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Sealed Air Corporation: The Road From 1980-2010

In 1982, Harvard Business School published the *Sealed Air Corporation* case (HBS 9-582-103) which was destined to become one of five “HBS Classics”¹ and with sales of approximately 300,000 copies, one of the best-selling cases of all-time. The many students who have studied that case were given a snapshot of the company in 1980 as Sealed Air wrestled with a product line expansion decision. Even though the company had experienced a 25% average annual growth rate in net sales and earnings from 1971 to 1980, it may have been difficult to imagine the transformation of the company over the next 30 years as it became a global, multiproduct firm.

Key changes were as follows:²

	1980	2010
Sales Revenue	\$88.6 Million	\$4.8 Billion
Percent of Sales in the United States	76%	45%
# of Countries with Sealed Air Operations	5	52
Major Product Lines	Protective Packaging	1. Protective Packaging 2. Food Packaging 3. Food Solutions 4. Shrink Packaging 5. Medical Product Protection 6. Specialty Packaging

Protective packaging represented only 31% of sales by 2008 and the company’s leading product lines were food packaging (41% of sales) and food solutions (20%). The company had more than 17,000 employees worldwide.³

One man, T.J. Dermot Dunphy, led Sealed Air through the first 20 of this 30 year evolution. Dunphy served as CEO from March 1971 to February 2000. William Hickey, who had worked with Dunphy at Sealed Air for 20 years, took over as CEO and Dunphy remained chairman.



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