



## FM Top 50 2015: Fast Risers

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The FM Top 50 consists of companies doing the largest amount of business in contract foodservice by top line revenues generated. In this special online addendum to the 2015 Top 50, we take a look at the five companies that posted the largest growth rates in the past year.

Unidine's jump in annual revenues from under \$200 million to nearly \$250 million in just one year was due to a number of factors. While the company's acquisition of FAME Food Management, which expanded its presence in the education and government segments, helped, "We've always looked at organic growth as the real strength of Unidine," says President/CEO Richard Schenkel. "The acquisition was accretive but a very small amount for 2014."

Schenkel emphasizes that the company's basic approach of fresh, innovative dishes prepared by talented associates has been the same from the start almost 15 years ago, and is something increasingly embraced now by the marketplace.

"We're the Whole Foods of foodservice management," he says. Another factor, Schenkel believes, is the "intimacy" his company maintains with clients. "To this day I think our executive team knows all our clients and I think that's unheard of in this industry."

Of course, that becomes harder as a company grows and takes on more business, and that is one reason for the recent establishment of two new president positions to oversee the senior living and healthcare/corporate/FAME Culinary units.

"It will allow us to continue that intimacy at the senior level and allow me to be out there more focused on our clients," Schenkel says.

"We're never going to be a \$14 billion company, that's not our game plan, but to be a half a billion to a billion" is achievable, he believes.

As for the FAME acquisition, Schenkel says what attracted him was the company's culture fit, its strong client list on the corporate side and its education business, a new niche for Unidine, which had originally started as a provider to the senior dining segment before branching out to hospitals and B&I.

"It gave us an entry," Schenkel explains. "This is a 'you-can't-play-in-the-business-because-you-don't-have-any' market. Well, we now have education facilities and it's become a very active marketplace for us."

He believes the needs of the education market dovetail with Unidine's strengths in fresh, healthy food production.

"Look at what Michelle Obama is pushing in schools: fresh and wellness," he says. "We think that with our platform we can continue to grow in education."

Despite that, Schenkel says the healthcare segments of senior dining and hospitals will continue to drive the bulk of the company's expansion, especially the acute, behavioral and rehab hospital markets, which he describes as "yearning for what we provide." He says he expects "double-digit growth" in healthcare over the coming years.

One recent coup was landing the Northeast Georgia Health System with its three hospitals and two senior living facilities. Unidine also recently added Franciscan Hospital for Children, in Brighton, Mass., and Southeast Hospital, in Cape Girardeau, Mo. Recent geographical expansion has seen Unidine penetrate the Carolinas, Texas and Missouri. It is now in some 20 states overall.

**"We feel this company will be in the Food Management Top Five within the next five years," Schenkel boldly declares.**

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