

CONTRACTORS, OWNERS & MANAGERS

By Tim McEntyre, McEntyre Associates

Corporate Contracting, Inc. makes 'big play' for major league baseball

Yogi Berra once said, "If people don't want to come out to the ballpark, how are you going to stop them?" While baseball fans ponder that thought, they will have an additional venue, in the heart of New Jersey's professional sports playing field, The Meadowlands.



Michael J. Walsh

Corporate Contracting, Inc. (CCI), the Morris Plains, New Jersey-based, construction firm, has put the finishing touches on a 40,000 s/f state-of-the-art television studio for the Major League Baseball network (MLB). The MLB broadcast headquarters will telecast baseball games and other Major League Baseball programming to worldwide audiences. Studio sets will resemble ballpark décor.

"We view every project as exciting, but this one is extra special," said Corporate Contracting, Inc. president Michael J. Walsh. "This will be a new landmark in a marquee showcase for our revered national pastime, so there is real history in the making."

The 42-year old Walsh has a construction resume that dates back more than two decades. He began small building jobs right out of high school in Denville, NJ. He liked the feel of the business and aptly describes himself as a "hands-on guy". That passion superseded youthful notions of college and law school.

CCI's success in the marketplace is demonstrated by a project scorecard which repeatedly lists names like Siemens, the international electronics giant; Foster Wheeler, the global engineering star and power equipment supplier; noted carrier, Travelers Insurance; prominent book publisher Houghton-Mifflin; and leading health care provider Atlantic Health Systems, to name just some.

In addition to its third-party corporate clients, CCI has

a longtime relationship to provide construction services on behalf of the well-known developer, Commercial Realty Group (CRG).

Walsh always speaks candidly about his business game plan and his "hands-on" approach is literally reflected on every job site. For example, his cell phone number is emblazoned on signs erected at every project site.

"Communication is crucial and I make sure I can be contacted for any reason," he explains. In addition to being just a mobile phone call away, he visits job sites daily.

Walsh cut his teeth in the business working with one of Morris County's early developers, Anders S. Billing, who pioneered scores of commercial properties in the 1970's and 1980's, and would position Morristown's Madison Avenue as a prominent corporate row. Walsh became a full partner in Anders' construction business in 1994 and acquired sole ownership in 2004.

Working with Commercial Realty Group of Morris Plains, headed by Andrew H. Billing, Walsh has participated in the completion of three projects that have been honored by the New Jersey Business Industry Association (NJBIA) as "New Good Neighbor Award" winners in recent years. Winners are judged as the state's top commercial buildings.

Most recently, CCI helped finish the conversion of a vacant factory in Fairfield, NJ, to a modern 400,000 s/f manufacturing, warehouse, and corporate office building for Middle Atlantic Products. The transition to a modern, hi-tech facility retained several hundred manufacturing jobs for the area's economy.

The Fairfield site where propellers were "banged out" for the famed B-29 bomber of World War II now has a new life making an impressive line of support and protection products to secure company data operations.

Another "New Good Neighbor" honoree was Morris Business Campus, a 330,000 s/f, three-building complex in

Morris Plains, which CCI helped resurrect from a time-worn, third class status. A third project was a 200,000 s/f Southgate office facility in Morris Township, which CCI transformed to class A corporate headquarters quality.

An essential part of that CCI game plan is keeping a tight rein on every assignment. Walsh uses his own team of carpenters on every job. In 1998, he partnered with an electrical contractor, Matthew Kramlick, to provide in-house electrical expertise.

"This enables us to use our own personnel for most interior construction; and the end result is we control jobs and stay efficient," added Walsh. For other construction specialties, he relies on a proven cadre of subcontractors who have performed successfully for CCI on numerous facilities over the years.

CCI has established a solid reputation in interior office space construction and alterations. Fast-track tenant fit-ups are second nature and the firm is expert in navigating the sometimes cumbersome government permitting process at all levels.

"We have longtime relationships and build offices for clients over and over again," Walsh observes. "They choose us because they always know how the job will turn out. Construction is not a commodity like buying a car off the showroom floor. Every construction project is a significantly different product which varies because of the type of materials and time commitments," he added.

Explains Walsh; "We have great leverage because our subs have worked with us forever. Competitors get into trouble because they may use new subcontractors and never really know how they will work out. We know!"

The CCI president sticks to his demanded "no whining" policy. By that he means, "When people on the job come to me with problems, I tell them I want to hear solutions."

"I'm a problem solver, not a

finger pointer," clarifies Walsh. "It's easy to be a finger pointer, but that's not my style."

Under Walsh's stewardship, CCI has become a multi-million dollar enterprise even through 2007 and 2008 when the general economy got shaky. He credits his unique relationship with Commercial Realty Group, a multi-faceted real estate organization, with providing an opportunity to understand the wide spectrum of real estate essentials.

"I can show people I know where they are coming from and I am not just a guy trying to build something," he notes. "I understand the entire process from site acquisition, the permitting process, leasing and management, to the construction fit-out for the end-user."

CCI's measured successful growth is part of the game plan. An essential factor is "We never overload our schedule," declares Walsh. Savvy skills in his toolbox include converting solely occupied facilities to multi-tenant buildings and completing office structure renovations without disturbing the worth ethic of existing operations.

He points with pride to the 80,000 SF, five-story 65 Madison Ave., one of the early office buildings to grace Morristown's corporate thoroughfare. While companies in residence carried on their daily business agendas, CCI added new windows, a new HVAC system and converted elevators from antiquated cable to hydraulic-driven operations.

The CCI track record is filled with repeat business. Because of its proficient handling of a 14,000 SF renovation of executive offices and R&D space in Plainsboro for Siemens, CCI earned another project for the near \$100 billion titan of industry.

"I make it clear that I will be personally involved in every significant job, that's what we tell the ownership and the reality is we keep people happy during the progress of the job," states Walsh.

But he is quick to point out his roster of clients is far from

being limited to business giants. Quite the contrary is true. For example, other recent sites completed were a 6,000 SF family intervention center in Denville and a 15,000 s/f child abuse prevention center in North Brunswick. St. Peter's Orphanage, Denville, was the happy recipient of pro bono interior upgrading.

Corporate Contracting expects to put its "hands on" finishing touches on another historic project in the near future. Commercial Realty Group (CRG) has rescued a Parsippany project that has stood bleakly as an unfinished four-story structural steel skeleton for some 20 years.

What the press had termed "the eyesore of Morris County" is being dramatically turned around as a class A 76,000 s/f office building as part of the new InterPark Office Campus adjacent to New Jersey's only crossroads of interstates Route 80 and 287. A second five-story 109,000 SF building will follow when the first is completed.

"This is a great site and a great testimonial to CRG for creating a first class corporate facility in the capitol of Morris County's business landscape," said Walsh.

CCI has worked closely as well with a number of other real estate and property management firms including CB Richard Ellis, Jones Lang LaSalle and Ivy Realty, to name a few. Walsh also has a working relationship with major architectural firms.

Since he deferred those many years ago in choosing a hardhat instead of a college cap and gown, he has enjoyed his family, business, and leisure life.

An avid golfer, he travels for business and pleasure. While visiting the sights across the globe his internal compass always motivates him to sites for a first-hand study of local building culture and architecture. He casually admits, "One reason I travel is I like to look at buildings."

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