

▲ Part of the Gold Coast Packing crop that makes it among the largest washed and ready to use cilantro packers in the world.

and shipping costs on a year-round basis. Other trucks picking up in the Valley will also be encouraged to take advantage of consolidation opportunities at the new location.

Fresh Venture Foods was a year in construction, but decades in the making. Both of the partners in the new facility have spent more than a third of a century in developing their reputations for quality products and a loyal customer base.

Thus an important element of the joint announcement was to assure their respective customers that the partnering companies will keep their individual identities and that marketing and sales contacts are unchanged.

In fact, the new building has 8,000 feet of office space for the separate administrative functions of the two companies.

Whether this joint effort between Gold Coast Packing and Babé Farms becomes the “new normal,” in this and other industries, remains to be seen. What we do know is that these two companies were uniquely qualified to create a new model that has generated a “win-win” scenario for them, their employees and customers.

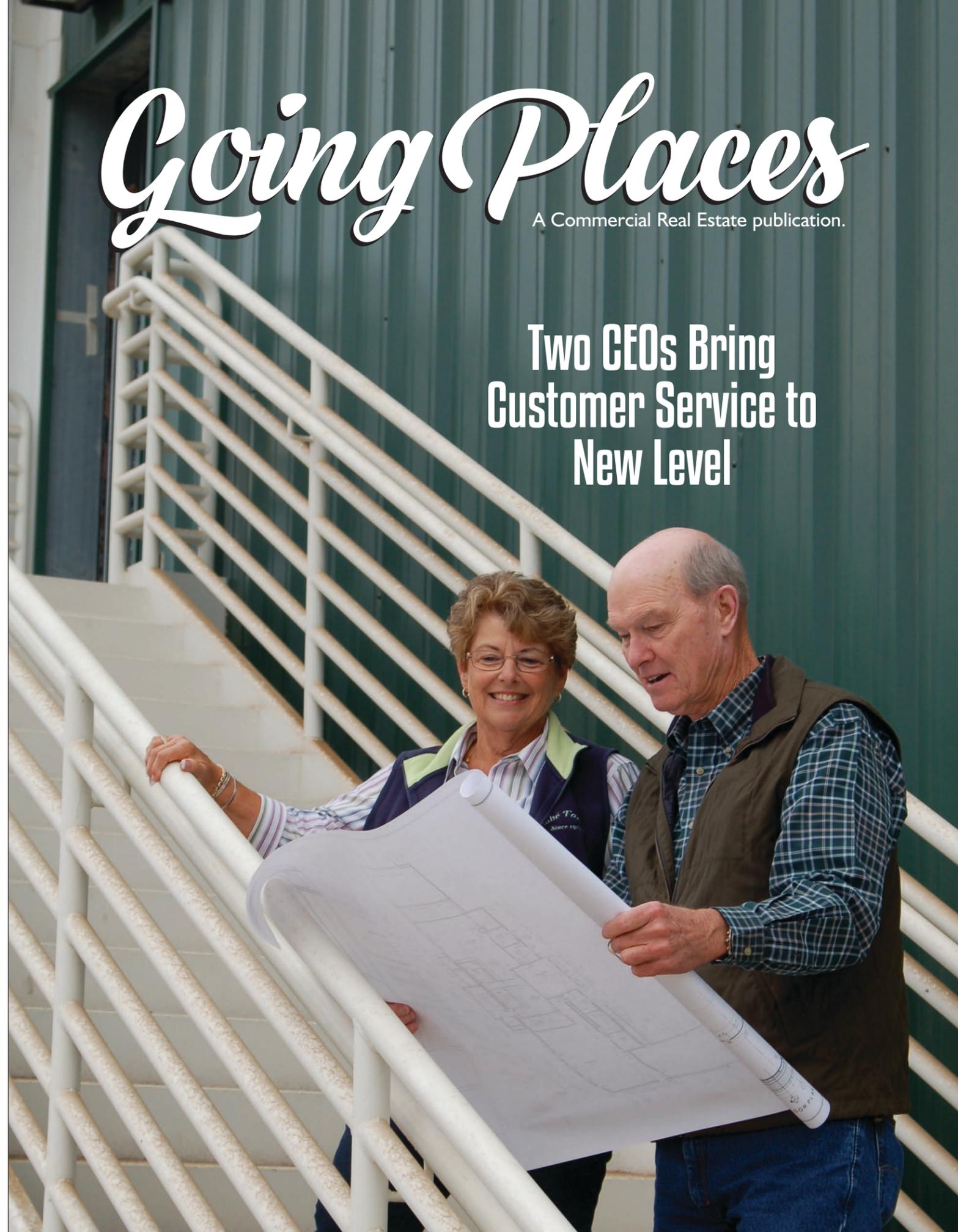
Will others follow?

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Going Places

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Two CEOs Bring Customer Service to New Level



Babé Farms and Gold Coast Packing Build and Share New Processing Plant

by Rob Bryant, editor of Business World

Co-operative efforts exist throughout the history of business, and they have been particularly prevalent in the annals of the agricultural industry. The joint undertaking by two prominent growers in the fertile Santa Maria Valley, however, may be plowing new ground.

In an effort to solve their mutual need to modernize and expand their respective processing facilities, Gold Coast Packing and Babé Farms created a third entity, Fresh Venture Foods. By combining forces, the two farming operations have met their customer service objectives on a grander scale than either would have achieved on an individual basis.

The plant has modernized systems for receiving, cooling, cleaning, sorting and packing that will increase production for the founders by 50 percent.

Mainly, the new facility's additional space and modernized systems allow for future growth, without sacrificing the product quality and unsurpassed food safety standards that both companies have established over the past three decades.

"Fresh Venture Foods is basically a mutual enterprise between two old friends with similar requirements for economy, efficiency of operations and room for future growth," explained Ron Burk, CEO of Gold Coast Packing. It is the first new processing and cold storage plant in the Santa Maria Valley in 16 years.



His company's product line includes value-added broccoli and cauliflower florets, table-ready cilantro, and spinach and specialty packs, which are very popular in the foodservice market.



Judy Lundberg, CEO of Babé Farms, which grows, packs and ships specialty salad blends and baby vegetables to foodservice as well as the retail market, felt the timing was right for the pair to launch their new business model.

"Both of our companies were working at capacity, in outdated facilities on multiple sites," she said. "We had to do something and we decided to do it together."

Both Burk and Lundberg agreed that their mutual desire to maximize customer service guided every plan and decision in

New hand wash facilities for the 150 employees assure that food safety begins with individual cleanliness policy and HACCP compliance.



designing and equipping the new 75,000 square foot facility, which will include a 10-bay loading dock.

The plant has modernized systems for receiving, cooling, cleaning, sorting and packing that will increase production for the founders by 50 percent. Such new capacity will improve turnaround time from the field to their respective customers' warehouses.

"This kind of efficiency," added Ms. Lundberg, "is ideal for those of us promoting the benefits of fresh produce."

▲ *A modern cooling system is among the many installations that enhance the operational efficiency of Fresh Venture Foods and enables both Gold Coast Packing and Babé Farms to maintain their unsurpassed quality standards well into the future.*



Better efficiency isn't lost on the employees, according to Burk who explained, "Customers will enjoy optimum service from our personnel who are operating in a more comfortable and efficient environment. Extra room to do your job allows more productivity at less effort."

A combined work force of 150 will operate two shifts over six days per week. A second building phase, to accommodate future growth, will bring capacity to 105,000 s.f. when expansion is required.

Cost savings and efficiencies are also found at the loading dock. The customers that Gold Coast Packing and Babé Farms have in common will be able to consolidate loading, which will reduce delivery times

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FRESH VENTURE FOODS WAS A YEAR IN CONSTRUCTION BUT MORE THAN THREE DECADES IN THE MAKING.

