

Horizon differentiates itself by looking at projects from the owners' perspective.



On Time and on Budget

Horizon takes design/build one step further and adds management to its project services. Horizon's President Chuck Heath says he knows of no other company offering this combination of services.

BY JOANNA MILLER

Horizon Construction Group says it understands its projects from every angle. That's because the Wisconsin company has experience in nearly every aspect of a project, from development, ownership and management to engineering, marketing and, of course, construction. According to President Chuck Heath, the company started as a developer, but quickly integrated property management into its business.

During this time, the company hired general contractors but was increasingly dissatisfied with the results.

"Unfortunately, it was hard for us to control price, timing and follow-up," Heath says.

"Timing is important, and while some contractors were great, most couldn't seem to get the projects done on time and wouldn't be straightforward regarding completion dates. Some contractors would do a good job on 98 percent of a project, but they typically wouldn't finish the last two percent. There would always

be little things that never were finished. We were doing a lot of senior housing work and it was a huge problem with our clientele. They were in the building all day and would see the thing that wasn't fixed. That's what prompted us to become a general contractor."

At first, the company worked for itself, performing general construction on its own developments. Heath explains that it immediately began completing projects on time and on budget. That practice has become the norm rather than the exception.

Exceeding Expectations

Horizon decided to take its general contractor services to the open market in 1998 and, shortly after, the company added design services.

The company has grown significantly since that time. Heath says it had sales of \$8 million to \$10 million when it launched its general contractor services.

That rose to \$46 million in 2003, \$50 million in 2004, and he expects it will be close to \$50 million, if not more, in 2005, he notes.

Horizon Construction Group Inc.

www.horizondbm.com

2005 sales: \$50 million+
Headquarters: Verona, Wis.

Employees: 140

Services: Design/build/manage

Pres. Chuck Heath: "The worst thing, in my mind, is to start to design the project without the contractor on board."

"Customers can see the critical difference between us and our competition," Heath emphasizes. "Not only can we build a project, we can provide help and insight in other areas such as development, design, engineering, finance and management. Our staff offers different perspectives and expertise. We are able to provide the client with an owner perspective and a multi-disciplined approach."

That approach is based on the experience of the company's partners. Heath has a background in development and

senior housing and waterparks.

Current projects include an indoor waterpark at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells and a large senior housing project in Mays Lake, Ill.

Past waterpark projects in Wisconsin have included indoor parks for the Country Springs Hotel in Waukesha and the Lodge at Cedar Creek in Rothschild.

"We started doing these projects about three years ago," Heath says.

"It's a fairly new industry and waterparks are a bit more complicated than senior housing projects.

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For those clients concerned about getting the right price on a design/build job, Heath says, Horizon will do the project open book.

"They can see everything and they have the advantages of having a team on board early on," he explains.

While many companies perform design/build work, Horizon takes it a step further with its design/build/manage approach. Heath says he is proud of this unique service.



Horizon's capabilities include everything from senior housing to indoor water parks. The company can not only build a project, it can help with development, design, engineering, finance and management.

his partners have experience in finance, civil engineering and architecture.

"No one else in our market that I know of has that combination of expertise," Heath says.

"Others build it and leave it. They've never developed, owned, managed and marketed a project."

In addition to its headquarters in Verona, Wis., Horizon has offices in Milwaukee and Dubuque, Iowa.

Broad Market

While most of the company's projects are in Wisconsin, Horizon also performs a significant amount of work in Illinois and is currently planning projects in several other states.

According to Heath, Horizon has developed two areas of construction expertise:

"They are extremely expensive, with clients spending \$15 million to \$30 million on the sophisticated aquatic facilities," he continues.

"There is a lot that goes on with the structures and a large amount of coordination between the various professionals needed to design, develop and build the facilities."

Positive Trends

Heath says the company is pleased with the industry trend toward design/build work. Horizon concentrates on design/build and very rarely competitively bids projects.

"There is no question that the client is better off when it chooses a contractor early on," Heath asserts.

"The worst thing, in my mind, is to

"To my knowledge, no one else does it like this," he says.

"There are design/build companies out there, but we have been unable to find other design/build/manage firms. We really manage from the financial side, the marketing side and the ownership side. We have owned and continue to own projects, so we look at it from the owners' perspective."

Heath explains that in all of Horizon's projects, the company makes decisions based on its four core values: honesty, respect, integrity and compassion.

"We look at those values and emphasize them with our people all the time," he says.

"If someone is questioning a decision, we tell them to think about those four very important words." ■