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MARCH 2010

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## Blowin' in the Wind

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# A Stronger Firm

ALLIANCE'S EMPLOYEE-OWNERSHIP WILL BE A MAIN INGREDIENT TO ITS SUCCESS. BY LIBBY JOHN

In January, Loveland, Colo.-based Alliance Construction Solutions officially became an employee-owned firm when former owner Clayton Schwerin retired and President Bill Joyner, Executive Vice President Brian Weinmaster and 12 other employees bought interest in the company. "Previously, there had been a small percentage of employee ownership, but now more than half of our work force has an ownership stake," Joyner says.

Weinmaster says he is proud of the past but even more excited for the future. "Bill and I have been here 12 and 15 years, respectively, and are proud to have been a part of Alliance's success and reputation," he says. "We plan to build an even stronger company in the future."

Alliance Construction is a general contractor and construction management firm that offers a range of services from the preconstruction to completion stages, including development, construction, design/build, design/assist and estimating for all markets.

Weinmaster says the company's work force is the main reason he became interested in obtaining ownership of the firm. It currently has 32 employees. "Our hiring process is extensive," he admits. "Our candidates interview with several people from each department -

## Alliance Construction

[www.allianceconstruction.com](http://www.allianceconstruction.com)

- Headquarters: Loveland, Colo.
- Employees: 32
- Services: General contractor, construction management and design/build

*"The company is really now an employee-owned company for the first time."*

*-Bill Joyner, CEO and president*

that's seven or eight people in the organization. We like to make sure it's a great fit.

"We've learned that you may have experience, but it's important that the person fits in with the culture," he adds. "We're hard-working, we don't have to punch in a time clock, we go the extra mile, we put excellence into our work and we take pride in our work."

"Everyone is well-rounded," Business Development Manager Damon Balcerak adds. "We don't have 'silos' of project managers or superintendents. [About] 80 to 90 percent overlap or know [how other departments

work]. For example, project management may be the forte, but that person has been a superintendent and an estimator, or vice versa."

The company has many long-term employees, Weinmaster says, and they will be groomed to take over in the future. "Bill's and my goal and vision is to have another succession transition in the future with some of the people we have working for us right now," he says.

## Making Difference

One of the specialties of Alliance Construction is the affordable housing market. The company recently finished the St. Francis Cornerstone Center in Denver - a six-level, 55,000-square-foot facility with underground parking, first-floor clinic, commons area, and four stories with 55 apartment units.

This development is geared for homeless individuals and will include services to help them get back on their feet, Weinmaster says. For example, it will have a computer lab, employment center and case manager offices.

The company is currently building a similar project in Denver called the Renaissance Uptown Lofts, which is a 100,000-square-foot facility with parking, retail space, and five stories with 100 units. As of January, the founda-



» Loveland, Colo.-based Alliance Construction is underway on a new project at Morgan Community College.

PHOTO: BENNETT, WAGNER, & GRODY ARCHITECTS

tion was being finished and the project is scheduled to be completed in late fall. "In this project, our goal is to really be aggressive and over-achieve the Section 3 requirements that our government has in place, which is putting homeless people at work," he says. "Our goal is to create 50 jobs and put 50 low-income people to work."

The project will have between 58 to 62 subcontractors, and some of them will hire low-income people, he says. Alliance will self-perform the concrete, and plans to hire Section 3 help, as well.

All affordable housing projects have their own personality, Weinmaster says. "The way these projects are different is that we're trying new things," he says. "For both the Cornerstone and Renaissance, these are the first projects that really have been aggressively giving back to low-income people and helping them plant roots. In the past, we've just gotten by and made the requirements, but now we're really being aggressive in overachieving and exceeding them."

"It's the right thing to do when you can really touch lives," he states. "It goes beyond the bricks and mortar. When you train someone to make a difference, it's really what it's all about."

### Tough Times

The popularity of green and sustainable building has not escaped Alliance Construction, Weinmaster says. It has 13 LEED-accredited professionals on staff. "I'm going to say in about half the projects we work on, if they're not LEED, we push them to be LEED," he says. "It's the right thing to do, and it's where our industry is headed."

The Nederland Community Center in Golden, Colo., recently received LEED gold certification. Some of the sustainable aspects of this project

include daylighting, systems to improve indoor air quality, utilization of local resources – most within 500 miles – low-VOC adhesives and energy-efficient mechanical equipment.

Its other LEED projects include a United Way facility in Fort Collins, Colo., which achieved silver, and a Fort Collins, Colo. retail business called Peloton Cycles that is pending gold.

The economic condition is another market trend that is impacting the company. For example, it is performing more lump-sum and hard-bid projects instead of negotiated contracts, which is what it normally does, Weinmaster says. Specializing in diverse markets has helped the firm, he adds. For example, the company used to perform many hospitality projects, but that sector has shrunk as the credit market tightened, he says. "However, healthcare is still a strong market, and we have an enviable portfolio in that segment," he says. "We also perform public work. These markets help us in slower markets."

### 'Contractor of Choice'

The company's management team strives to get involved in all projects, an important characteristic that distinguishes it from other firms. "We're small enough that clients receive very special treatment," Weinmaster says. "If they need to reach [Joyner], he is just a phone call away. We walk every project at least once a month. We're very involved with all of our projects."

"We take care of our clients," Balcerak stresses. "In our history, 80 to 90 percent of our customers are repeat or referral clients. There is no better compliment. We really strive to take care of our clients and give them the best level of care." ♦



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