

Distek Turns 50 – Reflections on Leadership, Legacy, and Looking Ahead

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INTRODUCTION

In 2016, when Distek celebrated its 40th anniversary, I wrote about my family's journey and reflected on what it meant to grow up in a business founded by my parents. Ten years later, I find myself reflecting again and appreciating just how intertwined my story is with Distek's story.

I was born in 1974. Distek was incorporated in 1976. This year, Distek turns 50. I am in my 50s. Many have joked that I grew up with the company, and the older I get, the truer that feels, both literally and figuratively. Both milestones have caused me to think about where we've been and, more importantly, about where we're going.

The last decade has been defined by growth and transformation. We have continued to invest in and strengthen our core dissolution business while simultaneously expanding our bioprocessing product line. We've also invested heavily in software and cloud technologies that complement our instrumentation and create new value for our customers. It's been exciting to watch our products evolve into increasingly connected, software-enabled platforms while staying true to what has always been at the heart of Distek: designing and building great laboratory instruments.

That journey has also been humbling. Like many ambitious initiatives, expansion into new areas has taken longer and proven more complex than originally imagined. Yet I could not be prouder of what our team has accomplished: new products, new markets, new expertise, and a foundation built to support future growth for years to come.

Now, the parallel...just as the company was growing, and so was I – as a leader. Early in my career, I was in the weeds, hyper-focused on the day-to-day operation. The turning point came when we implemented EOS (Entrepreneurial Operating System). It provided a structured framework for aligning priorities, accountability, and execution across our organization.

For the first time, we had a system that allowed me to step back and work on the business rather than just in it. But here's what I've come to understand: a system like EOS only works if the people are ready for it. So yes, EOS gave us structure, but our team gave it life. They embraced it because they are the kind of people who take ownership, welcome accountability, and are genuinely open to changing the way we do things (for the better).

That adaptability and trust made change (for both the organization and me) possible. And it is also the foundation for what lies ahead. The opportunities in front of Distek are real and significant. Bioprocessing continues to grow as biologics become an increasingly important part of the pharmaceutical landscape. Our software and cloud-based capabilities are opening doors to new ways of supporting customers and helping them make better use of the data our instruments generate. And artificial intelligence is beginning to change what is possible in laboratory environments, from how instruments operate to how data is interpreted and acted upon. We are not standing on the sidelines watching these shifts happen. We are actively building toward them, and the discipline and people we have in place are what make that possible.

In addition to the Distek team (Fig. 1), I am grateful for our customers, who continue to push us, challenging us to innovate, holding us to a high standard, and growing alongside us. Together, our employees and customers are what make this company special.

When I reflect on all of this, I keep coming back to my parents, Gerry and Pearl (Fig. 2), because those qualities did not appear by accident. They were instilled from the very beginning by what my parents built nearly 50 years ago. What began as a small family business grew through hard work, perseverance, and a genuine commitment to customers and employees. The products have changed. The systems have changed. The markets have changed. But the values they instilled from the very beginning,

integrity, quality, care for the people around us, have not. In many ways, those values are what made all of this change possible.

As I've gotten older, I've found myself thinking more about stewardship than ownership. For the first generation, building a company often means figuring things out one day at a time. The second generation has the responsibility of growing and strengthening what was created. Through YPO (Young Presidents' Organization) and my exposure to how other family businesses operate, I've learned that thinking carefully about what comes next (i.e., putting the

right structures in place, developing the right people) is itself a form of leadership. My goal is simple: leave the business stronger than I found it and ensure the people who come after us are set up to take it further than I could.

I am excited about what lies ahead. Technology is evolving, the markets are growing, and the people we have in place give me real confidence in what this company can become. Fifty years in, and I still feel like we're just getting started.



Figure 1. Distek Office Team.



Figure 2. Gerry, Jeff, and Pearl Brinker.