

# US DEVELOPERS JOURNAL

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**H.L. MOE COMPANY**  
REDEFINING SERVICE

THE MAGAZINE FOR CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

# H.L. Moe Company



people too and need water just like the rest of us. In the world-famous neighborhoods of Beverly Hills, West L.A., Hollywood, Bel Air, Santa Monica, and Malibu, where many of these said celebrities reside, H.L. Moe Company is providing their plumbing.

Founded in 1927 by Herb Moe, The H. L. Moe Company has grown from a small plumbing contractor to an industry leader in plumbing construction and service. The Davis family bought the company from Herb Moe in 1964 and continued to grow in size and reputation. The company focused on growing the new construction division, while still maintaining a loyal customer base for service and repair.

In 2000, President Michael Davis decided to expand the company's service division, with the addition of several Los Angeles based plumbing companies, including John K. Keefe, a well recognized service business in Beverly Hills. In total, Moe has acquired nearly 20 service businesses across Los Angeles County.

## Redefining Service

*Produced by Jonathan Todd & Written by Andrew Robinson*

Celebrity fanfare is a funny thing. As kids, we like to think that our childhood idols are superhuman and wake up with every hair perfectly in place and makeup applied.

It is easy to forget when reading tabloids or watching television that celebrities are

Although it is rare for union plumbing contractors to have both new construction and service divisions, many Moe clients have found this to be valuable after a project is complete and becomes occupied. "The synergy between the two divisions allows us to offer a unique service to our commercial

clients when we take over the ongoing maintenance of the properties we have built," says Davis. "We know the facilities well and are able to pass along knowledge gained during the construction phase to the service team when it is necessary."

Today, the company has three divisions. Moe Contracting Services is the largest and is dedicated to new construction and major tenant improvement projects. Moe Plumbing Service is the service and repair division and Moe Drain Service consists of specialist dedicated to drain and sewer maintenance.

Well-known and flourishing in the Southern California landscape, Moe has participated in some of the city's most recognizable buildings with a niche in hospital, education, and public service facilities. Employing nearly 200 people and having annual budget of \$30 million, Davis has a formula that he expects the entire company to live by: "S=E+1. Service equals expectations plus something extra." In other words, discover the customer's expectation, and

then do a minimum of one thing more than that – that is his definition of service.

## Plumbing with Green

Given the nature of Moe's business, the company has been a leader in the green movement before it was the hot topic it is today. The company promotes sustainable products and lifestyles and makes viable recommendations on water and energy saving methods for both commercial and residential applications. The new construction division has participated in several LEED projects promoting the latest technologies and processes for saving water and energy including the California Science Center, The Dana Point Ocean Institute and Water Gardens Business Complex, to name a few. Moe has been on the forefront of installing water-saving technologies including gray water reclamation and rain water storage. In fact, Moe was the first company on the West Coast to install a hybrid tankless water heater.



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## Using Good People

A company is only as good as the people within it. Mike Davis knows this, and he continually seeks out the best employees to hire and train professionally. This is reciprocated with employee loyalty as 25 employees have been with the company for more than 10 years. The company uses apprenticeship programs for initial training, and it encourages people to strive to for self improvement. Any gifted member of the staff can start out as entry level, move up to be a foreman, superintendent, or even into management training. Not only is this encouraging, but it also helps to reduce employee turnover. The company's philosophy is simple: "improve yourself and you improve the company, and this will be reflected in your position and salary; you will be paid well for a job well done," says Davis.

## Using Technology

Moe incorporates cutting-edge technology for the design and estimation of its projects. With in-house 3D AutoCAD capabilities, the estimators are able to discover conflicts between the trades during the design phase and provide both design and value engineering recommendations. This translates to saving time and money during the building phase; few of Moe's competitors have the same level of expertise in this arena.

When supported by the general contractor, project managers use Constructware to collaborate and communicate with the project team. During any phase of the project, a member of the team can send questions into the system, which are then routed to the field staff, managers and other team members. Whether it is a superintendent, project manager, or engineer, the platform provides a convenient forum to update and share information to all who they can send in a question and get the answer from the right person.

In spite of the current economy, Moe has aggressive growth goals and is continuing to invest in the people and the technology to expand both their CAD and estimating staff, as this area is intrinsic to achieving success.

## Sales and Marketing

Moe believes that its clients are the company's best marketers and views a dissatisfied customer as the biggest detriment to future growth. It is a top concern for management to ensure they do all they can to satisfy their customers.

"We are really big on this and preach it constantly...It's a mantra

because when Herb Moe started the business, he talked about experience, integrity, and being reliable,” explains Davis.

Moe has a customer care center that handles most of the typical problems clients face, and anything beyond their capacity is immediately turned over to a senior manager. If they can’t answer the question or solve the problem, someone else will get back to them within a day; with or without an answer. After every service call, customers are asked to provide feedback. This information is used to identify ways to improve service, and to ensure the customer received the S=E+1 experience. Based upon the success of the service division’s program, a similar program is being implemented for new construction.

Moe uses the full range of advertising tools available to

market their company. This means something as simple as word of mouth from satisfied clients to the yellow pages (both paper and online), the company Web site ([www.moeplumbing.com](http://www.moeplumbing.com)), direct mail and a quarterly newsletter that are sent out via email.

### Striving for Reliability

Seeing some more unstable companies shut their doors or desperately fight for work can be unnerving for any business; but Moe is taking part in the industry-wide conversation that is helping companies combat the current economic environment.

“People are looking for contractors who can succeed. They aren’t always the cheapest but they can always finish strong,” says Davis. “We are not ignorant to the current



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environment, but we see it as an opportunity to improve our process, continue to train our plumbers, and be ready to hit the ground running when this turbulent season ends.”

Moe management knows that, in these uncertain times, a company can not sit still. As Moe approaches its centennial

celebration, the company will remain committed to providing quality piping to clients and offering innovative solutions to timely challenges.

## COMPANY AT A GLANCE

Established : 1927

Employees : 200

President : Michael Davis

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

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