

## Brakebush Brothers Takes Care of Their Employees, Communities and Healthcare Workers

**DAVE CASPER:** Welcome to Growing the Good. I'm Dave Casper, head of BMOs, North American commercial banking business. We're working with our customers to help them through this incredibly volatile times. They're stepping up in so many ways, helping to keep commerce moving, and keep people safe. I have the pleasure of speaking with a number of CEOs running businesses in a variety of industries, hearing their personal stories about the challenges they're facing, and some of the very innovative ways they've adapted in these uncertain times. Joining me today is Scott Sanders, President of Brakebush Brothers, headquartered in Westfield, Wisconsin. Welcome, Scott, thanks so much for speaking with us today. Let me start off, Brakebush has been around since 1925. So you're really close to 100 years. Tell the audience a little bit Scott about Brakebush and the products you offer, and some of the industries you serve.

**SCOTT SANDERS:** Sure, thank you. Our business has multiple segments, including a small part that we classify as industrial. And really, they are industrial chicken ingredients that are sold to other manufacturers, and they market them in retail. By far the majority of our businesses, commercial restaurants, and the majority of that is restaurant chains.

**DAVE CASPER:** So you've got in that group, you've got some industries that are potentially closed down, some that might need more chickens, so how are you doing that so far?

**SCOTT SANDERS:** The ones that are doing well, are the fast food operators, and a pizza chains. Those are doing very well in the current situation. Also, our retail business is doing very well.

**DAVE CASPER:** So clearly, unemployment is shot up to be interesting for our audience to hear what Brakebush has done, to basically step up and support these people that are not working.

**SCOTT SANDERS:** That's a great question. And the Brakebush company, and the Family Foundation has been very generous. And especially so in these difficult times. We have a special multi year relationship with a organization called orphan green train, which ships various supplies throughout the world, we help financially, logistically in supply trucking. Early in the pandemic, we were contacted by a local hospital to determine if we had extra PPE, they didn't have enough as they were preparing for

a surge in patients. So we were able to supply masks gloves and plastic apron that they needed. Another organization that we've worked with and spend stepped up in this time of need is the Feeding America organization. And we've made many donations to them and other food pantry, some of them are also associated with Feeding America. The last thing I wanted to point out that we've been doing for quite some time and have stepped up our efforts over the last several months or a couple of months is that we have chicken giveaway program, as we call it for our team members. So any team member can pick that up. And we and we make that available at all our locations and could pick it up and we encourage them to share it with family and friends and neighbors that are in need. And that's been very well received. We also offer for all of our team members, mental health, financial wellness and spiritual health resources for anybody that's interested in that.

**DAVE CASPER:** The Brakebush family though, really has been, I think well known in the communities that they serve for doing the right thing and giving back. So it's really fantastic to hear all this done. What has been the reaction both from the employees and the communities to the to all the things you've done?

**SCOTT SANDERS:** I think it's been very positive. Although we had some short term layoffs, furloughs and some reduced hours for some team members, everybody has been called back and almost everybody has returned. In fact, we're in the process of hiring new team members. And that probably says a lot for what people in the communities think about working at our company. In three of our manufacturing locations, they're relatively small towns and worry, a significant employer in those towns. And I really believe that all of the communities and the local government supports our company. We try to be very good citizens, good corporate citizens, and we're treated well and return.

**DAVE CASPER:** Scott, from your standpoint, nobody's been through anything like what we've all seen in the last few months. You've quickly pivoted your businesses in some ways and you've stepped up but is there anything as you step back and you think about it, any lessons you've learned or anything that you're thinking about for your business strategy as you go forward? Post COVID?

**SCOTT SANDERS:** We certainly do pay a lot of attention to that. The first lesson is that evidently anything is possible. We have a crisis management team and process in place and have for quite some time. And we review it on a regular basis. But pandemic was not on the radar. But it is it is now. I really believe that challenges bring out the best and the worst in people. And in our company, I believe that it's bringing out the best in people, because we all work together to thrive. Our businesses was significantly impacted, but now is coming back strong.

**DAVE CASPER:** Scott, it's been a real pleasure to talk to you. I appreciate and I think our entire audience appreciates hearing about all the support that Brakebush brothers has provided to its employees and the community. Thanks for listening to Growing the Good. I hope you'll join me again for another conversation. Until then, stay safe.