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COMPANY REPORT: PM CONSTRUCTION

## PM Construction: 'It's always about the customer'

As the recession deepens, PM Construction COO Bill Nason says this Maine builder's focus will remain on providing individualized quality.

Written By Kristin D'Agostino Produced By Shaheen Mohammadipour | Thu Feb 5, 2009



PM Construction's success can be traced to a serendipitous meeting in a supermarket aisle back in the early 1990s. At the time, COO Bill Nason was working as a Project Manager for a family-owned commercial construction company and was frustrated that his position offered no room for advancement.

While at the store on a job, he ran into Phillip Morin, a friend of a friend, whom he learned was looking to expand his residential construction business to include commercial buildings. In talking, the two men discovered their common goals, decided to join forces, and the rest is history.

With Morin as CEO and head of marketing and Nason as COO in charge operations, the Maine-based firm has grown from earning \$700,000 a year in 1992 to pulling in \$41 million in revenue in 2008. The company has 38 employees and serves premier clients such as Shaw's Supermarkets, Walgreen's, Hannaford Food & Drug, CVS and Advance Auto. "We've gone from being practically nonexistent to being one of the two or three main players in the state and New England. I'm very proud of that," Nason says. Nason, who has a degree in Education, found his way into the construction business after working for a short time as a Phys Ed teacher. Frustrated with Education, at 25 Nason began working as a laborer at commercial building sites. Over the course of several years, he worked his way up to being a successful project manager, a job he points out that his father had also held for many years. "It was in my blood," he says.

**STATISTICS**

Name: PM Construction

**Rapid Expansion**

"When Phil and I teamed up at PM Construction in 1992, we shifted the company's focus from residential to commercial clients, honing in on stores that would offer repeat business," says Nason. "We work for a fair price; we take care of customers, hit the dates and don't give them a reason to talk to anyone else," Nason says of their approach. "Next thing you know we're recommended to new developers in the area." Last year PM Construction completed 19 Walgreen's stores throughout New England, each of which brought in an average of \$2.2 million. To help ensure business runs smoothly with Walgreen's, the firm set up weekly meetings to discuss project development. "We make sure anything happening on one project that's an issue doesn't transfer to another," Nason says. "As a program, things click along pretty smoothly." Whether they're working with a big box chain or a "mom and pop" retailer, PM Construction's approach remains the same. "We tailor projects to meet their individual needs," Nason says. "Whether they sell or manufacture, we need to understand their budget. When we're dealing with Hannaford Food & Drug, they might need a big glass atrium, but negotiating with a family hardware business, they may want an inexpensive building with little frills. We put together project that best meets their particular needs. It's always about the customer." To help ensure safety on job sites, employees are required to take training courses in CPR and equipment operation. Managers at the company come with an average of 20 years of experience, which also helps decrease the chance of an accident occurring. "We've invested in top level management, good project managers and good job superintendents," Nason says. "As a result we don't have things going wrong with buildings."

**Shifting Direction**

With the state of the economy looking bleaker each day, PM Construction is focusing on ways to succeed in tough times. Because the majority of their clients are retail stores committed to expansion, Nason says the firm, luckily, has several projects lined up in coming months. But to ensure the company's success he and Phil are planning to expand the company's focus from commercial to municipal clients in the near future. "It's all about aligning yourself with the correct customers," he says. "The next two or three years will be challenging. I don't think people will be going in for big expansion. If (President) Obama is looking to spend on infrastructure, we're going to start looking at government offices and school buildings." One positive effect of the change, Nason says, is the opportunity to expand the breadth of experience. In expanding into municipal buildings, he anticipates that the firm will be constructing more LEED projects, which retailers generally pass up due to higher cost. "As time goes by and [green construction] becomes more acceptable, we expect to do a lot more," he says. In the future, the challenge will be to keep winning over new customers and bringing the old ones back for more. "This is going to be the most difficult economy we'll see in our lifetime," Nason says. "But we're going to keep chugging along. As the economy grows weaker our challenge will be to maintain the strongest possible construction team, while meeting the current economic environment, so customers know they're getting the best bang for their buck. We don't give our customers reason to talk to anyone else."

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