

Quality care

By Stefan Schumacher

Dublin Building Systems goes the extra mile to ensure client satisfaction



Samuel Strapping manufacturing facility in Heath, Ohio. All projects pictured in this article are VP pre-engineered buildings constructed by Dublin Building Systems.



DBS officers standing left to right: Bill Mullett, president, and Bob Howe, vice president of construction. Sitting left to right: Kevin Morris, treasurer, and Rich Irelan, vice president of sales and marketing.

Dublin Building Systems, a general contractor in Dublin, Ohio, makes long-term investments in the satisfaction of its clients. In fact, the owners of the company are so dedicated to this idea that when DBS completes a building and the client comes back 20 years later with a roof leak, DBS will go out and fix it at no extra charge.

"Just because it's that important," explained Richard Irelan, vice president of sales and marketing and one of the principal owners of DBS. "It represents how we treat all of our clients."

It is, in part, this kind of service that has kept DBS in business for almost 40 years and allowed them to score a record year for revenue in 2008, bringing in over \$35 million in sales.

The Bread and Butter

DBS specializes in design-build construction and has been a VP Buildings Inc., Memphis, Tenn., builder for 28 years.

"Our bread and butter are industrial-type projects (manufacturing and warehouse distribution centers), which suits the metal building structures the best," Irelan said.

"But things change, and we really have to follow where the market is. The first 20 to 30 years, most of our business was industrial. Lately we've been doing more office, medical and retail projects. The thing we do best is understanding the complexity of the project and assembling the right team of design-build subcontractors and design

consultants. We work with the owner every step of the way to design the most efficient and productive manufacturing facility possible while providing alternatives throughout the process. That allows the owner to make the best decision for his business. It is a very nonadversarial process."

Some other recent DBS projects range from a research and development testing lab that serves Honda to a custom coach production facility for Creative Mobile Interiors to a pet boarding resort called Pet Palace. All are VP pre-engineered metal buildings.

"Another market we've been fortunate to service is aviation. With the large clear spans required, pre-engineered steel structures are

ideal," Irelan said. "We have built corporate aircraft hangars for Lane Aviation and Nationwide Insurance, a total of three over the past 10 years at Port Columbus International Airport [Columbus, Ohio]. The Nationwide

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Hangar utilized a CENTRIA [Moon Township, Pa.] deep-ribbed wall panel."

Selling Efficiency

Irelan believes one of DBS's strong selling points is energy efficiency. Pre-engineered systems offer high R-values and cool roofs that can contribute to LEED certification. He also believes metal roofs, standing seam in particular, offer his clients the best return on investment.

"We feel the standing-seam metal roof is the best roof you can buy," he said. "The most important thing in a building is a watertight roof. [The VP standing-seam roof is] mechanically seamed; it floats for thermal

movement. Clients who have had both a rubber roof and a metal roof have come back and told us they want a metal roof. There is a growing market to retrofit existing built-up roofs with metal standing-seam roofs. In fact, we were just awarded a contract to install a VP SLR-16 architectural standing-seam roof over asphalt shingles.

"The insulation you get with a pre-engineered wall system and roof is a lot better than conventional, which a lot of people are concerned with these days."

Facing the Slowdown

Despite a record year in 2008, DBS, like so many businesses, is making some changes



Air Cargo Terminal #4 at Rickenbacker Airport in Groveport, Ohio.



Pet Palace pet resort in Columbus, Ohio.



Yachiyo of America's North American headquarters and testing facility in Columbus, Ohio.



Crafts Americana distribution center in Columbus, Ohio.

to deal with the economic climate. Ireland said DBS has had to cut back on staff, which ranges from about 40 to 60 people, and go after public bid projects. However, he said even some government projects, like a pre-engineered indoor football stadium in Obetz, Ohio, have fallen through because of a lack of financing.

It's not all bleak though. DBS has been working hard to find companies expanding and is currently working on a 100,000-square-foot (9,290-m²) manufacturing facility in central Ohio, a truck shop for a local natural gas company and a smaller manufacturing addition for a maker of foam athletic wall pads.

"There are still businesses that are

growing and doing things," Ireland said. "So much of our work is repeat business. Probably half the companies we're working for are existing clients. Two of the [previously mentioned] projects are existing clients. In the booming years, a lot of times we'll just let the phone ring to get the projects to work on. The past year or so everybody in our company has been really trying to get out and be a sales person."

Strange Beginnings, Strong Ties

What eventually became DBS was initially a road builder called Dodge Ireland some 40 years ago. By chance, the contractor building the Dodge Ireland shop died in the process.

The employees finished the job themselves, and Ireland's father, Vic, turned the business into a building company—DBS.

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Vic continues to stay involved as chairman of the board, and he is one of three owners, the others being Ireland and Vic's son-in-law Bob Howe, vice president of construction. The company's president is Bill Mullett, a nonfamily member who has been very valuable in transitioning the business to the second generation.

"We're family-owned, which is a challenge because people can feel that there's not a lot of movement upward," Ireland said.


"But we do a lot of things for our employees. A lot of company outings, from golf to Ohio State football games every year. At the end of the year we give out cash safety awards to our field people and bonuses to office and field employees. We also give a percentage of our profits back to each employee."

The company has managed to keep many of its employees for a long time. Some of the people working in the field are third generation—their grandfathers worked for DBS 25 to 30 years ago. Two of DBS's project managers worked their way up from being field laborers.

"It's just evidence of how people enjoy working here," Ireland said. "They know that

we're honest with our clients, we create quality end products and they're proud of it."

It's that commitment to the quality of the work that remains the focus for DBS, according to Ireland.

"We want to make sure every client is satisfied. I give every prospect I meet with a tailored list of references and tell them to call any one of our past clients. We do whatever it takes to make them happy." 

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