



# HEALTHY ADVICE

Founder of pharmaceutical packaging equipment supplier stresses good work ethic and attentiveness to customer needs as key to a thriving business

The general rule of thumb in Canadian life is that once you hit the ripe old age of 80, you should probably be ensconced in a Florida condo—playing full-contact canasta, going out to all-you-can-eat buffet dinners, and complaining about how the federal government back home is making it tough for you to pay for anything with your near-worthless Canadian currency.

But there are exceptions to all rules, and Charles Lapierre is certainly an exceptional individual.

While he does have a snowbird residence in Florida, Lapierre readily defies the octogenarian stereotype by returning to his Montreal roots a few times each winter to ski the slopes at the nearby Mont Tremblant. He also golfs regularly, and swims laps just about every single morning.

“You don’t want to sit back,” explains Lapierre. “You’ve got to keep active, watch your diet, and don’t abuse yourself.”

Staying active seems to come naturally to Lapierre, who is the founder of **NJM/CLI Packaging Systems International**, a packaging solutions provider for the pharmaceutical industry located in the Montreal suburb of Pointe-Claire.

The company is the result of a joint venture between **New Jersey Machine** and **Charles Lapierre Inc.**, a company he started out in the mid-1960s as an importer and distributor of packaging machinery—out of his home. Counting his prior experience as a sales manager for a packaging company, Lapierre has piled up close to a half-century of experience in the packaging business.



Charles Lapierre, standing in front of the FLX-1200 liquid filling machine, has seen enormous changes over his 40-plus years in the pharmaceutical packaging machinery business.

NJM/CLI’s business, this was not the case when Lapierre founded his own company over 40 years ago, he recalls.

“In those days, you couldn’t survive with just the pharmaceutical industry,” he told *Canadian Packaging* during a recent visit to the Pointe-Claire facility. “We sold to the cosmetics, food, and chemical fields.

“We didn’t know, at the time, that [the pharmaceutical packaging machinery industry] would grow so much.”

While Lapierre may not have foreseen the rapid growth of this particular sector, it has certainly turned out to be a fortuitous decision to focus on the pharmaceutical segment.

In 2003, global drug sales are estimated to reach a rather astounding total sales figure of US\$435 billion, with forecasts calling for continued average annual growth of about nine per cent in the next

hours.”

Not only was it a slow and costly process, says Lapierre, quality control subsequently suffered as well.

“It happened many times that the products went out to the drug-stores without being checked,” says Lapierre. “It could be two or three tablets less, or two or three tablets more. They could have broken tablets, or a half a tablet. Nobody could know.

“But now, with all the sophisticated sensors, the product coming out at the end of the line is fully controlled.”

The new-model NJM/CLI tablet counter can count from one to 10,000 tablets. The fully adjustable system doesn’t require any special parts to change the shape or the count of the pharmaceutical tablets. It is also fully automated, and can be programmed operationally for either the size of tablet or the number of tablets per bottle.

Another recent NJM/CLI innovation to hit the marketplace is the new Commander II Rotary Labeler, designed and engineered to ensure superior labeling accuracy and production flexibility. The servo-driven, 16-turret rotary labeler handles a wide range of containers to apply a variety of label configurations, with any potential machine downtime minimized with the machine’s rapid, no-tools-required changeover capability.

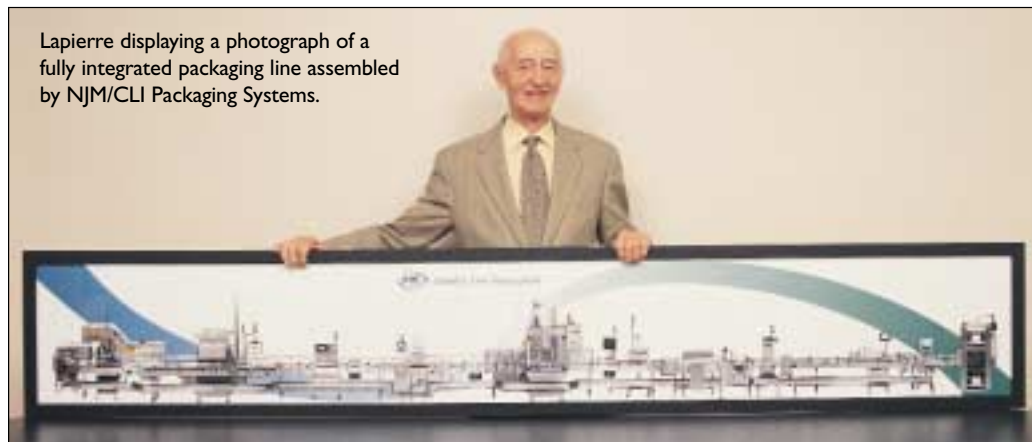
All in all, Lapierre has come a long way in the packaging industry since those rather humble beginnings in the basement of his house, when his wife served as company secretary and his garage was used as the company’s showroom.

“We’re looking at a growth of between five and 10 per cent a year,” figures Lapierre, “and it looks like it’s going to be that way for awhile.”

As for the secret of his success, both personally and professionally, Lapierre claims there is no such thing.

“First off, you must work hard, and you must take care of your customer,” Lapierre declares. “I still do it after all these years.

“If a customer has a problem, he will call us and we’ll make sure the problem gets fixed, so that he is back in production as soon as possible,” he concludes. “That’s how you do business.” □



Lapierre displaying a photograph of a fully integrated packaging line assembled by NJM/CLI Packaging Systems.

NJM/CLI designs, manufactures and supplies a range of its own packaging equipment, as well as equipment from other leading manufacturers. The company’s extensive product line includes bottle unscramblers, tablet counters, liquid fillers, blister packaging machines, cottoners, cappers, induction sealers, cap retorquers, tamper evident banders, a complete range of pressure sensitive labeling systems, labelers, cartoners, print-and-apply labelers, shrinkwrappers, conveyors, turntables, accumulating tables, and complete integrated packaging lines.

Sharing joint corporate headquarters in Pointe-Claire and Lebanon, N.H., the NJM/CLI operations add up to a total of 150 employees, as well as about 100,000 square feet of production space at the two facilities, and it often partners with other high-profile manufacturers such as **Bosch**, **Cremer**, **Enercon**, and **Pace**.

While pharmaceutical packaging machinery currently accounts for between 80 and 85 per cent of

few years.

Naturally, the demand for better and faster packaging machinery to package all those drugs and medicines is expected to grow correspondingly.

“Every month, we have something new,” points out Lapierre. “It’s unbelievable, the changes that come with electronics.

“There’s always a supplier that is coming up with something new.”

For its part, NJM/CLI is doing what it must to keep pace with some of its own state-of-the-art systems.

Citing how tablet counters, for example, worked 40 years ago, Lapierre recalls: “In the old days, they were counting mechanically. Every time you needed to change the shape of the tablet, you needed a set of change parts that would cost you from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

“Between products, you always had to clean,” he recounts. “In the old days, that could take up to eight

For more information on:  
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