

# US DEVELOPERS JOURNAL

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**CE&C, INC.**  
**A NEW MODEL FOR BETTER BUSINESS**

**THE MAGAZINE FOR CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES**

According to Jim Winskill, the Business Development Director, this organizational structure allows CE&C to be as efficient as possible in all areas of its business from the number of employees to the cost of each project. This orientation toward a team mentality rather than an individual one allows each project to receive more attention and produces fewer mistakes on the job which translates into less stress for everyone involved.

In the eight years since this new business model was conceived, many projects have been completed. Most revolve around CE&C's niche of commercial structures under six stories such as schools, colleges, retail and mixed-use buildings. However, working on affordable and low-income housing as well as renovations is also a priority. One renovation project was just completed and required a seismic structural wall renovation to a college campus building which was occupied. A "shear wall" was installed and buried eight feet below ground and towers through four stories above. This 100,000 square-foot renovation cost \$19 million and was particularly enjoyable because of its great complexity. According to Winskill, CE&C completes many complex renovation projects because of the longevity of the company and its depth of experience.

Assisting CE&C with its various conventions and educational resources is the ABC Western Washington Chapter. The association also gives companies like CE&C a voice on both the national and local political levels.

"Green" or environmentally friendly projects have also become a focus for the company. Currently, roughly 80 percent of all projects are green to some degree. This can include high efficiency heating and cooling systems, green roofs, porous concrete and many other variables. Any method that can lessen the environmental impact is used. Proper disposal of waste and buying materials produced within 500 miles of the job site, such as lumber, are techniques often engaged to increase the green quotient of a project. CE&C's Director of Preconstruction Services is a LEED Accredited Professional. They are certified to construct LEED, Evergreen and Sea Green Sustainability projects and partner with the owner and architect early in the process to ensure this philosophy is integrated to the highest degree possible.

"This has become the standard method of construction within government agencies and non-profit owners and is gaining

## A New Model for Better Business

*By R.C. Anderson*

Tacoma, Washington-based company CE&C has been in business since 1948, making it one of the oldest general contractors in the state. In the last eight years, the company has doubled its annual revenue from \$20 million to \$40 million. President Gregg Warter believes this is due to the company's change to a unique business model. Unlike most construction models, CE&C does not lay all the responsibility for projects on a single person. Rather, a menagerie of specialized support staff surrounds and works with each project superintendent to ensure he or she has everything necessary to complete projects on time and with minimal expense. Each person on this team is a master at his or her assigned task, be it working with submittals, schedules, contracts or estimates so a consistent quality result is always achieved.

ground within the private sector right now but it takes a closely coordinated effort [to achieve],” said Winskill.

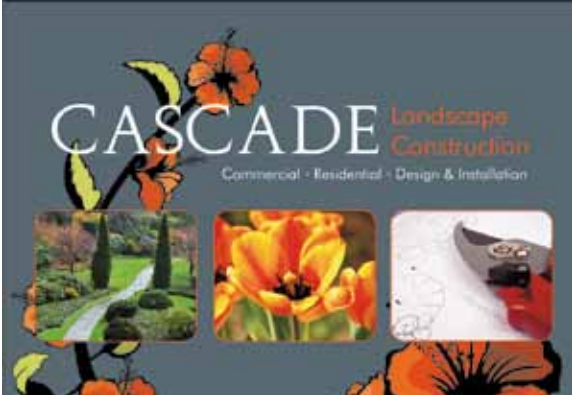
CE&C works with many professionals such as architects, engineers and sub-contractors on a recurring basis. “We focus on relationships with customers and other [professionals] involved in the projects,” said Winskill. CE&C has gained a reputation of being competitively priced and fair with everyone involved. Sub-contractors and others are paid on time and are consistently apprised of questions and new ideas in a timely and pro-active manner. “Lots of people make promises and don’t deliver, we want to be the ones that do,” stated Warter.

Our relationship-based strategy and our ability to deliver a quality process at a very competitive cost has become the company’s saving grace during the economic downturn. Whereas much of CE&C’s competition is being forced to severely cut back or close their doors, CE&C is still going strong and retaining its staff. The motto “relationships are the foundation of our business” has ingratiated itself into the minds of all CE&C’s employees and has led to a coveted reputation in the Washington area. Although CE&C is sometimes specifically requested for projects, the competition for other assignments has greatly increased. “Two years ago there were only one to two competitors on a deal, now there is up to 15,” said Winskill.

Projects are likely to become even more scarce in the near future. While growth projections remain solid for the rest of this year, next year the strain may begin to show. “It depends on how much Obama’s stimulus package gets involved with construction, but right now only one third is going to [our industry],” stated Winskill. “If the architects are busy this year, then we will be busy next year, but the architects aren’t very busy.” Winskill doesn’t see the construction industry picking up anytime soon, but believes “public projects will help keep the company whole until the restrictions on capital and private development loosens.”

The economy has not stopped CE&C from taking part in the apprenticeship program, however. Pairing with the Carpenter’s Union, CE&C is able to chose who they want at a job site, get to know which apprentices are best, and have the ability to hire trained staff when the apprenticeships are completed. One of the most important qualifications for this work is safety.





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“We want to be safe and hire people who are safe; people are the backbone of our business,” said Warter. By using apprentices, CE&C can train potential employees and hire the best.

CE&C has not only formed business relationships, but community ones as well. CE&C is involved with 12 charitable organizations to do with children and family. These organizations range from Habitat for Humanity to a local athletic team of underprivileged children who have a 3.0 grade point average or higher. This team is currently traveling to participate in the Junior Olympics and of the 22 children involved, 12 have obtained college scholarships. Financial support is not the only type of donation, however. CE&C is in the process of completing its second building for the Tacoma Rescue Mission at a reduced cost. This building will house up



to 100 people and provide a safe environment for the neediest members of the community to transition into a better life. The relationships CE&C has developed in the business arena and its local community have crafted a company image and appreciation that has proven a welcome buoy during the current economic climate.

While business has grown to \$40 million in revenues, CE&C has no plans to expand into other regions. Warter would rather focus on leveraging strong local relationships and continue to make his company as successful and efficient as possible. "We're just focused on western Washington. There's enough business to keep us busy," said Winskill. In the current economy, that is saying something significant.

## ***COMPANY AT A GLANCE***

Established : 1948  
CE&C,INC. Members : 50  
President : Gregg Warter

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