

FASTEST GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES

BleekerVigesaa shifts to more health care work

BY CHRIS CLEMENS
 SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

UP
 731 percent



Flight II— No. 1 Company: BleekerVigesaa General Contractors
Owner: James Vigesaa
Location: Brighton
Industry: Construction
Website: www.bvgci.com
Phone: 303-637-0981
No. of employees: 18
Revenue growth: From \$5 million to \$41.5 million, 731%

The team at BleekerVigesaa General Contractors has a long track record as accomplished construction professionals. Now the economic downturn is prompting the firm's management to sharpen its skills in another area: market forecasting.

As the financial crisis took shape last fall, BleekerVigesaa's executives realized that two of their biggest markets — restaurants and retail — were facing tough times. The firm quickly reacted by expanding its focus on the more recession-resistant health care segment.

"We were fortunate enough to recognize that opportunities for new work in the restaurant and retail sectors were diminishing, and were able to successfully transition most of our work into medical and dental," said owner James Vigesaa.

Every sector of the construction industry has been affected by the downturn, but according to Vigesaa, health care-related building has held up better than other segments. "Medical and dental has been the shining star in the field," he said.

Since refocusing its strategy in the fourth quarter of last year, BleekerVigesaa draws the majority of its revenue from health care. Among the firm's notable projects in the sector are the 14,500-square foot Smoky Hill Health Plaza in Centennial and the Platte Valley Medical Center's 3,000-square foot Turnberry Medical Plaza in Commerce City.

The firm's strong reputation in the industry helped fuel its growth in 2008 and facilitated its smooth shift in strategy toward the end of the year. BleekerVigesaa generates most of its



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Dan Brown, owner and operations manager, and James Vigesaa, owner, from Bleeker Vigesaa in front of their latest project, the Brighton Cultural Center.

business through referrals, and has been able to leverage existing relationships with architects and developers to expand in the health care sector.

The firm's processes and infrastructure also have been crucial to its success. "You have to be very, very well-organized in this business," Vigesaa said. "Even when we were a small company, we focused on getting systems and procedures in place that would scale with us as we grew."

The company invested early on in construction-management systems, which enable it to create and execute on highly detailed project schedules. Clients value this disciplined approach since it helps BleekerVigesaa to complete projects on time and within budget.

The firm's methodology also benefits subcontractors by providing clear timelines and objectives. "Our system helps subcontractors make more of a margin on our jobs than they would make on a competitor's job," Vigesaa said.

BleekerVigesaa's growing reputation and client list also has enabled it to shift its focus toward larger projects that leverage the firm's

expertise and infrastructure. According to Vigesaa, a \$200,000 project can require the same level of resources and management attention as a \$4 million one. The firm's strategy, therefore, has been to pursue bigger assignments, even if it means fewer projects.

As BleekerVigesaa expands its practice across the Front Range, it remains committed to Brighton, home of its headquarters. The firm has played a key role in the revitalization of several historic buildings there, including the Brighton Armory, which is being transformed into a cultural center, and City Hall. Vigesaa sees his firm's work in Brighton as a key part of the company's identity. "It's our hometown, and we take pride in it," he said.

Vigesaa expects the downturn to continue to affect his business throughout 2009. Regarding the revenue outlook, he said, "We all know that 2009 is going to be a lot less than 2008." However, he also sees signs that the construction market is starting to recover. He notes that the financing environment for new projects has improved somewhat in recent months, and is optimistic that business will be steady in 2010.