

Ceiling Systems Distributors aims high

With the recent opening of its sixth branch, Ceiling Systems Distributors continues a growth spiral that has spanned state lines and expanded product offerings.

Founded in 1982 by Dick Teodori, the company started as a small, exclusive distributor for Armstrong Ceilings, selling acoustical ceiling tile and grid. Within a decade, CSD saw a need to grow its market share.

“We embraced growth because we understand that if you stand still, people will pass you by,” said Jim Cauley, executive vice president, who over-

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tor, which it expanded into full-line operations. Today, the Pittsburgh-based company is the largest supplier of acoustical products in the western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and northern West Virginia markets. With the addition of its newest branch in Erie, Pa., CSD has three locations in Pennsylvania and three in Ohio.

CSD’s rapid growth has been fueled, in part, by its successful selling techniques.

“What makes us unique in the marketplace is that we strive to sell

Cauley is quick to point out that superior service is also crucial to CSD’s success.

“We want to service our customers better than anyone else. We give quotations the same day customers ask for them,” he said. “Our goal is to quote whatever they need and provide samples and literature, all within a 24- to 48-hour window. Service is where it is at in the distribution business.”

According to Cauley, training adds to the company’s ability to deliver excellent service. CSD encourages staff to pursue new skills through manufacturer and online training. To motivate, the company rewards employees with gift certificates when they complete courses.

CSD also offers value-added delivery services. Using its boom trucks—some extending more than 85 feet—CSD can deliver material to the sixth story of a building. Once the materials are inside the building, staff will place the products in locations requested by the contractor.

“We drop the material on the job site where our customers want it to be, and we strive to do it better than anyone else. Even if it’s not rocket science, the materials are still bulky and heavy, and they require a skilled effort,” Cauley said. “We pay our people adequately and make sure we have the right workforce to show up every day and do what needs to be done.”

More growth is on the horizon for CSD. Pennsylvania has many building projects planned, including several casinos and a hockey arena for the Pittsburgh Penguins. The company’s outlook for 2008 and beyond is positive.

“We’re excited about the new construction opportunities. We have already won the metal framing,



Jim Cauley points out a special installation project

the architectural end of the project. We have a major showroom at all of our locations, so we can bring in architects, builders, and contractors, and demonstrate the latest designs and acoustical product options,” said Cauley.

Once CSD wins the initial contract for acoustics, additional business follows. “We’ve found that more specification work means more business. Often, after we initially secure the ceiling order due to a strong specification position, sales of drywall and other products we offer just fall into place,” he said.

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Acoustical ceiling
showroom

On-site delivery

drywall, and ceiling business on two of the casinos, and we hope to be successful in the current projects we're bidding on," Cauley said.

As he looks to the future, Cauley finds AMAROK membership to be a competitive advantage.

"Consolidation is going on at both the manufacturer and distributor level, and we must compete with large chains that have more buying power," he said. "That's where belonging to AMAROK is so important. AMAROK provides the same strategic buying points as home centers get since, together as an industry, we buy just as much material—so we can get the same place at the negotiating table."

CSD also benefits from AMAROK's networking opportunities. As a board member, Cauley values his increased interaction with members.

"It helps to see what successful members are doing right. AMAROK membership has helped us communicate with fellow members and develop best practices," Cauley said. "It's neat when you can sit down with peers in a noncompetitive group setting and share information. There's always a better way to do something, and I'm willing to learn that lesson every day of the week."

Sonia Coleman, a contributing editor to *MarketTracks*, can be reached at scoleman@colemanunlimited.com.

