Lockard Companies Takes a Holistic Approach

Sixty years ago, Wendell Lockard started a small construction firm in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Using a design/build concept, he soon gained a reputation as a premier commercial contractor in the local industry. Today Lockard Companies, while still headquartered in Cedar Falls, has gone nationwide with construction and development projects (medical and manufacturing facilities, retail stores, and shopping centers) in 28 states.

Kenneth Lockard, who succeeded his father as president in 1985 and is now chairman, says Lockard Companies is a real estate solutions company.

“We take a holistic approach,” Lockard explains. “The average person who walks in the door has never bought a piece of commercial ground, hired architectural or engineering firms, worked with construction firms, submitted and obtained permits from various city and state agencies, or done the analytics of putting an entire development together. We have the expertise and experience to guide them through the total process.”

That approach is a key to their success, according to Robert Smith Jr., Lockard Companies president. “We don’t get to build something unless the project actually happens,” he says. “We help our partners and clients identify all of the pieces that are required to take a project from start to finish.”

A wide range of topics is thoroughly discussed throughout the project. Lockard and Smith emphasize, for example, that value engineering of items like roofing materials and heating and cooling systems includes the installation costs up front as well as the operating costs later. They ensure clients are fully informed as they make important decisions and won’t have unpleasant surprises once they are in the new facility.

While Lockard Companies works largely with the private sector, it also has had success winning government contracts. CIRAS’ Dave Bogaczyk, program director, and Julie Fagle, government contracting specialist, have worked with the company since 2007 to guide them through the rigors of bidding on government projects.

One of the biggest government complaints is that companies don’t respond to what they are asked and don’t clearly state their qualifications for a job, says Bogaczyk. He and Fagle help clients create a capability statement that is targeted to the agency requesting bids.

James Fettkether, president of Lockard Construction, says he first worked with CIRAS on a project to build biosafety labs at Fort Detrick, a U.S. Army medical command installation in Frederick, Maryland. “There is extensive supplemental information that you have to provide before you can become a vendor,” Fettkether notes. “CIRAS helped us set up our vendor identification numbers and then group the opportunities so we could review the ones that were really appropriate for us. Guidance from Dave and Julie has been very beneficial.”

Fettkether also credits CIRAS with helping the company understand how partnerships and joint ventures work in the bidding process. The company partnered with Art’s Way Scientific in Monona, Iowa, on the Fort Detrick project.

“Partnering with a team like Art’s Way enables us to bring a creative solution to a government agency,” Smith says.

While government contracts have been limited recently due to budget constraints, Lockard is optimistic things will change as the economy improves, and projects will be initiated to meet a backlog of needs.

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