

Ed Herr, President  
Herr Foods Inc. [www.herrs.com](http://www.herrs.com)

The Herr Foods story began in 1946 when 21-year-old James Stauffer Herr bought a small potato chip company in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for \$1,750. Starting out in the basement of a house, it was a greasy hot dirty job, but he persevered. In 1947, the business moved into a vacated tobacco shed on the Herr family farm. As he learned more about the business, Jim Herr developed new and better cooking processes, and a delicious snack food became even better. As demand for Herr's® Potato Chips grew, so did the company.

In the early 1950's people started buying televisions and watching sports on TV. Movies became more popular as well, and the snack food business started growing quickly to meet the changing American culture.

In 1951 the potato chip factory burned to the ground. With \$6,000 in insurance James thought about using the money to purchase a farm. He had grown up on a farm and most of his family owned farms. James decided to start over. Without a factory, he outsourced production to competitors to keep the business going. In 1952 James purchased a farm in Nottingham, PA., and converted the 43 acre farm into a potato chip factory.

Ed Herr grew up in the family business and it was part of his life. The Herr household was on the same piece of land as their business, and there was always work to be done. When Ed was about eight years old, he wanted to buy a bicycle. Ed started out unloading potatoes and was paid a quarter for every tractor trailer he unloaded. It took about two hours to unload a truck and Ed had to drag 100 lb. sacks that weighed more than he did, but he learned how to drag them off the truck and get the job done. His first promotion was washing the company trucks, a job that a twelve year old welcomed since he could drive the trucks on the property for a short distance to wash them. Ed continued moving up the corporate ladder onto being a janitor cleaning the floors and bathrooms. During his High School years Ed worked in the warehouse from 3:00 a.m., to 7:00 a.m., and then he would go to school. Once home from school he would work additional hours.

After graduating from High School, Ed became involved in the production operations and over time learned the entire business. Ed liked working with people and gravitated toward that segment of the business. Ed was 21 years old when he became production manager. He worked his way up from the bottom, thus gaining a very clear understanding of the details of the business.

Herr's corporate culture is based on integrity and is highly people oriented. The organization believes in giving second chances. Every effort is made to help their employees be the best they can possibly be. Ed believes in a high level of integrity with his people and suppliers. Grounded in the Mennonite faith, Ed also believes in giving back to the community.

Herr Foods Inc. is, therefore, involved with various organizations, churches, schools, and international programs. They have a full time Chaplin and twenty part time Chaplin that work onsite to help Herr's 1,500 employees with many issues such as weddings, funerals, and personal counseling. Herr's also has a program, Partners in Service, where they have a bank of 1,000 days available to employees. The employee's can apply to receive paid time off to go and perform service work in the community, as well as internationally. True to their corporate culture, Herr's created another program, a "Bank", for employees in need who have experienced disasters.

The future of Herr Foods Inc. is one of growth. Herr's is open to new ways of doing things, new methods and new distribution channels. Ed sees growth in the export market, food service organizations, vending companies and food distributors across the nation. They have a stable business that is steady, but they have tremendous competition. Herr's believes in partnerships in manufacturing that would decrease shipping costs. Networking with other companies can offer great opportunities. Their future growth will be partly based upon these partnerships. Maintaining and improving margins is one of the biggest challenges. Another critical factor for success is having the right people in the right spot at the right time. To this point, Ed is involved in hiring for entry level management positions and above.

On a personal note, Ed likes to read motivational books. Sunday's are his favorite day since his family gets together for dinner, and he even cooks many a meal on any given Sunday. Ed's family is very involved with the business. All the second generation is very involved with the company. In the third generation of his family, eleven members are actively involved, and they place a lot of emphasis on keeping family members informed and involved with the present and future of Herr Foods Inc.

Ed's advice to the youth of today is to believe that one of the keys for success is to make the best quality product you can, and provide the best service to your customers. Exceed people's expectations on service. Make certain that integrity permeates everything you do. Work hard, not just for your benefit but for the benefit of others. Every single day, get up and work hard. The harder you work the luckier you get.

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