

THE MAGAZINE FOR LEADING CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

USBuildersReview



Delighting
Customers for
Over 50 Years

J&S
Construction
Company Inc.

A Dedication
to Perfection

Force Inc.

Finding
Opportunities for
a Family of
Companies

Donohoe
Development
Company

J&S Construction Company Inc.

Delighting Customers for Over 50 Years

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Every time J&S Construction Company Inc. (J&S) completes a project its customers fill out a survey. They check a box that says delighted, pleased, satisfied or disappointed in regards to how they felt the construction went. And the results J&S has garnered throughout its history of 5,000-plus unique projects for various clients are worthy of note.

“In 2010, 100 percent of our customers said they were delighted,” John D. Stites II, CEO of the company, proudly states. “Not even pleased or satisfied, but delighted.”

In fact, 92.4 percent have been more than satisfied since 1990, and 99.6 percent of customers said they would refer J&S to others. With such outstanding customer satisfaction, it comes as no surprise that nearly 74 percent of the firm’s business comes from repeat customers. As the company itself states, J&S is as much about building relationships and building

trust as it is about building structures. Many companies say similar things, but few can provide the same factual and anecdotal evidence as J&S.

This Cookeville, Tenn.-based premier contractor accomplishes such levels of success through its many years of experience and adherence to timeless principles. “The company was founded in 1957, and I’ve been with it for 40 years,” says Stites, who runs J&S alongside his brother Jack Stites. “Our grandfather started his own construction company in 1926 called Builders Supply Company. Then our father, John Stites, started this company after leaving the previous company. So the family knows almost 90 years of construction. My son is actually the fourth generation in the industry. He serves as vice president and is in charge of all the estimating.”

J&S is equally guided by its spirituality as it is its history. J&S uses the “going the extra mile” philosophy drawn from Matthew 5:41 to inform its employees about expectations and customer relations. In addition, the firm strives to be active agents of transformation – “salt, light and yeast,” according to Biblical principles. These Christian values infuse every aspect of the company’s work.

A TEAM (Together, Engineers, Architects, Managers) Approach

J&S’s agents of positive change include 105 of the finest craftsmen and trade professionals, whose commitment to integrity help the company generate \$35 million in annual revenue. Through their hard work and consummate abilities the company self-performs roughly two-thirds of its work, and has extensive design-build capabilities.



“We promote our design-build and TEAM-build services. It makes no sense to give the project to a guy that bids real low. You’ll get inferior construction and, secondly, you’re going to end up dealing with change orders that put your project at risk,” Stites says.

The TEAM-build service he mentions is an innovative single-contract approach to construction. J&S has clients sign one contract for all architectural and engineering design services, as well as construction services. This puts full accountability on J&S, and helps the client avoid messy third or fourth party dealings.

The geographical footprint in which J&S conducts business extends within a two-hour radius of Cookeville. However, clients have been so pleased with the work J&S has performed that the firm has had the opportunities to complete projects across nine states. “We only follow clients from this area, but we have had people say, ‘We like your work so much I want you to help us in Texas.’ So we’ll go out of state for repeat clients,” says Stites.

Helping Tennessee Become a Greener State

Aside from the “delighted” customers, and accolades such as the Achievement Award from the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence, the aspect of the business that pleases Stites most is its commitment and recognition for sustainable, energy-efficient materials and techniques. “We are a very green company. We’re one of the few contractors in the nation that has completed Silver, Gold and Platinum LEED-certified projects. We are committed to being green, but we also know how to build projects that not only get that little plaque on the wall, but are very efficient at well.”

One project that Stites cites as an example of J&S’s efficient building is a military base in Ft. Campbell, Ky. “A project we just finished was the first LEED Gold building in the entire Fort Campbell military base,” he says. “A building next door is an exact replica of our building, except they aren’t LEED-certified. It’s the same size building used for the same purposes, but our building’s electricity bill is 49-percent lower. The difference is we just used the latest technology to make our building far more efficient and environmentally friendly than the other building.”

Other green projects have included designing and constructing a processing plant that helps turn switch grass into biofuel, a retail strip center in Cookeville known as Times Square, as well as the Freedom Plaza office building, among others. The Freedom Plaza earned a LEED Gold-certified Class “A” rating, and makes extensive use of solar panels and an



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innovative, environmentally friendly process that used the sprinkler system as the water source for the mechanical system. Overall, J&S has completed more than 130,000 square feet of LEED-certified projects.

More Risk, More Reward

Stites knows that dedicating one’s life to construction can be a gamble. “I work in the second riskiest business in America,” he says. “But I absolutely love what I do.”

This affection for his work keeps Stites going through tough times. Having worked full-time at the business for over four decades he’s guided the business through the inflation of the ’70s, the downturn in late ’80s, as well as the recession following the bursting of the Internet bubble. Stites and his brother know how to make a business survive. Drawing on this wealth of experience in how to deliver excellence even in volatile times, and empowered by a stable foundation of seasoned, enthusiastic employees, J&S Construction Company Inc. has all the needed resources to extend its roster of satisfied surveys into the foreseeable future. •