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*Vernon/RTC is a supplier of foodservice and janitorial products located in Commerce, California. The company is the result of a strategic merger between two harmonizing entities.*

#### **Written by Ryan Cartner**

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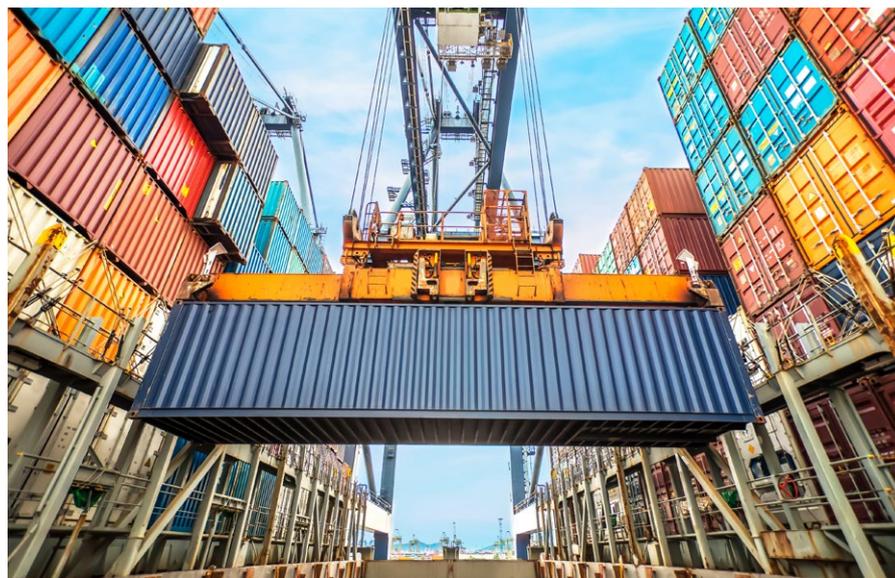
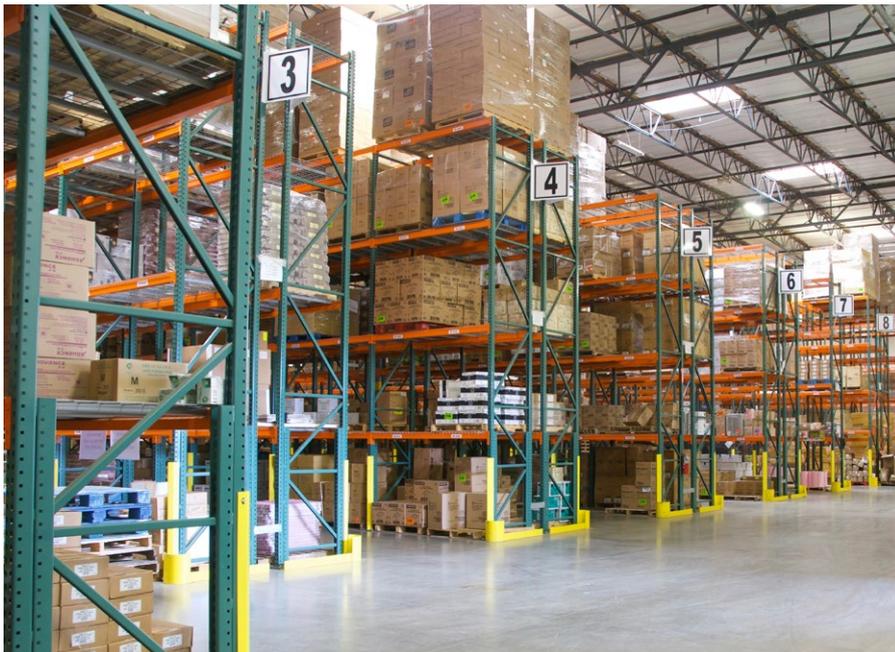
The first half of the Vernon/RTC name refers to the place of its earliest inception: Vernon, California. In 1944, Mike and Al Roberts were operating a small linen supplier and generating some success renting uniforms to local businesses. After some time, the ever-entrepreneurial pair decided to expand their offerings by selling a line of sanitation and janitorial supplies from their delivery trucks. It was then that they unknowingly defined a new trajectory for the company. Eventually, they decided to focus exclusively on this market, and Vernon Sanitary Supply was born.

The remaining part of the name is an acronym that spells out the other half of the company's origin: Regal Trading Company. Regal, founded in 1972, began as a paper and packaging products supplier to Los Angeles grocery stores, butcher shops, and meat packers. The company was very successful and grew rapidly into a leading supplier of foodservice items, food contact items, and some food items to supermarkets, meat processors, bakeries, and restaurants.

Both Vernon Sanitary Supply and Regal Trading Company were family-run businesses that had risen to success in their respective industries. Steve Supowitz, chief executive officer of Vernon/RTC, purchased each company in 2014 and continued to run them separately until June of 2017.

Steve Supowitz is the third-generation owner of Individual Foodservice (IFS), a ninety-two-year-old family business, which is one of the largest foodservice distributors in California. Under his direction, with the support of his key management team, this ►►

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► company has seen significant success and rapid growth. His experience in the industry enabled him to identify the potential in Vernon Sanitary Supply and Regal Trading Company, though they were both comparatively much smaller than IFS. Understanding firsthand the challenges of running a large business, he recognized that companies small enough to be extra nimble and acutely reactive to customer needs would soar if given the ability to capitalize on the buying power of a company like IFS.

It soon became apparent that both companies – built on a strong foundation and very capable independently – made even better complements to each other. The two were merged in 2017 to form Vernon/RTC, a much stronger company specializing in both the distribution of janitorial and sanitary products and selling to end-users in the supermarket, food processing, commercial baking, and restaurant markets.

“They were stronger together than they were apart,” says Steve Supowitz. “Operationally, we became more efficient by running everything under one roof, and it gave us far better control.”

Vernon/RTC is committed to making a positive and sustaining financial impact on the lives of its employees, customers, vendors, and the communities it serves. The company’s chief concentration is on serving the needs of its customers, making them more profitable through a true partnership. It understands that a stable workforce, invested in the work they do, plays a critical role in accomplishing that objective. The financial impact it makes on its employees by paying an above-market wage with benefits encourages a culture of teamwork and collective ambition.

Vernon/RTC continues to make large volume purchases, and immediately ►►



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**"The company maintains its personal touch, its small family business charm, and the essential relationships between the company and its customer base."**

- ▶ pays vendors, keeping the company in excellent standing. "We put a real emphasis on making sure that financially it's a good business decision to work with us," says Supowitz. "Bottom line, we know our employees have to be paid well; our vendors have to make money on us, and our customers must save/make money when doing business with our company."

Vernon/RTC works diligently to save money for its customers. The primary focus in every transaction is to find a way to provide the "most value for the lowest price." The team knows that the customer depends on them to constantly look out for their best interests at every opportunity. As a result of this aggressive strategy seeking ways to reduce the customer's expenses and improve their profitability, Vernon/RTC sells so competitively in the markets it serves that even the largest multinational competitors have a hard time competing.

More value for less, quality products and impeccable service are the three pillars fundamental to the success of the company. Vernon/RTC works to find the right products to suit its customer needs but never sacrifices quality. The company stocks products from every major domestic brand and matches that with competitively-priced alternative import products that are continually tested for quality. It offers a tremendous variety of products priced to suit all budgets. The company has a 'fill rate' of over 99 percent, meaning that very nearly all orders are filled from in-stock inventory. This ensures immediate turnaround and fast delivery. Service is an "ABSOLUTE PRIORITY" for Vernon/RTC.



Vernon/RTC values its long-standing relationships. Many of its employees have spent twenty or more years with the company, and many of its customer relationships have lasted far beyond that milestone. There is very little turnover and very little absenteeism. The employees are invested in the work they do, and that is what allows the company to provide the exceptional level of service that it does. "Many of our customers have partnered with us for decades, establishing lasting relationships with Vernon/RTC's employees," says Vernon/RTC President Robert Fast. These relationships are a key component of the company's success, and from the beginning, a deliberate effort has been made to maintain them.

Although the two companies were merged, it was decided to operate them independently from IFS. IFS is a much larger company, and often, when small family businesses are acquired, something gets lost in the transition. Management saw value in allowing Vernon/RTC to retain its independence from the more extensive entity. As a result, the company maintains its personal touch, its small family business charm, and the essential relationships with its customer base. According to Robert Fast, "when you call a company with tens of thousands of customers, it's not unusual for an automated voice recording to direct your call. When you call Vernon/RTC, it is always a warm welcoming voice answering the phone."

There are operating advantages to running Vernon/RTC independently as well. Robert Fast is involved in all aspects of the decision making. In a larger organization, this would be virtually impossible, but for an operation of this size, it is a manageable endeavor. He can work with customers; he can help make decisions about pricing; he can be involved in every aspect of the business. "There aren't many companies like Vernon/RTC," says Supowitz. "Most are either very small and inefficient or very large and bureaucratic. We're right in the middle, without being either."

At a time when consolidation is shaping the American business landscape and giant multinational corporations are swallowing small businesses and transforming them into faceless entities, Vernon/RTC is making a stand for the old tradition of valuing relationships in business. It comes with a promise of "more value for less," quality products, and impeccable service that together foster an unshakable confidence in the partnerships it has formed for over 70 years.

The merger of the two companies resulted in a perfect fit. "It's like chocolate and peanut butter," says Steve Supowitz. "They're great on their own, but they're outstanding together." ■

**Congratulations to Vernon RTC on your continued growth and success.**

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