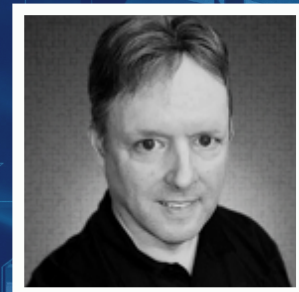




Center Stage Member Spotlight

Michael Boyle - Morton Salt



Life often works in wonderful and mysterious ways, and Michael Boyle – General Manager of Morton Salt in Rittman, Ohio – can attest to that. In 2017, Boyle's career came full circle as he was welcomed back to the plant where it all started. For the past 28 years, Boyle has worked for Morton Salt in a variety of positions and locations. After living in Chicago, Texas, and Kansas, the Ohio native is happy to be home where both his roots and Morton Salt's run deep.

Boyle began his career for Morton Salt back in 1992 when he joined the Rittman plant as part of the University of Cincinnati's cooperative education program. Following graduation in 1996, Boyle accepted a full-time engineering position at Morton and never looked back. As Boyle's career advanced, he transitioned into corporate engineering and ultimately operations management.

The Rittman plant is Morton Salt's largest evaporated salt plant. Matter of fact, it is one of the largest in the nation. The plant uses a process called solution mining to evaporate brine, which in turn forms pure salt. The company produces a variety of salt purities including food-grade salt, reagent grade salt, and pharmaceutical grade salt. Exclusive to the Rittman plant is Morton's Sea Salt round can line and Nature Seasons bottling line.

Much like Boyle's roots, the history of Morton Salt in Rittman, Ohio dates back to over 120 years ago. First established as The Ohio Salt Company in 1898, the Rittman plant merged with Morton Salt in 1948.

After speaking with Boyle, it was clear to see the impact both Morton Salt and Wayne County have had on each other. "This plant has been a flagship of Morton salt for a very long time," said Boyle. "We have that reputation that helps us bring new products to the plant and sustain our operations." The company's success and long-standing reputation is a clear testament to their strong workforce, stability, and resiliency.

The salt industry is an old industry and many of the processes created years ago are still used today. Working in the plant takes a lot of know-how, experience, and fortitude. "We've had access to a good volume of skilled workers," said Boyle. "We've been very competitive in this area in terms of acquiring talent and skilled workers. We have a lot of people stay for a long time." Part of the reason these workers stay so long is that Morton Salt invests in its employees. From in-house apprenticeships to employee assistance programs, the company fully supports the advancement of its own. The Rittman plant has an apprenticeship committee – made up of hourly and salary individuals – that monitors the progress of their apprentices as they go through training. In addition to the apprenticeship programs, the Rittman plant still offers the co-op program that Boyle participated in over 20 years ago.

When it comes to having a strong workforce, stability makes a huge impact. At the Rittman plant, production levels are stable, the customer base is sound, and the industry is steady. "When people come to work for Morton Salt, they know they are going to have consistent work," said Boyle. "We aren't going to hire a bunch of people one year then turn around and lay them off the next. People value stability."

An example of this stability shined bright last year during the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic. Unlike many other businesses, Morton Salt's Rittman plant never shut down. The company's day-to-day operations ran at 100% through the entire crisis. COVID 19 protocols were put in place and Boyle praised his team for abiding by them to keep everyone safe. This stability kept the company running, employees paid, and customers happy.

When asking Boyle what he was most impressed with at Rittman, his answer was the area's resiliency. "When you work in an old plant, there are many challenges," said Boyle. "It amazes me how resilient the people are here. They support each other, they solve problems, and bounce back."

With the salt industry being so competitive, Boyle and his team are constantly focused on improving their competitiveness. The company is currently in the process of coordinating a major project to replace a large part of its equipment. Boyle explained, "The completion of this project will set Rittman up to continue its legacy as the largest evaporated salt plant in North American for a very long time."

In addition to the improvement project, the company is currently working with its sister plants and the city of Rittman to continue identifying opportunities for growth. Moving forward, Boyle and his team are looking to explore growth opportunities in sea salt, spice blends, and pink Himalayan salt as well as continuing to invest in improving the reliability and efficiency of their processes.

As Boyle looked to the future, he gave us this statement, "The relationship between Morton Salt and Wayne County goes back many decades and we certainly hope to continue it for decades to come."

To learn more about Morton Salt, visit www.mortonsalt.com.

