

BRCS

Success story



abeillesbusybees

At Busy Bees, we do everything but honey

After more than 30 years of doing business, Abeilles Busy Bees, a contract packaging company, is one of Canada's top 500 Fastest-Growing Businesses, according to Maclean's Canada Business Growth List 2020.





PATRICK PARADIS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Abeilles Busy Bees

Tell us about the company

Founded in 1989, the company initially called “Les Abeilles au foyer” (Bees at home), provided stay-at-home women the opportunity to package personalized kits of products in the comfort of their home.

Seeing the long-term potential of the business, Patrick Paradis purchased the company in 2015 and became CEO of what is now called Abeilles Busy Bees.

Under his leadership, the company evolved towards a rigorous culture of quality which transformed Busy Bees into Canada’s top certified contract packagers.

Within 5 years, after acquiring and integrating 2 competitors, Abeilles Busy Bees now owns and operates a 100 000 square foot contract packaging plant in Montreal and employs more than 150 people on site.

What influenced your decision to become certificated and why did you choose BRCGS?

Having adopted a customer-driven strategy, we are attentive to the needs and feedback of our clients. One of our customers mentioned they were now HACCP certified and wanted us to follow that certification.

After running a market research, we noticed that no other co-packer in our market had this certification. We pushed the analysis further and found BRCGS, an internationally recognized certification that not only accredited us with the HACCP certification but also provided us with an extensive measurement system to audit all departments of our business. In doing so, we have raised the bar for certification in our industry, and today, BRCGS represents a necessity for businesses in the Canadian manufacturing or packaging industry.

Walk us through the process of implementing the standards in your company.

We implemented the new standards in four phases:

PHASE 1

Senior Management Commitment: We obtained the full support of the President and the higher management.

PHASE 2

Visual representation: We started to integrate visual elements of the new quality culture within the organization to increase employee awareness towards the importance of the new standards.

PHASE 3

Standards implementation: We then incorporated the new quality procedures prescribed by BRCGS to our already-existing framework and ingrained it into our employee’s daily habits.

PHASE 4

Quality measurement: As a result of the previous phases, we are now able to track the impact of our quality system on our daily activities, hence enabling continuous improvement.

What were the most significant changes and challenges you faced in order to meet the requirements of the BRCGS?

Last year, we were fortunate to purchase our first 80 000 square-foot building and move from our previous rental warehouse into this new location. This obliged us to re-qualify for the BRCGS certification. We took into consideration our previous BRCGS audits and experience and decided to update our procedures and adapt the building structure according to the standards.

After implementing the improved processes, we requested an audit with AIB International and were able to go from good to great, or in BRCGS terms, from Grade A to Grade AA.

If previously certified against another standard, what improvements had to be applied in order to obtain the BRCGS certification?

Hear it from our president himself: "I was impressed by how senior management's commitment was integrated into the process. It's an overall team work between all parties of the company as well as it is a major audit performed on all departments. BRCGS helped us put both a process and a quality culture in place."

- Patrick Paradis, CEO

We invested in the BRCGS certification because it essentially covered these four aspects:

1. Protection of the final consumer: by measuring the impact on the final consumer's health, only allowing safe products to be released on the market;
2. Storage & distribution distinction: the certification allowed us to concentrate our procedures on our core business;
3. Quality system management: We had to put in place specific processes, such as nonconformity with KPIs, corrective and preventive measures and actions of continuous improvement;
4. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP): BRCGS not only helped to improve our quality management system, but also gave us access to large corporation practices, which upgraded us from a small business to a leader in the industry.

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- Patrick Paradis, CEO

What problem or issue in your company's management or production processes did the BRCGS certification help you address?

The certification helped us ensure the overall applicability and benchmarking of the Global Food Safety Initiative in our production.

It mostly ensured that we had controls, standards, and processes in place to help prevent any problem related to our customer's products and also that we had the proper course of action and traceability tools to react in case of problems.

It has helped us conform to the requirements of our clientele and meet their expectations in terms of quality control.

Was this training delivered by the BRCGS Academy or one of our approved training partners, and how did it improve your skills and knowledge?

We hired an expert consultant in BRCGS who provided us with the training and different updates of the standard BRCGS Storage & Distribution. We also plan to take the courses in BRCGS Academy for continuous improvement, in the near future.

What are the main benefits your company has experienced in being compliant with BRCGS, and obtaining the certification?

We are currently categorized as a small business. The BRCGS certification gives us the tools, the leverage, and the power to speak the same language as the large corporations. Clients can rely on the quality and reliability resulting from the certification. It gives them a sense of ease and confidence in our processes. The thorough exercise of upgrading our standards improved our credibility and established our notoriety.

Have you seen any significant commercial benefits when you gained certification (sales increase, more customers, better customers, etc.)?

Absolutely, BRCGS will become mandatory in our industry. It allowed us to attract major blue-chip companies with the highest standard requirements. They are now willing to pay premium price to work with a supplier who meets their standards in terms of quality. It also reinforced our current customer experience and created an added distance with our competitors, placing us several steps ahead. In fact, in the past 5 years, it was a significant leverage factor which led us to become one of the top 500 Fastest-Growing businesses in Canada.

Do you have any top tips for sites who are thinking about implementing the standard, or are approaching their next audit?

We wanted to take a very unique approach to this question and decided to ask our departments about their top tips:

Higher management: Look at it like an investment instead of an operating expense.

Quality department: Put in place a quality culture and obtain the engagement of higher management.

Sales & Marketing: New clients will sometimes forego an audit of our facility as our certification is adequate proof that we meet and/or surpass their standards. When speaking with potential clients, they automatically have a sense of confidence in your abilities which makes the sales process much easier.

Production & Operations: Make sure you have the right employees in the right places. Your team must be on-board with not only making the required changes to the building and to their processes but also being able to live up to the new standards every day.

How does your company communicate the benefits of certification to the company, its customers, and any other stakeholders?

The Bees: We have integrated the processes into our quality culture and communicate it every day through: kick-off meetings, contests, internal audits, nonconformity tracking and improvement suggestions from the employees.

The Clients: When we communicate with a potential client, we always advise them of our certifications and quality control systems. It is also part of our branding on our website, inside our newsletter, social media and any other form of communication.

How have you used and benefitted from other BRCGS services such as the BRCGS Directory, BRCGS Professional and/or BRCGS Participate?

The BRCGS Directory is an important tool that we use, it serves not only to refer our customers to our certification but also to help us identify suppliers who respect the standards. It is mandatory for us to be an extension of our client's production chain and to ensure we also collaborate with suppliers who respect the same standards.

“With the BRCGS certification, we have elevated the barrier to entry in the contract packaging industry and changed the rules of the game.”

- Patrick Paradis, CEO