

SUMMIT CONTRACTORS GROUP INC.

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Building the 'Best' Projects

For nearly 20 years, Summit Contractors Group has been highly successful by taking a team approach with clients, architects and engineers, its executive vice president says.

BY ALAN DORICH

Since its start in 1989, Summit has established itself as a top builder, Executive Vice President Marc Padgett says. Based in Jacksonville, Fla., the general contractor has completed more than 250 multifamily projects, consisting of more than 60,000 units nationwide.

In addition, the company's portfolio includes more than 8 million square feet of office, retail and warehouse projects. According to Padgett, Summit takes a team approach when dealing with its clients, architects and engineers. "This approach has allowed us to be highly competitive in our industry, while being able to keep our projects ahead of schedule and within budget requirements," he says.

Padgett, who became a partner with Summit in 2007, recently spoke with *Construction Today Quarterly* about how Summit Contractors has nurtured a high rate of repeat business, its plan for adjusting to the economy and its future.

Summit Contractors Group Inc.
www.summitcontractors.com

Proj. 2008 sales: \$110 million
Headquarters: Jacksonville, Fla.
Employees: 54

Marc Padgett, executive vice president: "Our employees truly love what they do. They take pride in our projects and know that their involvement is important to our success. I couldn't ask for a better staff."

CONSTRUCTION TODAY QUARTERLY: How long have you been with Summit Contractors?

MARC PADGETT: I am in my 11th year with the company. Summit has allowed me to work through all levels of employment, from (a) superintendent to project management and estimating, and eventually up to one of two owners of the company. We are a very close-knit group and have a lot of fun in our day-to-day activities.

Our employees truly love what they do. They take pride in our projects and know that their involvement is important to our success. I couldn't ask for a better staff. Not only is it rare, but it is also very rewarding to be part of a company that has its employees putting (forward) the efforts that ours do and seeing the results of all their hard work.

CTQ: What has enabled Summit's success?

MP: Our primary key to success is certainly our (staff). Our average employees have worked for our company in excess of five years. We have a full-time general superintendent, an outstanding estimating department, a human resources department, highly qualified and experienced field personnel and project managers, along with some of

the best office (workers) in the industry, all of which have been a contributing factor to the success of our company.

The combination of this team has allowed our company to provide exceptional quality and service. Another key to our success, which may sound a little unusual, is how we have learned from our mistakes over the years.

For example, we were not always as focused as we are today in regards to issues such as waterproofing, mold prevention and even items as simple as how we pass information to the rest of our team, particularly our clients, architects and subcontractors. Fortunately, we have learned from our mistakes and implemented a very smooth process that will take our projects from beginning to end at a very fast pace, safely and within budget.

CTQ: More than 70 percent of Summit's work is comprised of repeat clients. How have you managed this?

MP: This is something that we are very proud of. We offer a great package to our clients through our team approach, our outstanding employees, our vast

project experience, competitiveness and project quality.

We implement the management systems and services I mentioned previously into every project we build to ensure our clients have the best possible product in the market. As a result, our clients have a high level of comfort when using us as their contractor, which allows our company repetitive business with them.

CTQ: Are you seeing any new challenges?

MP: Obviously, the current economy is a concern for every business. We have seen a lot of our developers that have great financial strength (who are) struggling with their lending institutions. Fortunately, we have a backlog that will get us through most of 2009, but if clients that typically build three or four projects per year get forced into doing only one or two, we need to adjust.

One of the more recent trends has been the initiative to use green products in the construction industry. Green building products and anything eco-friendly is being pursued by developers more and more to accommodate their own and their tenant's sensitivity to the

environment. As a result of this trend and our own concerns regarding the environment, we are working on getting some of our team LEED accredited.

CTQ: What other changes are taking place at Summit?

MP: In light of the changes in the economy, we are implementing some new developments in our organization to offset the number of projects our clients may not be able to generate. One of the larger developments is our marketing division, which we brought online in October.

We feel that if there are fewer developments available, we need to be more aggressive to offset that change.

Additionally, we are trying to reduce our risk by being a little more cautious in our subcontractor and vendor selections, and at times, require a bond or letter of credit from a major subcontractor.

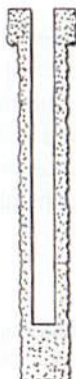
CTQ: What do you see for the future of Summit Contractors?

MP: We see continued success through satisfied clients, a great working atmosphere for our employees, and by constantly striving to raise standards in the construction industry. ■



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