

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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MasterTag Bought by Avery

Chris Beytes

MasterTag announced they'd penned a deal to sell to Avery Products, a world leader in specialty label, security and packaging solutions. MasterTag is Avery's 18th acquisition in the last eight years. They'll leave MasterTag's management team intact to continue to focus exclusively on serving customers in the horticulture industry with no change to the people, products or services customers expect.

Owner Rick Hughes, who bought the business in 1978 from his grandfather Lou Schmidt who founded MasterTag in 1949, explained that it takes considerable ongoing investment to keep a company like MasterTag growing and innovating. He was fine going to the bank for loans when he was 25 and even 45 ... but at 65? That's riskier. So he began the search for partners, including various investment groups (most want a quick profit, then sell) or a large corporate printing company (he was worried MasterTag would be lost in a giant corporation). Then came Avery, whose focus, Rick said, was "What can we do to help you to be more successful?"

Rick said the CEO of the parent company said to him, "Look, I'm buying used equipment and people. I don't need used equipment—it's the people, it's the industry, it's your knowledge of what you're doing and where you're going. You've convinced me it's something we should invest in and help support that growth."

As for Rick's plans? He says he'll stay through the transition. He's got a two-year contract, but can opt out anytime.

"I'm excited about the things we're doing and where we're going," Rick said. "I want to be part of that transition. It's not a drop-the-mic-and-walk-out-the-door kind of thing. I care too much about the employees and the customers to do that." **GT**