

Philadelphia Macaroni Company  
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Luke A. Marano Sr., CEO  
A story of perseverance and adaptation

The Story of Luke Marano Sr. and the Philadelphia Macaroni Company is a story of a family history, adventure, perseverance and adaptation to changing times and changing business environments.

Luke's grandfather, living in a small town in Italy as a young man in 1874, spoke to a man visiting from America who had emigrated there from their town, this man came back to Italy with money and a success story. Luke's grandfather said "If such a man can prosper in America, why couldn't I?" He and his older brother headed for America. A few years later they successfully started a wholesale grocery business. Over time other businesses were started, a tanning business, a bank around 1885. The brothers had a Midas touch.

During World War I obtaining pasta was difficult and the Philadelphia Macaroni Company was founded in 1914, at first a side line of the grocery business.

During the 1920's the business climate and food industry were changing greatly. The company's big account was Campbell Soup Company that had acquired the Franco- American Food Company. They needed letter shaped noodles for alphabet soup. This major contract was vital in surviving the Great Depression. In 1936 a factory fire razed their building. But due to their strong financial position and strong management, the factory was rebuilt the company reorganized with Luke's father and uncle in a partnership with an outsider. The grocery business was sold.

Luke's father and uncle where involved with numerous business enterprises. The Philadelphia Macaroni Company grew. With common sense, hard work and steady nerves they laid the foundation for the future. This is the environment Luke entered as a young man.

Luke's first job at 18 years old was to purchase produce at 3-4:00 a.m., in the morning, load up the little truck and place the produce on the stands. Thereafter he would go to a college class in business. After class Luke would go back to work and deliver the orders. A short time later Luke joined his father at the Philadelphia Marconi Company, starting out at the bottom working in the shop, dumping flour, packing macaroni from 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. He learned the details of the day to day operations, how the equipment worked and how to fix it. Over time Luke became the second shift plant manager. By the late 1950's Luke had worked his way up to general manager. His father's partner had a stroke and Luke took over the company and ran the operations. Eventually they lost a major account due to their customer's change of operations and the business ran into difficult times. It did not appear that the company could make enough money to support all the partners. The company was sold to his father's partner, the price was right.

In 1959 Luke took a job with Prince Macaroni and ran the Classico Sauce division. Luke had a great mentor in Giuseppe Pellegrino who owned Prince Macaroni. They remained friends throughout Mr. Pellegrino's life.

Once again, Philadelphia Macaroni ran into difficult times. Luke was contacted and bought out his form partners in 1960, reclaiming the family business and built the business back up. Times where difficult but Luke and his father made some wise investments in raw material, the price went up and they made a profit. That profit helped them stay in business.

He then won a large government contract which saved the business. Luke figured out the methods of dehydration of noodles and they won a large contract. Luke kept his eyes open for new opportunities with large food companies and the business grew and diversified. Adapting to change and being creative was a key to success. Market research with customers keeps them current and constantly learning. New and unique methods of packaging, computerization and new systems keep them competitive.

Over the years the business has grown. Competitors have come and gone, but the Philadelphia Marconi Company with steady management has persevered and moved forward.

In 1998, to maintain optimum control of the quality of the flour used in their own pasta, they built a durum milling plant in the center of the world's finest wheat fields...Minot, North Dakota. In 2005, they added the Bakery Flour Mill and Market to the commercial bread baking industry, a bold move to expand the business and vertically integrate their operations.

Today, the Philadelphia Macaroni Company is one on the top producers of pasta. Customers include America's elite prepared food companies, such as Campbell, Con Agra, Gerber, Heinz, Hormel, Lipton and Pillsbury. In addition, they furnish supermarkets with their own top quality Conte Luna and King Midas pasta brands.

Luke's sons are actively running the business with him, starting from the bottom up like Luke and his grandson a recent Temple M.B.A. graduate has joined the company. They have near 300 employees and are growing, moving forward.

From Luke's perspective the role of a CEO in his company is to make certain they have high quality key employees and managers. You can't accept mistakes and a person who can't do their job. With the right people your business will then grow. Without the key managers it won't. You need to understand your people their strengths, weaknesses, needs, etc... You have to strive to be the best.

Luke's words of wisdom are that nothing will replace hard work, 8 hours a day is not enough. You have to be willing to work 12 or 14 hours a day if necessary, you have to like your job and your business, you have to love your work and it has to be profitable. You have to be inspired to make money and be successful.

Author: John Vairo. Emerging Strategies Group.  
[www.emergingstrategiesgroup.com](http://www.emergingstrategiesgroup.com)



910 Harvest Drive, Suite 200  
Blue Bell, PA 19422  
610-941-2489  
[www.ExecutiveLeadersRadio.com](http://www.ExecutiveLeadersRadio.com)



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