

# Streamlining innovation

Packaging Compliance Labs ensures safe, secure delivery of products for the medical device industry.

BY MARK SCOTT

Medical devices that have spent years in development can be rendered unusable if the packaging they are shipped in fails to protect against the elements of an unsterile world.

Matthew Lapham and business partner Ryan Erickson sought to solve this problem with the 2014 launch of Packaging Compliance Labs, a company founded to meet the needs of medical device packaging from the first rendering to the end of its product life. Their vision was to design customized packaging that delivers this valuable cargo in a safe and sterile manner.

The medical device and pharmaceutical packaging engineering and validation firm has two core components—the engineering, design and development group that works with customers to develop packaging that securely delivers products, and validation testing, which then ensures the package and the product inside it will stand up to shipping and storage during delivery to the end user.

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– Matthew Lapham, President and Co-founder, Packaging Compliance Labs

“We’re a test lab for medical devices,” says Lapham, the company’s president. “We’ll work with a company’s product development group and shoulder the burden of packaging.”

Packaging Compliance Labs then works with the customer to produce the documentation needed to earn the approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, allowing the product to be distributed.

## Building momentum

As a young startup company, Packaging Compliance Labs received a significant boost toward its mission when it became part of a SmartZone Local Development Finance Authority in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This economic development district reinvests tax revenue into incubator space, entrepreneurial support services and the modernization of infrastructure to provide support to high-tech entrepreneurs and businesses.



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM MCKENZIE





Matthew S. Lapham, President and Co-Founder,  
and Ryan Erickson, Vice President, Package Engineering,  
and Co-Founder, Packaging Compliance Solutions





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The company got a small wet lab space—a type of laboratory designed to handle various types of chemicals and potential wet hazards—at Grand Valley State University to get started, Lapham says. And after taking on small consulting projects and building early momentum, Packaging Compliance Labs earned ISO 17025 accreditation, a standard for testing and calibration laboratories.

“That was our green light to move forward and start looking at some larger equipment,” Lapham says. “That’s when we started working with Huntington to finance a lot of the equipment we needed to get into the space we’re in today.”

In one instance, Packaging Compliance Labs needed to purchase equipment to complete a job for a new customer.

“We explained the opportunity to our banker and underwriters, and they listened to our needs and were instrumental in helping work out the financing of the purchase of that equipment,” Lapham says. “Having them take an active involvement in helping us succeed made a big difference.”

### A collaborative culture

With 13 employees and continued growth, Packaging Compliance Labs is eyeing a bright future to bolster innovation in the medical device industry. Although the company has only been in business a few years, its success has already driven it to open an office in downtown

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Denver to accommodate rapid growth and take advantage of the city’s biotechnology industry. It has also purchased additional equipment and hired additional personnel.

As Packaging Compliance Labs continues to add West Coast clients, the new location will allow it to expand its reach and give companies in established medical device markets such as Silicon Valley and Los Angeles easier access to the company.

“We decided to open this office, as we are doing more work with West Coast clients,” says Lapham. “In an effort to better serve them and handle the time changes, we felt that this was a great starting point.”

The company has yet to determine how big the Denver operation will be.



"We are making demand-driven decisions based on growth opportunities," Lapham says. "We are committed to continued investment in this region and growing the team based on the market needs."

As for future growth, "I see us expanding our service offerings to address industry challenges for launching new medical devices," he says.

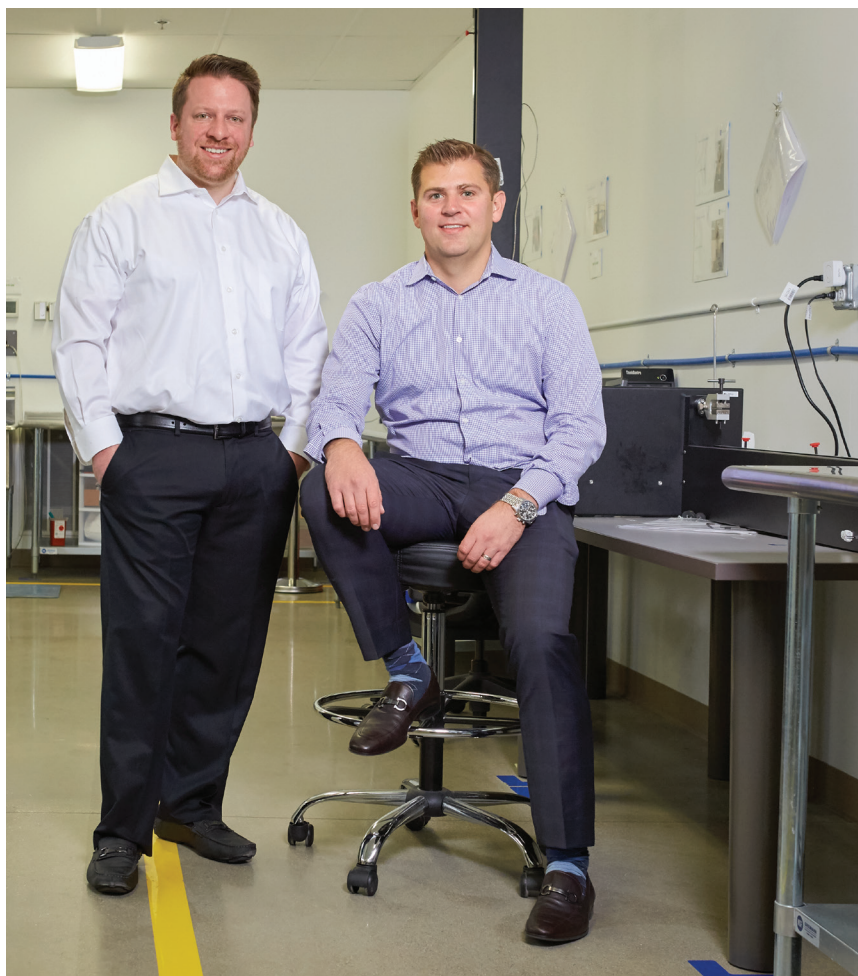
Empowering employees to be part of that future makes the goal easier to achieve.

"A lot of the folks on our team worked at large organizations where their voice wasn't heard as much as they would have liked it to be," Lapham says. "We try to empower our team to make decisions. If you don't like a procedure, every person—from the president of the company down to somebody that was just hired—has the ability to present different ideas and interesting ways to think about things. We have a culture of moving quickly, trying to have fun at the office and empowering our team."

Another key to getting employees excited about the challenge of streamlining innovation for the critical medical device industry is continually reminding them of the value of the work they do.

"You have an engineer who has probably been working on their project for more than a year," Lapham says. "We try to get our team more involved so they know the reasoning behind the product, why it's so important and what it means to the customer."

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## BROADEN YOUR REACH

Matthew Lapham, president and co-founder of Packaging Compliance Labs, has maintained close ties with Grand Valley State University, where the company got its start.

"We have a relationship with their biomedical engineering group," Lapham says. "When we're posting a job, it's been really nice to be able to send job descriptions to groups like that and have them distributed. It's been a great way to expand the network and bring on new talent."

Identifying those who can help your company with tasks such as hiring can be a valuable piece to achieving success.

"A number of our team members are Michigan State University packaging engineers," Lapham says. "We have set up an internship program, and twice a year, we have an intern who's working for us for school credit, as well as compensation. The opportunity to build our network within that vertical has been really helpful."