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## Mission Linen names new chief executive to lead expansion

By **Marlize van Romburgh**  
Staff Writer



Mission Linen Supply, one of the largest privately held companies in the region, has a new president and CEO focused on growth.

Santa Barbara-based Mission Linen, a linen and uniform rental service with about 2,500 employees across the U.S., said July 25 that John Ross is

its new president and CEO, effective immediately. He takes the top spot following the retirement of CEO Karl Willig.

Ross was promoted to CEO from his previous role as Mission Linen's vice president of operations. He joined the firm in December 2012. Before that, he worked in leadership positions at Cintas Corp., a publicly traded work uniform company based in Ohio, and at Swisher Hygiene, a North Carolina-based firm that offers hygiene services to large employers.

"John is as close to a perfect fit for leading Mission Linen as one could hope to find," Willig, who helped to handpick his successor, said in a news release. "His education, training and work experience have prepared him to lead this company aggressively into the future."

Ross is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, served for five years as a commissioned officer in the Army and received an MBA from UC Irvine.

He is now in charge of one the largest companies based in the Tri-Counties. Mission Linen told the Business Times it had revenue last year in the \$200 million to \$250 million range.

The family-owned business was founded in 1930 by George "Ben" Page, who started as a one-man operation.

Today, Mission Linen is still owned by the Page family and is one the largest uniform and linen rental services in the Western U.S. Its clients include hotels and resorts, hospitals, restaurants and food suppliers.

Mission Linen has about 315 employees in the Tri-Counties, according to Business Times data on file, and ranks as the fifth-largest family-owned business in the region. The company operates more than 40 plants in California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico and Oregon. Ross, who has also been named to the company's board of directors, said "Mission is uniquely positioned to grow and strengthen our business."

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The 83-year-old company has "probably the most unique capabilities of any textile service business we operate," he said, adding that the firm is able to offers services on a scale ranging from uniforms for small clinics, where perhaps only a few surgeons need uniform service, to massive hospital operations that may need large quantities of uniforms and linens laundered and delivered on exact timetables to several locations.

Willig, a former tech executive who came out of retirement to head up Mission Linen in 2009, remains on the board of directors.