

Johnson Bros.

Sights Set High

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Before strong federal support for the nation's roadways came in the form of the Eisenhower Interstate System in 1956, travelers didn't enjoy the highways we take for granted today. Instead, tough independent companies literally blazed the trails completing smaller roads, even dirt roads so travelers were able to get to their destination. These early days saw the beginning of Johnson Bros., a company that is still working in this niche.

Founded in 1929, the company began doing construction of small roads and today serves as a construction services

firm specializing in heavy civil road, bridge, infrastructure, industrial and marine construction for both public and private clients. Having worked in 40 out of the 50 contiguous states, Johnson Bros. also stretches to international locations such as the Caribbean, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

With a niche as a full-service firm, Johnson Bros. also prides itself on the complicated projects it completes so successfully. In house, Johnson Bros. offers earthwork and site development, dewatering, pile driving, steel erection and equipment replacement, concrete foundations, bridges, underground

utilities, hydro facilities, power plants, docks, and marine aspects of projects. The company turns to subcontractors for about 20 percent of their trades such as paving and electrical.

Employing 300, the company has locations in Orlando, Tampa, Bartow, City of Port St. Lucie, Florida, and a Louisiana location which includes a heavy equipment yard on the Harvey Canal in New Orleans.

Having a habit of growing employees organically, from entry-level positions to managerial and leadership positions, the company's philosophy



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lends itself to incremental growth rather than exponential growth. This is a method that has worked well for Johnson Bros., especially given their over 80 years in the industry. With their sights set high for the future, this incremental growth may just prove to be the best method to achieve their ultimate goal: “To be the most profitable and sought after employee owned construction services firm in the Western hemisphere by 2025.”

Inside this Incremental Growth

Johnson Bros. has an operating philosophy rooted in “the testament of the 3R’s: Respect for Self; Respect for Others; Responsibility for Your Actions.” Dedication to these beliefs makes the customers an important part of the construction process, creating a team of employees and clients to complete each project.

When looking to hire new employees, the company does minimal recruiting but does partake in graduate recruitment programs and summer internships with the University of Florida, University of South Florida, and the University of Central Florida.

As a member of the Associated Builders and Contractors Florida Gulf Coast Chapter (ABC FGC), Johnson Bros. benefits from the association’s educational and safety programs. This membership also keeps the company “attuned of the political battlefield at the legislative level,”



said A. Eric Kishel, President of Johnson Bros.

Elevating the importance of safety, Johnson Bros. completes an initial safety orientation for each employee that is specific to his or her task. A daily S.T.A.T. (Safety Task Analysis Talk) and bi-weekly safety meeting is also part of this safety program and contributed to the company's EMR rating of 0.55.

Johnson Bros. has been honored with numerous awards, receiving Florida's Best in Construction Award in 2005 for the US 41 Circus Bridge and Roadway in Sarasota County, Florida. Johnson Bros. also won the 2002 DBIA Award for the Best Civil Design Build project under \$15 million. In the same year, the company won the AGC Horizon Award in the Best Design Build category for their work on a bridge replacement in Polk County, Florida; and these are just a few.

Johnson Bros. at Work

A recent source of pride for the company was their work on the Treasure Island Twin Leaf Bridge Replacement. Completed in about 30 months with a \$44 million budget, Johnson Bros. won the FDOT's 2008 Best in Construction Award in the Major Bridge category. Partnering with clients on a regular basis, this project had a public owner who "we worked well with," said Kishel. "It was a top-notch, state-



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of-the-art E.C. Driver and Associates design that we really enjoyed constructing in partnership with the owner, E.C. Driver, and the community”

In 1999, Johnson Bros. completed one of their more unique projects for a first time client, Universal Studios. This project was the Universal’s Islands of Adventure. Still working with them today, this was the beginning of a relationship that has brought the company numerous projects over the years. Beginning construction on the 120-acre site in 1996, which also happened to be an El Niño year, Kishel explained, “We had a lot of turbid water to treat before discharging off site.” Working on an aggressive timeline, Johnson Bros. often worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week to complete the project on time.

Strategically minded during this economic freefall, Johnson Bros. is seeking new market space and planning to move into areas where the stimulus package is providing funding. With a five-year plan already drawn out, the company is waiting to see which specific projects will be funded.

Being born amidst the turmoil of the Great Depression, Johnson Bros. has certainly seen economic adversity in its lifetime. Today’s crisis, challenging though it is, will certainly not crush the goals or successes of this tenured company.




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