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Issue: October 13, 2025



Vol Case & Container - Custom Wood Crates and ATA Cases for Protecting Valuable Industrial Equipment and Machinery during Shipping



Matteo Valles
CEO

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<https://volcase.com/>

Interview conducted by:
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CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. Valles, Vol Case & Container has a 30-year plus history. What is the focus for the company today?*

Mr. Valles: Our business revolves around protecting valuable industrial equipment and machinery using custom wood crates, ATA cases, and precision-cut foam. Most of what we package supports the infrastructure that powers America or our allies abroad. Our focus is ensuring that these systems arrive safely, work flawlessly when they get there, and keep industry running.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of something typical you might be sending, and something a bit unusual?*

Mr. Valles: A good example would be an industrial-scale water purification system. Something used in medical or municipal applications, not your at-home filter. These can be 30 ft. long, 80,000+ lbs. and you can practically live inside the wood crate we build for them.

It's critical that it arrives intact because those systems supply clean drinking water, enable medicine production, and process wastewater safely.

CEOCFO: *What does Vol Case understand about creating these types of containers that less experienced companies do not recognize?*

Mr. Valles: In our world, quality and speed are what matters most. If the product arrives damaged, none of the rest matters. Customers call us at the very end of their project when they're under pressure to ship. We have to design and build quickly without sacrificing precision. So our reputation depends on speed and flawless execution.

CEOCFO: *What are some of the differences, depending upon what the product is like?*

Mr. Valles: It varies greatly depending on what they are looking for. Some customers want a wood crate that can be reused over and over again. That means it is screwed together and made to a higher quality standard. With some of them, it is just a one-way thing and then they are throwing it away. That would be nails and less concerned about longevity. That's part of what makes this work interesting. You're constantly balancing cost, reusability, and protection level.

CEOCFO: *Where does technology come into play?*

Mr. Valles: We're exploring how AI and, eventually, humanoid robotics can help in manufacturing. The technology isn't fully mature yet, but we're experimenting with use cases that reduce repetitive work and make life easier for the guys on the shop floor. Over time, we think automation will improve both quality and speed.

CEOCFO: *How do you attract people to your organization, and do people want to work in this arena or is it a challenge?*

Mr. Valles: It hasn't been too much of a challenge for us. It is a physical job, but many of our guys enjoy that. It keeps them active and engaged. They much prefer that over sitting at a desk every day. That, combined with we pay pretty well compared to our competitors, we haven't struggled so much with manpower or attracting people.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about On-Site Crating; does that happen often?*

Mr. Valles: Yes. We are doing something onsite probably every week and for a variety of customers. We have a lot of customers that need that but that is typically when something is way too big to build a wood crate in advance or they have some special requirements that need to be done onsite.

CEOCFO: *How do you work with your clients in figuring out what they need, or do people turn to you because they understand your expertise?*

Mr. Valles: Every once in a while, we get a customer who knows what they need already and they dictate for one reason or another, the design of the packaging. Most clients come to us with a blank slate. They show us what needs protection, and we take it from there. Because we offer multiple product lines, wood crates, ATA cases, and foam, we can recommend what truly fits their needs instead of forcing one solution.

"In our world, quality and speed are what matters most. If the product arrives damaged, none of the rest matters." Matteo Valles

CEOCFO: *Do you need to maintain a large inventory to use for the products that you are crafting, or are they readily available as you need them?*

Mr. Valles: Materials are generally available, but we still stock heavily. Lead times can spike without warning, and since speed sets us apart, we never want to be caught waiting on materials.

CEOCFO: *You are involved with a number of different industries. Are there industries where you would like to make more inroads?*

Mr. Valles: The medical device sector is a big opportunity. We already serve several companies there, but the market is vast. As more equipment becomes sensitive and portable, demand for custom protective cases keeps growing.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out?*

Mr. Valles: We are still figuring out that process. The business has been around for over 30 years and has continually grown. People have always found us by word of mouth, which I think is a testament to our quality, speed and customer service. As far as an outbound marketing strategy, we have never really done that and we are at the stage where we are trying to figure out the best way forward, but we've always believed that great work markets itself.

CEOCFO: *You mentioned you have international clients or is it people in the US that are sending things out internationally?*

Mr. Valles: A lot of it is people in the US sending stuff abroad but we do have some international clients in Europe.

CEOCFO: *Are many of your clients repeat?*

Mr. Valles: A lot of our customers are repeat customers. We do have a variety of one-offs that do pop up and fill in some gaps but long-term relationships drive most of our growth.

CEOCFO: *Clearly business is good as Vol Case was recognized in the Inc. 5000 this year. How did that come about?*

Mr. Valles: We can see the growth day in and day out, but it was nice to have something more formal to be able to show our guys on the shop floor just how good we are doing as a team and that we are growing. That is all a testament

to the quality of our product and how much our customers appreciate our work that they are continually sending us more business and referring us to other people. Being listed on the Inc. 5000 came about from building a great team, working hard, and being focused on our customers' needs.

CEOCFO: *What is the competitive landscape for Vol Case?*

Mr. Valles: There are not many companies that have been around as long as us. There are some but 30 years is a pretty long time. There are some that are much newer than us and we have a lot of competitors that just do one or two of the products that we do. Each product line has its own list of competitors, but there are very few that do them all. This is a competitive advantage for us as we can offer a wide range of solutions to our customers.

CEOCFO: *Are there any products you would like to offer that you don't currently?*

Mr. Valles: We have been getting into machining more and more. Currently, we machine wood, foam, and plastic, but not metal. We have a new machine coming in that will allow us the machine metal parts as well. I am interested to see if we are able to get into that space in the future. I think metal could be an interesting material to have some capabilities with as we move forward.

CEOCFO: *What has surprised you as the company has grown and evolved?*

Mr. Valles: How much of a headache growing is. You think oh we are growing, that's great, more business. What you start to realize is how systems break down. What used to be shouting across the office to update somebody on something, doesn't work as well. Suddenly you are in two different rooms, things need to be set by email so there is written proof of the conversation, or how we communicate with the shop floor and check quality. You constantly need to build new systems as you keep growing, and when the systems you built in the past start to break down, you have to reengineer them.

CEOCFO: *Why choose Vol Case & Container, and what might someone looking at the company miss that they need to know?*

Mr. Valles: I will start off with why you shouldn't choose us. If a company is looking for the cheapest product they can possibly find, they aren't concerned with customer service or speed, they have a long time to get it ready and just want the cheapest thing to get the job done at the bare minimum, that is not the kind of customer that works for us. We have tried to work with those customers, and we almost always lose out on that.

The people who are a good fit for us, are if you have tight deadlines, a complex product that needs a lot of time and attention, you need something high-quality that will get there safely and repeatedly. Those are the customers that work well with us. We find great success with any customer that fits in that category.

