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## This \$275M DFW company sells the products you never think about

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Lonnie Pollock III has friends that are doctors, lawyers and real estate big-wigs. You know, the typical professions that play well at parties.

So when he's asked about what he does, people give him a funny look when he says, "I sell toilet paper."

They usually give a small double take. But after all, somebody stocks those downtown office buildings with janitorial and office supplies.

"We do stuff that no one thinks about. And it's not glamorous. There's no, 'Oh, wow, that's so cool,'" Pollock said. "It's simple. It's basic. There's a lot of blocking and tackling. We don't have a lot of long touchdown runs."

The business model has proved fruitful for Pollock Paper. The company founded by Pollock's grandfather during World War I has been around for 100 years now.

And under the leadership of Pollock, who took over as president and CEO in the mid 1980s, Pollock Paper has grown its revenue to \$275 million. The company has 460



ROB SCHNEIDER

Pollock Paper President and CEO Lonnie Pollock III poses behind some of his company's specialty boxes at its headquarters in Grand Prairie.

employees, with 280 in North Texas, and Pollock has a big goal he wants his company to achieve.

"We're trying to be a \$500 million company when it's all said and done," he said.

Pollock Paper's typical customer is anybody in business, Pollock said. That means companies who work in single-tenant complexes or office buildings, where Pollock Paper contracts with building service contractors. The company also works with manufacturing plants.

It operates in all the major Texas markets, as well as Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina, and has warehouses in New Jersey and outside Los Angeles.

The majority of Pollock Paper's business used to be manufacturing, but now it's more focused on distribution, Pollock said. The company still does a bit of manufacturing, as it makes boxes on site for a variety of customers.

Sometimes customers will ask Pollock, why they should work with his company. After all, they can send employees to buy supplies that are cheaper down the street at Sam's Club.

Pollock responds with a barrage of questions — How much are you paying that person per hour? What if on the way back from the store, they get in a wreck? Did you know you could held liable?

"So, what are you saving to have them over there shop all day long?" Pollock added. "That's so stupid when you can have it delivered to your office whenever you want it."

That usually does the trick.

To discuss his business more, Pollock sat down with the *Dallas Business Journal*.

**Offering such a variety of products, how do you ensure you keep track of the best prices from manufacturers? It seems like a lot to manage.**

It's a lot. In all honesty, we categorize, for lack of a better word, major vendors. And we do some marketing programs that are customer-based. We have thousands of vendors, but about 50 that are really important. Probably half of our volume is 20

vendors. I probably have \$10 million of volume that's 500 vendors. They're one-offs. They're accommodations items. They're specialty items.

### **Do you own your trucks?**

Absolutely. Or (we) lease them. But we don't third-party them or contract them out. We have these debates internally constantly. People are always trying to say you're doing it the wrong way. Well, here's what works for us: We like to control the customer experience. So, when you outsource everything, there are good partners, but it's not quite the same as my drivers. We hold them accountable. They're a big part of the relationship with our customers, frankly. Our customers see about three people on a regular basis. They see our reps occasionally. They see our drivers regularly. Our driver can make or break an account.

### **How will your business be different in 10 years?**

There will be a lot more automation in everything we do. Today, they're starting to wire toilet paper dispensers and soap dispensers. If you think about it, it makes a lot of sense. Today, I can look at my phone and say, 'Look, on the 23rd floor of the men's bathroom, stall No. 4 is going to run out in an hour.' So, there will be a lot more connectivity.

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## **Lonnie Pollock III**

***President and Chief Executive Officer of Pollock Paper***

**First job:** Paper boy for the *Dallas Morning News*

**Quote you live by:** Treat others like you would like to be treated

**Favorite spot in DFW:** Sporting event or a Tex-Mex restaurant

**Evan Hoopfer**

Staff Writer

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