

Sabert Corporation

Makes food look great

Albert Salama was born and raised in Europe but came to the U.S. to pursue his college education. After graduating from the University of Rochester with a Master's Degree in Business Administration, Salama went on to become a Vice President of Manufacturers Hanover Corporation, one of the largest international banks of its time. Salama quickly rose to a vice president role overseeing commercial banking in Hong Kong. "We lent to shipping companies, we lent to the government, and we lent to a lot of entrepreneurs."

Salama was intrigued by the entrepreneurs he met in his banking career, and he wondered if he should start his own business. "My challenge was, 'What kind of business was I going to go after?' I tried a lot of different things, but then I said to myself: 'I really love food. I enjoy cooking food, I enjoy buying food, I enjoy just being around food.'"

On a trip to a trade show, a tray with a metallic finish that was made of plastic caught Salama's attention. This simple product was a way for food to be made to look good and to meet safety regulations. Salama started working on how to make the plastic trays better. He also figured out how to subcontract a lot of the work. In 1983, he launched Sabert Corporation from his one-bedroom apartment in New York City with a product line of five silver platters made out of plastic.

Sabert Corporation is now considered the premier quality leader of the food packaging industry. In 2021, Sabert had over \$1 billion in revenues and sold over 1,000 different food containers to a wide range of companies. Sabert has more than 2,000 employees and operates North American facilities in California, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia as well as manufacturing facilities in Belgium, England, Poland, and China.

When Salama started Sabert pollution, environmental sustainability and recycling were not something most manufacturers thought too much about. Today, Sabert spends heavily on research to design packaging from sustainable materials, primarily corrugated paper, sugarcane and wood fiber packaging. Salama believes that sustainability needs to be front and center for all industries — with food packaging leading the way. "We should be the poster child for sustainability, because food packaging is so ubiquitous."

"Not only do we want to make food look great, but we want to keep it safe and sustainable too."

To transition towards a circular and low carbon economy, Sabert offers a wide range of food packaging products in plastic, pulp and paper. Sabert combines deep insights about food lifecycles and consumer lifestyles, with fast and flexible production capabilities. Its industry-leading product designs encompass all five areas of innovative packaging: Performance, Presentation, Safety, Sustainability and Economics. The company is committed to incorporating high levels of recycled content, making effectively recyclable

packaging and optimizing products to reduce the waste of natural resources across their life cycle.

To achieve its sustainability goals, Sabert has a team of experts in material science, product design, engineering, and manufacturing. These experts collaborate and influence the delivery of new, sustainable, innovative solutions to the marketplace. At each phase of development, Sabert evaluates the impacts of its choices and injects sustainability early into its process.

In 2018, Sabert committed to increasing its share of sales from sustainable products going from 40%, up to at least 80% by 2025. This commitment was supported by investments in local sourcing and manufacturing within the three substrate categories Sabert produces: plastics, pulp, and paper packaging. The effort was also assisted by Sabert's fully owned plastics recycling facility, Nuvida.

By 2021, Sabert had made significant progress toward its goals with 49% of sales coming from sustainable products and 78% of sales coming from products that have at least one sustainability attribute; meaning they are either recyclable, compostable, or have recycled or renewable content. The company also launched a total of 131 products that year, of which 84 (64%) were either recyclable, compostable or made with recycled or renewable content. In addition, the company recycled 16 million pounds of plastics at its Nuvida Recycling Facility, roughly the equivalent of 380,952,380 plastic bottles.

Despite making progress on the environmental front, Sabert must still face the market reality that there is simply not enough recyclable plastic to meet demand for new carry-out food containers. Even if supplies of recyclable plastic are available, they must be economically viable. According to the food industry consulting firm Technomic, about 60% of consumers are willing to pay more for eco-friendly takeout food packaging. In reality, customers want environmentally friendly products at little or no cost to their pocketbooks.

Beyond his role at Sabert, Salama and his wife have had a long commitment to education, providing over 50 graduating high school students from the community where Sabert is headquartered, with four-year college scholarships. Additionally, they have been involved with the capital campaigns of St. Philips Academy in Newark, New Jersey, the Willow School and Gill St. Bernard's School, both in New Jersey. They also support the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, PEN America, UNICEF, and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

By 2022, Sabert realized that a lot of their early sustainability efforts were in place. In order to take the company to the next level, Sabert acknowledged that they needed a seasoned expert to take over as a Global Director of Sustainability responsible for all the company's sustainability responsibilities. Sabert retained Gaia Human Capital Consultants to partner in its executive search for an accomplished and collaborative leader to champion Sabert's sustainability and ESG mission.

Gaia Human Capital Consultants identified a handful of candidates for Sabert to consider in its search for a Global Director of Sustainability. However, one candidate stood out from all the rest, Rebecca Locker, PhD. After meeting with the executive team at Sabert and learning about their commitment to sustainability, Ms. Locker agreed to join Sabert Corporation in the fall of 2022.

Locker earned her doctorate in biochemistry from the Georgia Institute of Technology and began her career at ExxonMobil Research and Engineering Co. She most recently served as sustainability lead at Modern Meadow Inc., where she performed a variety of environmental assessments for several consumer goods categories. Locker brings expertise in industries that include polymers, petrochemicals, biotechnology and bio-based materials and has played an active role in numerous industrial organizations, including Conservation X Prize, TechConnect World and the American Chemical Society.