

## Company of the Year: Safetec gets back to its roots after challenging year

By Katie Anderson – Reporter, Buffalo Business First

It's been one rollercoaster of a year, and Safetec of America is holding on. After demand for the Buffalo manufacturer's infection-control products skyrocketed in 2020, it quickly plummeted this year, when vaccinations increased, Covid-19 cases decreased and competing products flooded the supply chain.

"You would think with Covid storming back into Western New York and across the country like it is, that we would still be manufacturing in a big way," CEO Scott Weinstein said. "But the truth is, when there's demand like that, competition grows, and now there's a lot of product out there. I've been through five or six of these similar pandemics, but never has it reversed the way it did this year."

Since disinfectant products make up only half the company's business, Weinstein made the tough decision last year to stop manufacturing less in demand products – safety and first aid items, lip balms, hand creams and itch relief lotions.

"Maybe you have to say 'no' sometimes to the customer, but I don't know how you say 'no' to the country," he said. "There was a need. We were in the middle of a pandemic. I wish we didn't have to turn our back on half of our customers."

This year, Safetec refocused the business, and restarted production of its first aid and safety products. Weinstein said his team has worked hard to gain some of those customers back.

"I think as a company that we are finally on track," he said. "We are right sized for our reality. We have implemented some price increases, and we're getting back to our roots."

Last year, the company invested in more warehouse space, four pieces of equipment and about 50 more employees to keep up with demand. When demand came to a halt this year, Weinstein realized the company perhaps grew too fast. He was forced to downsize and lay off about 40 people, and because of that, he called it "the most difficult year" to be a CEO.

"As a CEO you love consistency," he said. "When you're up and down, it's quite challenging. It's all part of business, but it's the part that I don't like – the part that keeps me up at night. Still, we see our future as pretty bright."

While many companies struggled with not enough space or laborers, Weinstein had the opposite problem. Now that the company is regaining business in first aid products, additional space and loyal employees will carry growth opportunities into 2022.

"That's where we're headed and that's where our growth will come from next year," he said. "Now it's a matter of driving ourselves to utilize our new capacity. That building was perfect for us, and now we have equipment to drive the future. We just have to

keep navigating.”

In January, Weinstein will celebrate the company’s 30th anniversary.

“Our excitement is to get back to who we were again and have the full line of products that we want to make and that we do well,” he said. “Thirty years is a big number that’s had us thinking about our history. We feel the worst is behind us, and it’s onward and upward for Safetec.”

Safetec of America Inc.

Locations: Headquartered at 887 Kensington Ave., Buffalo. Other locations 55 MSGR Valente Drive, Buffalo, and 401 William L. Gaiter Parkway, Buffalo.

About: Manufactures disinfectant sprays, first aid and safety products.

CEO: Scott Weinstein

Local employees: 131

2021 highlight: The company returned to its full product list this year, in time to celebrate its 30th anniversary in January 2022.

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