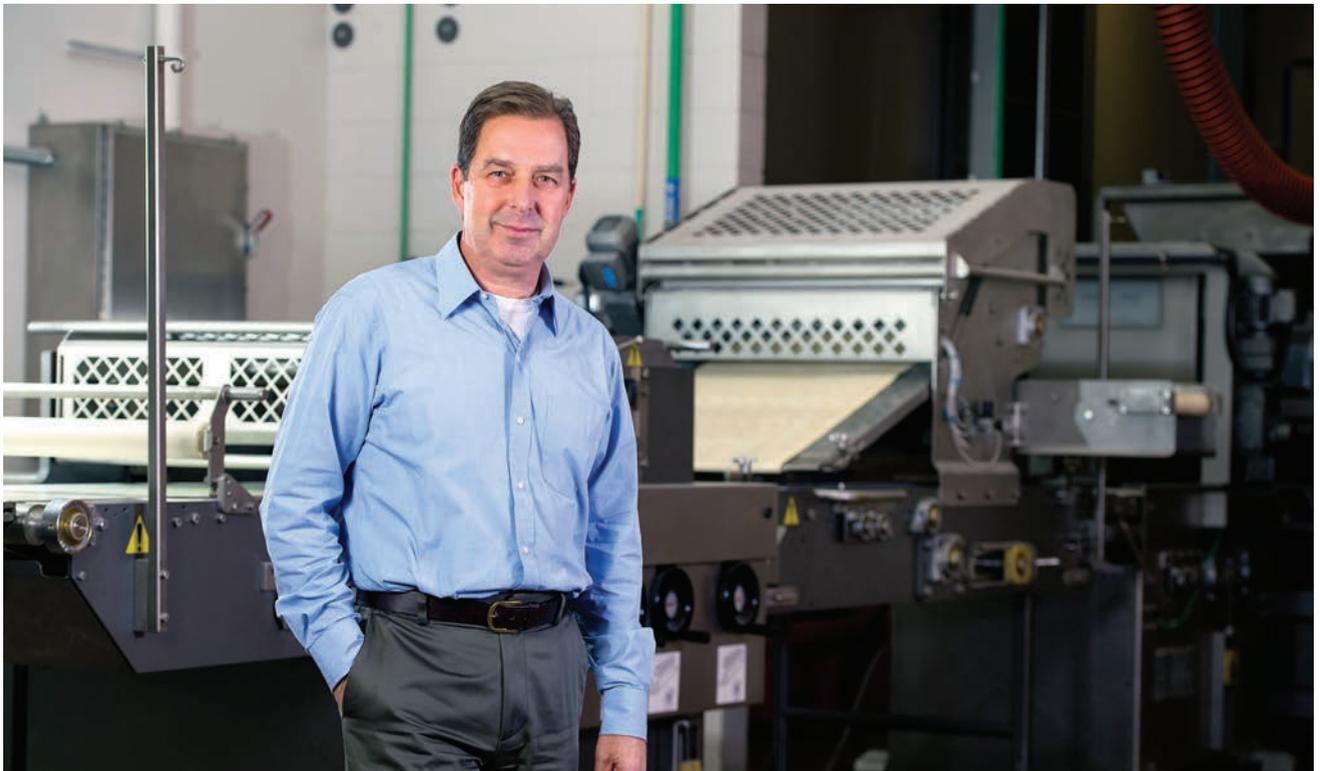


featured technical expert



READING BAKERY SYSTEMS: KEN ZVONCHECK

Developing the next big idea isn't new to Ken Zvoncheck. He's been digging deep for inspiration throughout his career. And before he became the Reading Bakery Systems (RBS) director of process technology, he put his creative and technical mind to work making snacks.

Mr. Zvoncheck started his career in baking directly out of college. He managed two regional snack plants for more than 20 years. During this time, he was involved in new product development and process efficiency — two sides of the creative coin.

"There is still some art in baked snack production, but so much science can also be applied," he said.

This experience introduced Mr. Zvoncheck to the baking industry. Since then, he's transformed his experience into a career at RBS by not only helping the company better implement its equipment but also teaching bakers how to improve their own operations.

"Before coming to RBS, the plants that I managed were customers of RBS, so I tend to look at equipment as a customer rather than a supplier," he said. "I believe this complements our engineering group well and challenges our staff, as I tend to see things from a different perspective."

When he transitioned to RBS, he managed the Science & Innovation Center for 15 years, which provided him exposure and experience with customers developing a variety of baked snacks around the world.

The experience was invaluable, he said, because he could help

customers fast-track their product development processes.

Mr. Zvoncheck's current role as director of process technology lets him tap into his experience to show snack companies how to improve and innovate.

"My goal is to help customers achieve superior quality, efficiency and energy savings in their processes, as well as help them develop new products to fill their capacity," he said.

With first-hand knowledge of how snack plants operate, he assists customers in choosing proper equipment based on the complicated process needs of a select snack. He understands the art involved in making a snack but also steers them to the right science.

"We must still respect their experience but also bring in the 'science' part of our knowledge," Mr. Zvoncheck said. "This analytical approach, coupled with empirical knowledge, is a good blend of expertise to direct our customers in what we feel is the right direction in making their choice. After all, their success is our success, so we are all in this together."

Recently, he visited a customer in Europe who was having an issue developing a cracker to compete in their market. After reviewing their process, Mr. Zvoncheck discovered that the sequencing of ingredients in the mixing phase wasn't ideal.

"We changed this to a different sequence, thereby adjusting the acidity of the dough, and the development suddenly opened up," he said. "It's always a gratifying feeling when you have success and know that you helped your customer going forward."

Mr. Zvoncheck works out of the RBS R&D Center, which provides direct involvement in FATs performed at the center and allows him to simultaneously learn and provide input on potential improvements for customers.

As it has for most, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has temporarily changed how Mr. Zvoncheck does his job. One new way he reaches customers is through RBS' webinar series, in which he was the first presenter on innovation in healthy, sheeted snack production. More than 400 people registered for the course. When normal business practices return, he will resume the formal training process and education at bakeries and in the Science & Innovation Center.

The pandemic isn't slowing Mr. Zvoncheck down. He knows that the baking industry is stable because people always need to eat. And if he can help them enjoy new and better snacks, then he's achieved his goal.

"It is certainly gratifying for me to see a new product go from concept to the store shelf knowing that I have been part of that process," he said.

— Nico Roesler



www.camcorpinc.com



CAMCORP
A MEMBER OF THE SCHEUCH GROUP

PROCESS WITH CONFIDENCE

REPEATABLE AND ACCURATE
PNEUMATIC CONVEYING SYSTEMS

Helping customers to automate manual processes - big or small - is what we do to improve production efficiency, quality control, and labor costs.

CAMCORP experts understand these processes and can design a pneumatic conveying system that meets your processing goals. Call us today at 1-877-226-2677.