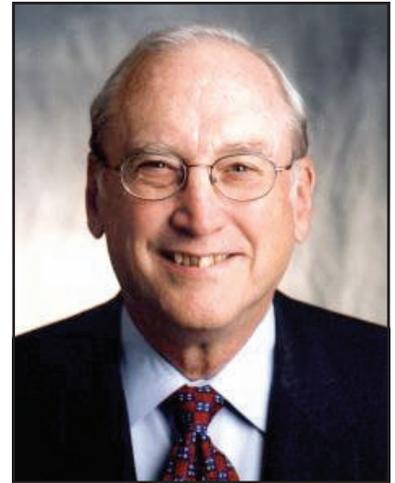


2008 Volunteer of the Year

Andre Lacy

By Rebecca Patrick



“I go into a corrugated box plant today, and I just love the smell. But that industry’s appetite for profit wasn’t as strong as mine, so we decided to exit that business,” explains Andre Lacy, chairman of the board for LDI Ltd., the Indianapolis firm that now specializes in wholesale distribution.

With these simple, yet direct remarks, Lacy gives both a fond nod to his family’s history in the community and reveals the true businessman that has pushed LDI to continued growth – growth that soon will near the billion-dollar mark in sales.

The Lacy family has been part of the Indianapolis business scene for nearly 100 years. Andre’s grandfather, Howard – along with two partners – started LDI’s predecessor, U.S. Corrugated-Fibre Box Company, in 1912.

“Howard Sr. was just a remarkable guy. The corrugated box industry was in its infancy at that time; he was a pioneer with it,” Lacy offers.

“I got into the company when my Dad died (in 1959). The company, arguably, was put together with sort of chewing gum and bailing wire. Over the next years, we ended up building U.S. Corrugated into a real leader in the industry. ... Today, we’re a holding company with two businesses that are either number one or two in their respective industries.”

Lacy was active in and led much of the day-to-day operations of the business until 2007, when he stepped into his current role that calls for 50% of his time. The other half he devotes to family and community.

During his time at the helm, Lacy is particularly proud of two accomplishments. “We created the company to be an institution, an institution defined as more important than any one single individual and reliably sustainable over multiple generations. Then, over that 45-year timeframe, we were able to record a 15% compounded growth rate in the company’s enterprise value.”

Lacy’s current focus with the company is “in the things I enjoy and feel I can provide a contribution. That’s basically in strategy, long-term planning and promulgating culture – and the overall governance.

“One of the things I really care to have is what I call windshield time. Windshield time is being in the field with sales personnel, listening to customers – understanding and asking how easy are we to do business with, what are our competitive advantages and asking how is their business,” he notes.

“As you move on, you have to step away from the supply side, but you can certainly continue with the customer side – and I really enjoy it.”

Balance in life

Lacy also takes great pleasure in his time outside of work.

“I believe it’s awfully important personally – for me or anybody – to strike a proper balance in their life between business and family. I really have lived that,” he states.

“My parents were also good role models for being involved with the community. That’s where my dad (Howard II) was a lot different than my grandfather, who was strictly entrepreneurial and it was basically the business and then his personal interests.”

As an up-and-comer in the business world, Lacy crossed paths with Eldon Campbell, the late Indianapolis civic leader and WRTV general manager. It was Campbell’s specific philosophy about giving back to the community that hit home.

“He was remarkable. He talked about being good at doing good. It

Politics and public policy are passions for Andre Lacy, who attended a meeting with Sen. Evan Bayh at the Chamber’s recent D.C. Fly-in event.



provides all kinds of opportunities. You benefit the entity – whether it’s the United Way, Indianapolis Public Schools or something else, and it gives you networks and relationships. That I think was really a strong life lesson for me.”

When it comes to his own civic mindedness, politics has always been a passion for Lacy. “I first became aware of politics during the Eisenhower presidential election. My father supported Robert Taft in the primary, and it was very interesting to be old enough for the first time to see the difference. That was fascinating,” he shares.

Later on, when Keith Bulen became Marion County Republican chairman in the mid-1960s, Lacy and his wife, Julia, “got involved in that whole stampede that Bulen brought about. I’m a contemporary of (U.S. Congressman) Dan Burton and (former Indiana Lieutenant Governor) John Mutz; we all started at the same time in the Young Republican Club.”

Chamber commitment

It’s no surprise then that Lacy has been a major player for the Indiana Chamber’s political action arm, Indiana Business for Responsive Government (IBRG). Beyond being an active committee member, this year Lacy established a matching fund for new and increased contributions to IBRG.

“I said to Kevin (Brinegar, Indiana Chamber president), ‘What can we do to make a difference?’ I was increasingly frustrated with the General Assembly, their bickering over the

Lacy Legacy

The Lacy family and employees of LDI Ltd. have promoted various worthwhile endeavors in Indianapolis for decades – be it in the arts, education or the business community.

The Stanley K. Lacy Foundation, formed in memory of Andre’s late brother, is a well-known and well-respected executive leadership training program.

last decade or so, plus I think that we lost – maybe on both sides of the aisle – the notion that business is essential and vital for a civil society and for quality of life,” Lacy declares.

“Business is not a dirty word. Business is the means for you to pay your mortgage. It is the means that you can take a vacation. It is the means that you can pay for your children’s education ... and sometimes to splurge. Business is the big engine (for all that).

And for that big engine to run its smoothest, it needs the right conditions.

“At the state level, we need to be easy to do business with compared first of all to those states immediately around us and then in a national and global sense. IBRG is the strong political advocate that tries to find and support legislators to run for office who advocate that we need that competitive advantage,” Lacy asserts.

“We also really needed to excite the Chamber membership to

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get more engaged in business advocacy. That's one reason I agreed to do the matching fund."

Mission accomplished.

"The fund has really served us well to leverage new investments to IBRG," Brinegar states. "In one case, we took what had been a \$10,000 commitment – and doubled that – and then with Andre's dollar-for-dollar match, that investment ramped up to \$30,000 total."

But perhaps where Lacy has most left his mark with the Chamber in 2008 is with his service as chairman of the board of directors. He came into his year with a clear vision of what he could do to help elevate the organization.

One thing he pushed for was "developing greater transparency from the president and the chairman, with the expectation that it would excite greater transparency and candor from the executive committee (the Chamber's primary governing body).

"We also put in good governance like having executive sessions at the end of every (executive committee) meeting, both with Kevin and without. In general, we moved our whole governance closer to the 21st century for the best business practices," Lacy says.

Another high priority was examining the Chamber's efforts to make public policy resonate with the masses. "I wanted to explore how the Chamber could be more effective in its communication as an advocate for Indiana. That focus was admirably embraced and, along with the many new communication initiatives, established an excellent benchmark to measure our effectiveness in bending public impressions of business contribution in Indiana. We still have a ways to go to be understood, and I believe that will be done when our communication is simple, forthright and elicits emotion and passion from the reader," Lacy stresses.

It's been this tenure as chairman, he concludes, that has produced his greatest satisfactions involving the Chamber.

"Accomplishing the governance (changes) and watching Kevin really relish the excited interaction that he now has with his executive committee. That's been the most rewarding. I think it has really worked out well."