

# CASE STUDY



Founded in 2003

20% Year over Year  
Growth since 2013

Sold Internationally  
in 45,000 retailers  
and online

Partners with:  
Feeding America  
Girls on the Run

Based out of  
Baltimore, MD

[TrueLemon.com](http://TrueLemon.com)

## CLEARVIEW GROUP AND TRUE CITRUS

True Citrus was founded by David Schleider as a way to answer the question: why hasn't anyone been able to put quality, fresh-squeezed lemon taste into a packet form so it's convenient for everyone, everywhere? In 2003, after finding a method to crystallize the lemon juice and oils together to deliver a convenient, shelf-stable lemon wedge replacement, the world was introduced to True Lemon.

Today, the True Citrus family includes over 100 delicious and refreshing products for Retail, Commercial Ingredients and Foodservice. True Citrus has experienced steady growth since 2013, and now carries over 60 consumer products and hundreds of industrial ingredient applications with more on the way and is sold in 45,000 North American stores and sold internationally in 14 countries.

# THE MODEL SYMBIOTIC BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

When Mike and Vlada get together for an interview, it feels like you're at a family dinner with an aunt and uncle. The authenticity of their friendship is unanticipated for a business interview, and by the nature of the banter between them, you can tell they go way back.



Vlada Rassin, CFO at True Citrus, and Mike Buher, Director of Assurance and Advisory at Clearview Group, go back seven years, in fact. True Citrus was Clearview's first audit client in 2012, before Vlada or Mike even arrived on the scene. Mike inherited True Citrus as a client when he took over Clearview's assurance and advisory practice in 2015, and Vlada had just taken over as Controller.

## The relationship took off from there.

"Mike is a big follower of True Citrus, and it's great when your audit partner loves your products and believes in your brand," says Vlada. "Mike has been a great supporter, a good friend, and very helpful in a pinch."



## Shared Values & Mindset

The more you listen to Mike and Vlada reminisce about the last seven years, the greater the instinct to probe – it's obvious that this relationship goes deeper than supporting the brand and performing audits. It becomes apparent that what makes this relationship so strong is the trust and respect that they have for each other.

For starters, it helps that Clearview and True Citrus share the same ethics and professionalism – or, professional skepticism, as Mike calls it.

"It's just part of the job, you have to be skeptical in nature and ask lots of questions," Mike explains. "Some clients who maybe don't share that same mindset may get offended or think we don't trust them. So it's nice when a client shares those values and understands why we ask the questions we do."



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**Vlada Rassin**  
CFO at True Citrus

”

And Vlada certainly does; she takes the same approach with her team. Vlada points out that her team members must be able to explain the numbers and why they reported something the way they did. Everything has to make sense for the business, in addition to complying with the rules.

“Our financial data has to have merit. That's the reputation we want to have,” Vlada states emphatically.

That professionalism shows up in the work. With any audit, the quality of the audit working papers is usually a direct reflection of the quality of information you get from the client. Mike trusts (but verifies) the information coming from True Citrus because of the consistency and thoroughness of Vlada's processes.

“Because Vlada is exceptional at what she does, I'd put our work papers up against anyone in the business. She can predict with a good amount of certainty what her numbers will be. I've even offered to use Vlada's cash flow forecast as a model to other clients.”





## Mutual Respect

The respect and trust between Vlada and Mike has trickled down and led to a consistently solid, healthy relationship between their two teams.

“The audit team is smart and reliable,” reflects Vlada. “Beyond that, they respect our business operations; they don’t try to tell us how to do things. We really appreciate that, and it makes it very easy to call them when we’re running into something.”

Several years ago, Vlada’s team did “run into something.” They were entering into a new and different arrangement with a co-packer and were unsure of how to handle it on paper. To make matters more complex, True Citrus’ CEO at the time had his own idea for how to handle the situation that didn’t feel right to Vlada.

“I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, what do I do? I’ll call Mike,’” Vlada recalls.

## Teamwork

Mike and Vlada’s teams were able to come up with the right solution and Mike helped pitch the idea to the CEO. Together, the team got executive buy-in and are still using the same methodology today.

This remarkable partnership of nearly ten years has led True Citrus to tap into Clearview’s tax team, as well, and neither Mike nor Vlada see their partnership ending any time soon.

“We learn from each other, and the relationship helps each of us better our own practices,” says Mike. “I couldn’t ask for anything more in a partner, or friend.”

The two trade jokes about neither retiring or leaving before the other, and the interview concludes just as it began – with smiles and laughter, and respect for all.



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I’ll call Mike’, Vlada recalls.*



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