our people and our culture."



Lansing

and the third generation of his family to lead the business.

The company's sales growth has outpaced the overall building supply industry's growth, he said.

"A lot of that has been market share we have taken," Hunter Lansing said. "We try not to just ride the industry wave. We try to go out and capture new business and find new customers."

"We have really expanded our revenue on a location-by-location basis," he said.

In late 2017, the company also moved from its former home office on Sanford Drive, which it had occupied since 1974, into



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Toccara Gruber uses a new scanner to check inventory at the distribution site on North Lakeridge Parkway in Hanover County that opened in late 2017. At the same time, Lansing Building Products opened a newly renovated headquarters on Edward Holland Drive in Henrico County.

a newly renovated headquarters on Edward Holland Drive. At the same time, the company opened a new distribution site on North Lakeridge Parkway in Hanover County to serve its central Virginia customers.

The new headquarters, decorated in bright blue colors, is suffused with a sense of the company's long history, as well as its mission and future. A "Heritage Wall" showcases the company's progress from its founding in Richmond in 1955 as Ted Lansing Supply Co. to a business that now employs about 950 people with 77 branches around the nation.

Lansing Building Products focuses on supplying windows, doors, gutters and siding to about 60,000 customers, mostly building contractors and professional home renovators around the country.

"We sell to everyone from the small contractor or remodeler who operates his or her business out of the back of a truck, to the top 20 publicly traded builders," Hunter Lansing said.



Hunter Lansing became CEO in 2016 when his father, Chris Lansing, retired from day-to-day management, though he

remains chairman of the company's board of directors.

Chris Lansing and his wife, Erlynn, are near the end of a three-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Working in Utah, they have been providing guidance and direction and managing daily operations for about 150 of the church's young missionaries.

Hunter's brothers Ted Lansing and Chase Lansing are also in the company leadership, with Ted serving as executive vice president for brand development and Chase as vice president for real estate.

Under the leadership of Chris Lansing, who acquired the business a few years after his father Ted Lansing died in 1980, the company expanded from six branches to 75 branches by 2015.

Now, the company's leaders have set some new goals.

"We call it Vision 2025," Hunter Lansing said.

One of the goals in that strategic vision is for Lansing Building Products to reach \$1 billion in annual sales by 2025.

The industry has 11 companies that generated more than \$1 billion in sales in 2018. Lansing Building Products was the



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Contractor Charlie Harriman picks up his order of windows and molding at the warehouse loading dock. Lansing Building Products continues to grow and is on track to reach \$1 billion in annual sales by 2025.

13th-largest by sales last year with revenue growth of nearly 10%, according to rankings by the industry trade publication ProSales.

The industry includes multibillion-dollar players such as Wisconsin-based ABC Supply Co., Dallas-based Builders First-Source and Herndon-based Beacon Roofing Supply.

The larger companies make a lot of money from selling roofing and lumber, but “we do not sell commoditized products like those,” Hunter Lansing said. “We sort of fit a niche. There are not a whole lot of companies out there like us who do things like we do.”

A downturn in the economy could stymie reaching the billion-dollar goal, but Robert S. “Bobby” Ukrop, one of three outsiders who serve on Lansing’s nine-member board of directors, said he is confident the company can get there.

“Even if they fall a little bit short, it won’t be for not trying,” said Ukrop, CEO of Henrico-based Ukrop’s Homestyle Foods. “Their people are hungry

Founded in 1955, the firm now employs about 950 people with 77 branches around the nation.

for success. They are not taking their foot off the pedal.”

Lansing Building Products has an “aggressive” sales mentality but is also focused on excellent customer service, Ukrop said.

“The best way to build new business is to satisfy existing customers,” he said. “Word spreads, and that is how they’ve built their business.”

Part of the growth Lansing Building Products is targeting could come from establishing new branches around the country. A map in the headquarters lobby pinpoints the location of each of its 77 branches in 25 states.

Hunter Lansing pointed out that the company is heav-

ily concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic and Deep South and has branches in the Pacific Northwest, but there are regions where it has no footprint — parts of the Northeast, for instance.

“We want to continue growing our business, and there are a lot of pockets where we do not have a presence,” said Hunter Lansing, adding that the company expects to grow both organically and through acquisitions.

“Throughout our 64-year history, we have grown both through acquisitions and green-field [opening new locations],” he said. “We have got an acquisition target list we are actively working, and we have got green-field locations that we have identified.”



Another strategy aimed at helping Lansing Building Products grow is an ongoing push to implement new technology so that its building products can be stored, tracked and shipped more quickly and efficiently.



Window specialist Curtis Duncan talks to a customer in the showroom. CEO Hunter Lansing aims to take the company to an e-commerce level.

Employees who work at the company’s distribution center in Hanover are on the front lines of that push. The company is in the midst of rolling out a new warehouse logistics barcoding system at its branches.

“This will take our inventory accuracy to 99 percent,” Hunter Lansing said.

“The bigger picture is really about taking our business to an e-commerce level,” he said. “The idea and the expectation is that if you are a customer of ours and you place an order — say on a Tuesday afternoon — those materials will arrive on your job site 18 to 24 hours later.”

“What we have been asking is what are our customers going to expect of us in five years?” he said. “We really think it is going to be this e-commerce platform.”

Ray Avery, executive vice president of Chesterfield County-based homebuilder Emerald Homes, said the company has been buying almost all of its siding from Lansing Building Products since the 1990s and has stuck with the company because of its emphasis on good service.

“I know I am dealing with good folks who I can count on to do what they say they are going to do,” Avery said.



At the home office of Lansing Building Products, the nameplates beside each office door

don’t list titles, no matter the rank.

Instead, they simply show how long the occupant of each office has been “delivering excellence” for the company.

“They have a great leadership team, supported by other senior leaders and family members,” said Mark Hourigan, CEO of the Richmond-based construction and development company Hourigan, who is also a member of the Lansing Building Products board of directors.

“They are committed to growing the company in the right way,” Hourigan said.

Some associates, such as credit manager Glenda Miller and inside sales representative Boe Watkins, have been with the company more than 40 years.

“We value tenure,” said Hunter Lansing, who was quick to add that the company has “a great mix” of long-term and newer employees.

The company’s chief operations officer, Billy Mosby, has 24 years of tenure.

Among the relatively newer members of the leadership team is Mason Chapman, who joined the company as chief financial officer in 2016 after previously working in finance for another company that was bought by a private equity firm.

“Family-owned is a great place to be,” Chapman said of working at Lansing. “You get to think long-term and not just

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quarter to quarter. This is not about what our exit strategy is or how we can sell the company. They have had the company for 64 years.”

Hunter Lansing joined the company full time in 2005 out of college and worked as a sales representative and branch manager in Charlotte, N.C., before returning to Richmond as vice president of marketing.

He was a branch manager when the housing bust and recession hit.

“The music stopped real quick,” he said. “It was some challenging and painful times.”

“We survived it as a company and got through it,” Hunter Lansing said. “I learned a lot being in the field and on the front lines.”

The billion-dollar sales target is not actually the company’s top goal for 2025. The top goals are to become a “best in class” place to work and to continue to improve customer experience.

“If we do those two, then the billion dollars will come,” he said.

The target is really just a means to an end for the company, he said.

“Yes, we need to make a profit and, yes, we need to hit our financial goals,” he said. “At the end of the day, though, that is not what really motivates the leadership team.”

“We exist to make a meaningful impact in the lives of our associates. That is why Lansing Building Products has not been sold, and it is why we have been around for 65 years.”

jblackwell@timesdispatch.com
(804) 775-8123



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Lansing Building Products relocated to North Lakeridge Parkway in Hanover County after outgrowing its space near Parham and Staples Mill roads. It stocks supplies that can be picked up by local contractors.