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[IMPROVING THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE]

WB ENGINEERS | CONSULTANTS

DAVID BONIFACIO AND VINCENT WARNER

DIVERSIFIED SERVICES DRIVE DECADE OF GROWTH FOR WB ENGINEERS

It's only been 10 years since WB Engineers | Consultants opened its doors for business. At the time, the two-office firm offered mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire alarm/protection services.

Who would have predicted that, a decade later, the firm would comprise four offices, services that reach well beyond traditional engineering and a long list of prominent clients?

"What started out 10 years ago as nothing more than an idea has steadily grown into a business far exceeding our expectations," says David Bonifacic, co-founder and co-managing principal with Vincent Warner. "We are proud of our firm's growth, grateful to our clients and appreciative of our employees who helped us to get here."

A decade ago, it was just the four founders: Mr. Bonifacic, Mr. Warner, Peter Dussault (who runs WB's Boston office) and Peter DeBernardo, WB's chief mechanical engineer. They had just two offices — in New York and Boston.

Now, the firm also has offices in New Jersey and Washington, D.C. The firm's roster of clients has grown to include Verizon, Tiffany & Co., Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation, Brookfield Properties, Digital Reality Trust, JPMorgan Chase, Citibank, Jones Lang LaSalle, Turner, L'Oreal, Ogilvy & Mather and General Dynamics.

The key to this expansion of business, says Mr. Warner, has been WB's carefully planned expansion of services.

"A main reason for the firm's success is our ability to embrace diversity, in terms of our clientele and service offerings," notes Mr. Warner. "We started as a strictly MEP/FP/FA (mechanical/electrical/plumbing/fire protection/fire alarm) engineering firm but have grown to offer other important services including commissioning, Building Information Modeling (BIM), strategic services, sustainable design and information technology."

In perhaps the most important element of this diversification, WB has expanded its role as a service provider beyond engineering services to encompass strategic consulting as well.

"We aren't just guys who do drawings," says Mr. Bonifacic. "We are strategic advisors to our clients, helping them to run their business. As a matter of fact, we've consistently been moving toward fewer drawings and more consulting."

In developing its strategic consulting service practice, WB has grown particularly adept at assisting portfolio managers and planners, as well as real estate brokers, in achieving their business goals. For example, when Verizon sought to sell two Manhattan buildings, WB's team worked closely with the brokerage, legal, and real estate teams towards the successful marketing and eventual sale of the properties. At the same time, WB led the project design and construction teams in isolating and protecting Verizon's critical networks remaining within both facilities.

Mission critical projects comprise a project type that requires both technical expertise and strategic consulting. Evaluating a client's technology

needs in relation to energy consumption, conservation, and regulation requires specific expertise and critical thinking. In data center projects, any interruption to the data center's critical functions could be disastrous for the client's business. The complexity of the work, coupled with the continual evolution of the technology, has created opportunities for WB to turn its extensive experience in engineering to new ends, as an expert consultant guiding the client and the team throughout the project.

WB is finding that today's clients need more assistance in identifying priorities and directing projects. In response, WB's diverse service offerings now range from the start of a project to its finish. From portfolio management, site selection, preconstruction audits, and planning/scheduling to final commissioning and facility management, WB takes an active role in every step of a project.

"We partner with clients early in the project planning phase, then continue as their consultant and advocate through design, construction, commissioning and owner acceptance," says Mr. Warner. "Successful completion of construction projects requires a rigorous understanding of scope, schedule, and budget — and the ability to deliver based on that understanding."

"All of our project team members are responsive and accessible to our clients, and the principals are actively involved in every stage of a project from initiation through completion," adds Mr. Bonifacic. "Clients receive the expertise of the entire multi-disciplined team on each project, enabling us to anticipate and address potential complications and to keep each project running on time and on budget."

WB is also demonstrating its broad scope in a project for Governors Island, where the firm is auditing current systems and upgrading the infrastructure. The firm's civil engineering services are fundamental to preparing the island for future development.

Last year, WB became the first New York City-based firm to be awarded a Federal Supply Service Schedule in Professional Engineering Services (PES) to perform construction management services for government agencies. The five-year schedule, awarded by the United States General Services Administration, rec-

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ognizes WB as an approved PES construction manager to bid on government projects that call for such services.

And of course, WB makes extensive use of Building Information Modeling (BIM) technology. The firm utilizes BIM as a tool in 3D modeling, energy analysis, digitally integrated cost estimating, coordinated construction planning, and project planning and management — although WB points out that BIM has a long way to go before its capabilities are fully realized and effectively implemented.

When a leading global consulting firm hired WB to provide MEP/FP/FA engineering and consulting services in relocating their Waltham offices, WB used the BIM software Revit to complete the design. Armed with 3D drawings of all existing conditions in the building, WB determined the placement for the MEP/FP/FA systems and steered clear of two potential pitfalls later in the project. Using Revit allowed WB to better coordinate with the architect and other consultants during the design phase, when it was easier and

less expensive to make modifications.

“There’s no doubt that BIM is an important and very useful tool; we’ve used it with great success on some of our projects, particularly for calculating different scenarios in budgeting and scheduling and anticipating their overall impact,” says Mr. Bonifacic. “It’s not quite the be-all and end-all yet, but I think that BIM’s potential will be more fully realized as the technology’s software and hardware matures, standards are implemented and users across disciplines develop more experience.”

A top priority for WB is its sustainable design services, which include energy use modeling, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) commissioning, LEED engineering services, rebate/incentive consulting services, renewable energy technologies, sustainable M/E/P design and utility rate analysis.

Commissioning, the process that vets all systems and ensures that a project is fully completed, is another important service for WB. The firm is currently serving as the commis-

sioning authority for a laboratory project at the State University of New York in Orange County (SUNY Orange). The project, which broke ground at the end of 2008, consists of a new building and significant renovations of the existing Tower Building. The commissioning process is a key part of the project’s application for LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

It is in sustainable design, in particular, that WB sees opportunities for even greater innovation and expansion in the coming years.

“New technology, energy efficiency, infrastructure upgrades, and environmental regulations — these are factors that are driving a growing need for creative thinking to push the envelope on sustainable design, and engineering will be the catalyst for those changes,” says Mr. Bonifacic. “But when I think about what we’ve done in the last decade, things we never expected to do when we started out, there’s no telling where we’ll go in the next one.”

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