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Mark Moscrip, vice president, Joe Dubbels, president, and Geoffrey Whittaker, project manager, led Dimensions Contracting through a growth spurt last year and expect to see continued growth, through 2007-08.

‘BANKS ARE TERRIFIED OF CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES AT START-UP.’

Joe Dubbels
President, Dimensions Contracting

Contracting firm thrives on its connections

BY MIKE W. THOMAS

When Joe Dubbels was growing up in his native New Jersey, his dream was to be a salesman in Manhattan like his father. The last thing he imagined is that he would one day wind up running a multi-million dollar contracting company in San Antonio.

Today, Dubbels is president and co-founder of Dubbels Contracting LLC, which does business as Dimensions Contracting. It is one of the fastest growing companies in San Antonio, according to the San Antonio Business Journal's latest list of Fast-Track Companies.

Dubbels founded Dimensions Contracting in 2004 with his father, Richard Dubbels, and his business partner, Mark Moscrip. Richard Dubbels died in January

2006. When they started out, they had little more than their combined savings, which they were risking to get the company off the ground. But in just three years, the firm has grown into a thriving business with 35 employees and \$11.7 million in revenues last year.

Dubbels' journey from New Jersey to San Antonio was almost happenstance. It began when Dubbels decided against becoming a salesman and instead joined the U.S. Navy straight out of high school.

He was stationed in Hawaii for a time and there he met a friend who was planning to go to San Antonio after his service term was up. Dubbels, who did not have any desire to go back to New Jersey, thought that was a good plan and followed him to the Alamo City in 1989.

For the next dozen years, Dubbels worked as an interior finish-out contractor, first with Whitaker Roofing Associates and Wadsworth Construction and then with O.E.S. Construction Inc. and South Texas Interiors Inc. He quickly rose through the ranks and became a construction manager and supervisor at the firms where he worked.

Making connections

During that time, Dubbels made a lot of connections with property management companies and before long determined that he was ready to set out on his own.

"I felt that this was something that I could do myself," Dubbels recalls. "I was working hard and putting in a lot of hours and that is what motivated me to start my own business."

DIMENSIONS: Hiring smart people is the key to success for Dimensions Contracting

Dubbels says he and his partners sold everything, including extra cars, and put all their savings into the new business. They had a lot of support from their families, but no loans and no outstanding debts.

“Banks are terrified of construction companies at start-up,” Dubbels says. “So we had to finance everything ourselves.”

Things took off almost from the beginning, Dubbels says. His connections with local property management firms

proved to be the key to getting the business on track. In particular, Teresa Miller, vice president of property management for Endeavor Group and formerly the property manager for the Forum Shopping Center, helped to catapult them into the market by giving them a number of big jobs. Also, Matt Rose, vice president of management services for Transwestern Commercial Real Estate Services and the property manager at Bank of America Plaza, provided them with a lot of job opportunities, he says.

Dubbels says he struggled to get past the bad reputation that many contracting companies have.

“Typically, people feel that you are going to try and put one over on them,” he says.



Dubbels

“We have tried to change that perception and demonstrate that we are all on the same team. That is our goal — to make everyone happy — and we try to be more customer-service oriented.”

Smart hires

Dubbels credits much of his success to “the grace of God” and to the people he has hired to work for him.

“I like hiring people who are smarter than I am,” he quips. “It certainly helps.”

Among the people Dubbels has brought in to help him are Geoffrey Whittaker, Darren Hawthorne and David Daugherty, who are all project managers with the firm. In addition, Dubbels says he relies on great subcontractors to supplement their work.

Dimensions Contracting specializes in interior finish-out and renovations in office buildings. All of the demolition and carpentry work is done in-house, while they use subcontractors for the electrical and plumbing work.

The company has done work for clients in the retail, health care, commercial and

■ Dimensions Contracting

What: Interior finish-out contracting firm

Who: Joe Dubbels, president; Mark Moscrip, vice president

Founded: 2004

Employees: 35

Annual revenues: \$11.7 million

Address: 8615 Botts Lane, San Antonio

Tel. No.: 210-829-1388



financial services sectors among others. The company’s biggest project to date was a \$1.2 million job to perform tenant improvements for aviation giant Boeing SAT.

Dubbels says the company’s growth in the past few years has been incredible and its biggest challenge has been in finding enough manpower for all the work in the pipeline.

“Last year we went through a huge growth spurt, and we weren’t manned up for all of the work we had,” he says. “But this year we are manned up and we are doing more volume.”

The company recently opened an office in Austin to pursue work in that market and has also been doing work in other Texas cities such as Del Rio and Uvalde.

“I’m still trying to figure out what our market share should be,” Dubbels says. “I think it will cap out at about \$15 million to \$20 million at most. We are typically about three months behind the engineering firms, and they are buried with work right now, so we should be good for another year or more.”

But even when things slow down, Dubbels says there is still usually renovation work that the company can do. Nevertheless, he has been careful to keep the company debt free as a security against hard times.

“If you have no debt and things go bad, you are still OK,” he says.