

Colorado Drywall Supply innovates to increase productivity and customer service

Earlier this year, Colorado Drywall Supply made a bold move: the 11-year-old company unveiled a new 30,000-square-foot headquarters. Situated right off a major highway in Denver, Colo., the new building provides CDS with improved visibility, efficiency, and productivity, as well as new business opportunities.

He started Colorado Drywall Supply in 1997 after nearly 20 years in the drywall industry. Today, the privately owned company carries a complete line of drywall and sundry items, including steel studs, fiberglass insulation, ceiling tile, grid, texture material, and several lines of tools.

CDS also specializes in work downtown. The company has built relationships with key building management staff, which grants them efficient access to freight elevators.

“We know all of the building supervisors and dock foremen for the buildings downtown,” Sleeman said. “Everyone making deliveries wants to use the elevator at the same time, so knowing the right people is critical to being able to cost effectively get in and out of a building.”

Sleeman credits his employees with being key to the company’s success in meeting niche market needs. CDS’s leadership team includes Sleeman’s wife, Ann, who is CFO; Tom Heil, controller; Michael Stoddard, sales manager; Victor Fonesca, operations manager; and Kevin Simmons, office and safety manager.

In addition to knowing the market, Sleeman also improves the company’s performance through innovation. CDS has a miniboom truck that Sleeman designed. The truck has the functionality of a large boom, but it doesn’t require a commercial license. Plus, the miniboom truck can fit under electrical lines and other spots downtown that a normal boom truck would be unable to travel through.

The company is also experimenting with a hydraulic dolly that can stand up wallboard in elevators, saving some very difficult and time-consuming physical labor.

But Sleeman’s innovation isn’t limited to equipment. He also sees opportunities to expand using the company’s new rail access.

“We’re considering reloading freight for other businesses that aren’t necessarily in the construction business. Utilizing the rail and our semis, we could take the material off the rail and deliver to other companies in town,” he said.



Founder and managing partner Ed Sleeman sees many

benefits in the building’s design.

“We’ve got rail access for five cars as well as 30-foot-high ceilings, so there’s no height limitation. Plus, the building has a separate area for customer loading, which we didn’t have before. This has been very beneficial and keeps customers away from potential injuries at our main loading dock,” he said.

Sleeman added that the company’s new loading dock has brought tremendous efficiency, enabling CDS staff to unload a truck of wallboard in less than half the time it took at the old building.

Finding efficiencies to build his company’s competitive advantage has been a success strategy for Sleeman.

Over the years, CDS has carved out a successful niche.

“We’re unique in the fact that we target smaller jobs,” Sleeman said. “We partner with our customers: they don’t go out and bid a lot, and we keep them competitive to get them work. We’ve found that if they’re successful, then we’re successful.”

As a result of this focus, CDS has also majored in service.

“Service is a big part of our business. With the type of jobs we do, the material is needed right now, so we are set up to provide quick, on-time service,” Sleeman said. “Our customers often get the contract today and need the material to start the job tomorrow morning. So we have to have the material on hand and react quickly. That’s what gives us value to our customers.”

What causes Sleeman to seek new innovative solutions? It starts with curiosity, he said.

“When I run into problems, I try to come up with a solution that is easier laborwise or faster to do,” he said. “We have a desire to do things better and be innovative, and that’s why our customers stay with us. We are doing more than just provide a price—we’re doing a better job for them and making them more competitive.”

AMAROK is also a big part of the company’s ability to be innovative.

“AMAROK does a great job for us, providing us knowledge of other parts

of the country. They let us know if prices are going up or down and about shortages or labor problems. AMAROK also gives us an opportunity to share ideas, learn about new product lines, and find qualified vendors, which saves us a ton of time,” Sleeman said. “When I talk to people, I learn about what’s going on. If there’s a problem that we’re all having, then we can work together to find a way to figure it out.”

Sleeman also appreciates the way AMAROK provides strength in numbers, especially when dealing with manufacturers. Now, he sees even

more opportunities on the horizon through AMAROK’s new association with Affiliated Distributors.

“There’s a big upside to interacting with a lot of other distributors in different types of businesses,” said Sleeman. “I’m excited to see what A-D can do.”

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