

CANDYMAKER FINDS SWEET SUCCESS THROUGH ASSISTANCE FROM CIRAS

ABOUT FAIRY TALE COTTON CANDY. Fairy Tale Cotton Candy is a family-owned business located in Des Moines, Iowa, employing more than 30 people making candy sold worldwide. More than 50 varieties of cotton candy are produced and shipped far and wide to small stores and big box outlets as well as under private labels to Universal Studios, Dollywood, and other tourist destinations.

THE CHALLENGE. In 2002, Steve and Meg Shearer bought Chocolate Storybook, a well-established Des Moines candy retailer. The pair collaborated with a vendor that supplied wrapped caramels, one of Chocolate Storybook's most popular items. When the vendor went out of business, the Shearers bought all the assets with plans to open a facility to produce caramels. Business associates urged them to reach out to CIRAS, part of the MEP National Network™, for guidance.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. CIRAS worked with the owners on a wide range of topics as they transitioned from a retail shop to a manufacturer. This assistance included helping them understand the requirements of being an FDA-inspected caramel factory, attaining Preventive Controls for Qualified Individuals (PCQI) certification, internet marketing strategy, and identification of a plant manager.

Chocolate Story Book and Fairy Tale Cotton Candy now sells products through a variety of channels, including Amazon and Etsy. CIRAS helped them understand their customer data needs by conducting a customer relationship management matrix development exercise. The Shearers were able to create a system to track their various sales mechanisms, helping them to better manage and meet customer demand.

"It's challenging to grow a business. It is overwhelming to go after new ideas. We have a formula for how to do it, but it takes a lot of time. Working with CIRAS makes it easy to manage everything. We've partnered with them for a long time, and they know our business."

-Steve Shearer, Owner

RESULTS



More than **\$1.5M** in sales, cost savings, and investments.



Invested in new production location

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