

Gonsalves & Stronck has developed a diverse project portfolio with 50 percent of its projects in the public works sector and 50 percent privately negotiated.

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Taking a Vast Array of Jobs

San Francisco Bay Area-based Gonsalves & Stronck Construction says it has worked to develop lasting relationships with clients as well as with its employees.

By JOANNA MILLER

Bill Stronck, president of Gonsalves & Stronck Construction, and his partner, Vice President Keith Gonsalves, may be responsible for multimillion-dollar construction projects, but Stronck says, in many ways, they are still “just kids who want to play with Tinker Toys.” It was that spirit that drove the partners to establish the company in 1993, over a couple of beers, Stronck says.

“We broke away from a large regional company,” he recalls. “We were both senior estimators and area project managers. We were with that company when it went through an enormous growth spike, and I helped open their office in Southern California.” But the bigger that company got, the further away they were from the toys, he says, so they set out on their own.

The new company’s goal was not to focus on volume but, instead, stay “closer to the ground,” Stronck says. Gonsalves & Stronck’s first project was in San Bernardino, and the partners had to stretch themselves pretty thin to keep things running smoothly. “We were invited to bid on a select list and were successful in one of the components,”

he says. “Keith went to Southern California to act as the superintendent, and I stayed in Northern California to set up our office. We built two buildings in 42 days for Santa Fe Railroad and General Motors in an active railroad yard. That was our first project.”

Stronck says they started the company the hard way ≠ without any money. But because that first project turned out to have a high profile, more jobs soon followed. “That first job was \$2.5 million in work, and we had the heads of General Motors and Santa Fe Railroad, and then-governor Pete Wilson, there to cut the ribbon,” he says. “It was a high-profile job for a couple of yahoos just starting out.”

The company has since developed a diverse project portfolio with 50 percent of its projects in the public works sector and 50 percent privately negotiated. As Stronck explains, “Our niche is not to have a niche.”

Instead, he says, Gonsalves & Stronck is equipped to complete a vast array of jobs.

Gonsalves & Stronck Construction

www.gs-construction.com

2006 sales: \$40 million

Headquarters: San Carlos, Calif.

Employees: 65-100

Services: General contractor and construction manager

Bill Stronck, president: “Our culture is based on loyalty, which is a two-way street.”



PHOTO: JD PETERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

This is particularly important in the public works arena, he says.

“Public projects are broader than on the private side,” he notes.

The company’s project experience includes fire and police stations, libraries, civic centers, education, seismic retrofit, downtown beautification, historic renovation, sports and recreation centers, parking structures, medical facilities and performing arts centers.

It also works regularly on research labs for the University of California San Francisco, including a complex exterior renovation project on a 16-story building.

The company replaced the exterior skin of the entire facility while it remained open and housed, among its tenants, a Nobel Prize winner. “High-tech research labs are all about jamming as

much as you can into a little space,” Stronck says. “We thrive on challenging jobs like this.”

Gonsalves & Stronck is currently working on The Marine Mammal Center in the Marin Headlands area of California.

The organization focuses on rescuing and rehabilitating marine mammals up and down the West Coast. It conducts research and educates the community on the marine environment.

The new \$18 million facility will include 40 pens and pools as well as a life support system for the animals. Also planned is a two-story visitor center and administration offices. Gonsalves & Stronck built a small hospital for the group seven years ago. Both projects have garnered a great deal of public attention, Stronck says.

Family Oriented

Stronck says the company’s culture, while it may sound like a cliché, is truly family oriented. “Everyone has been here for a long time; we don’t have a revolving door,” he says. “We’re not in the volume business, so we don’t have to hire and fire regularly. We stay pretty steady. Our culture is based on loyalty, which is a two-way street.”

That culture becomes most evident in a crisis. One of the company’s superintendents, who had been on staff for 13 years, died recently of a brain hemorrhage, Stronck says. The company has set up a trust fund for the employee’s children, and donations have come in from a wide range of sources.

Busy Market

Stronck says the market is getting very busy. “In the Bay Area, the economy is hitting on all cylinders,” he notes. “There is a shortage of manpower, so we are putting more emphasis on training and promoting from within.”

Stronck is currently the president of the Construction Employers’ Association (CEA), which represents most major general contractors in Northern California in union labor matters. The total annual volume of the group is more than \$10 billion, he notes. “One of the major goals of CEA is working with unions to address labor shortage,” he says. “We are currently looking for state funding for the creation of a California Construction College. The program would serve a dual purpose of training and transitioning field personnel to management positions, while enticing a younger work force by offering college credit.”

Looking toward the future, Gonsalves & Stronck has an eye on the burgeoning market in senior housing trends. “There is enormous growth right now for new long-term care, housing and recreation facilities for the aging baby boom generation,” Stronck says.

Among other senior facilities, the company is currently working on preconstruction services for a \$60 million master plan renovation of large retirement community. Gonsalves & Stronck also plans to focus more on design/build projects. This will allow it to continue building lasting relationships with its clients, Stronck says. ■