

Reprinted from

# HARTFORD BUSINESS JOURNAL

February 21, 2005

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

## Jacks of all trades

Diversified Project Management takes diverse roles in region's developments

By Carol Latter

**A**fter many years of pondering, planning and waiting for work to begin, the city of Hartford has, in the last 12 to 18 months, seen enormous progress in half a dozen major development projects and a slew of smaller ones. That's been good news not only for the developers and the city, but for a company that — unbeknownst to most people — has played a significant role in a number of them.

Hartford-based Diversified Project Management has been involved in several high-profile projects in Greater Hartford, including providing construction management for the University of Hartford's \$32 million ISET (Integrated Science, Engineering and Technologies) complex, the biggest budget project in the university's history.

Diversified was also hired to manage the renovations and base building improvements to 100 Constitution Plaza in Hartford, whose first four floors have become home to the University of Connecticut's downtown business school and financial accelerator. Under Diversified's direction, the building received improvements ranging from asbestos abatement to mechanical infrastructure and elevator upgrades.

Several companies — including Fleet and Webster banks and insurance software developer Insurity — recently engaged Diversified to manage their relocation projects. Diversified has also been a key player in major projects involving schools, hospitals, municipalities, global corporations and nonprofits throughout



PHOTO/CAROL LATTER

*Chuck Pinckney, president of Diversified Project Management's Connecticut operation, left, stands with colleague Craig Wilbur, project manager for the University of Hartford's ISET Complex, as workers install metal siding on the new construction and continue renovation work on the old section.*

the state. It has also taken on projects in various parts of the country, including a 40,000-square-foot tenant improvement project for Cigna in Pittsburgh, Penn.

Chuck Pinckney, president and co-founder of Diversified Project Management's Connecticut operation (another separate but related firm of the same name operates in Boston), says the company, founded in Hartford in 1996, is well-named, noting that its staff members take pride in both the varied projects they take on and the range of services they're equipped to offer. The company employs specialists in programming and pre-construction services, project and construction administration, move coordination, and facilities and operations management, among others.

Because of the diverse skill set of its people, he says, the company frequently finds itself active in a project from the very beginning — performing due diligence and sizing up prospective sites — to the very end.

"We want to make sure we help in the selection process of the architects, and remain involved all the way to watching the last nail being driven and the last

chair set," he says, adding, "Probably one of the greatest satisfactions is to see your project come online."

Diversified's primary role is to act as the owner's representative on any given project, making sure that it proceeds in the best, most cost-efficient and timely way possible. The goal of its people, Pinckney adds, is to immerse themselves in the culture of the client company so they can carry out that role to the best of their ability. "I think our challenge is to have our involvement be absolutely seamless, ... [yet] be extraordinarily effective in our role in representing the owner."

He says in addition to saving clients time, money and hassles, hiring Diversified to manage their projects allows companies to "concentrate on their core business while we get this done." On a large project, he adds, "our pricing can be rolled into the soft costs and be written off over the life of the project. If it was internal, it would have to be written as an expense."

Pinckney, a Guilford resident has worked in Hartford since 1965 — first

*Continued on back*

with a partner in a retail and corporate design firm called Interspace Design, then as head of Pinckney Associates, which also offered project management services, and later as head of design and construction for Aetna.

In 1996, he left the corporate world to co-found Diversified's Hartford operation, dubbed DPMCT, with Robert M. Keeley Jr., president of the Boston-based operation, in 1996. Today, there are just over 50 employees in the two companies, including 40 project managers. While the two firms share intellectual property, according to Pinckney, they operate as separate firms.

The Hartford office currently has 15 on staff, but is "continually growing," and is in the process of expanding its employee roster.

Pinckney says over the past few years, the downturn in the economy has put the services offered by DPMCT much in demand.

As a cost-cutting measure, he notes, "many industries today have downsized any non-core functions within their companies, and the one area that seems to be hit quite hard is the facilities and operational end."

He says a management team that has adjusted its organization to a level that allows it to handle only day-to-day operations may be caught unprepared when a decision is made by the president, for example, to go in a different direction — like engineering a move, an expansion or the construction of a new building.

Often, says Pinckney, "they don't have the capacity in house to handle that," and may prefer not to add staff to accommodate it. Increasingly, firms are finding it makes more sense to hire an outside company that is well-versed in the skills required, just for the duration of the project.

"Where we come in is, if they need support to build the building, to build the addition, or to move them, we're in, we do the work and then we're out. Then hopefully — and so far it's proven to be consistently true — the next time they want to build a building or move, they call us because we have integrated well into their business environment."

That has certainly been the case for the University of Hartford, says Norman Young, the university's senior director of facilities.

The university, he says, has had a relationship with Diversified for about the last five years, and called on the

company again last spring, when it embarked on its largest project ever — the renovation of its 108,000-square-foot Dana Hall and the construction of 37,000 square feet of new space alongside it, to create the ISET complex.

"The university is not staffed for multiple large construction projects, so I made a strategic decision to hire an outside firm because of the flexibility" that option would offer, says Young. By using a project management firm like Diversified, he adds, "I have a staff member as I need a staff member."

*"I think our challenge is to have our involvement be absolutely seamless."*

*— Chuck Pinckney, president,  
Hartford office, Diversified  
Project Management*

Diversified's philosophy, and its track record, also played into the decision.

"I consider any consultant that I use, but in particular this firm, as an extension of my organization. I've worked with them before, and ... they have a good reputation as project managers." The company, he says, "brings a level of professional expertise that is hard to find."

Diversified has not only managed the construction and renovation, but coordinated the move of students out of the old building so that it could be revamped. "In a job where you're doing a renovation, you've got a lot of moving around. There are a lot of logistics that have to be done, and that is one thing that they have proven to be particularly good at," Young says. The company also provided general project management and some clerical and budget help.

The ISET project, he says, is on time and on budget, "and a large part of the credit for that needs to go to Diversified."

Gloria McAdam, president and CEO of Foodshare, says her Windsor-based nonprofit, whose goal is collect food for the hungry, has also hired Diversified as the owner's rep for its new project — a 30,000-square-foot distribution center slated to be built on Woodland Avenue in Bloomfield. The facility, set to break ground next month, will be nearly double the size of Foodshare's current location.

"We began the hiring for the design-build process last fall. And we didn't get

very far into it at all before we said, 'we need some help,'" says McAdam. "Our staff doesn't have the expertise to take on a construction project of this size."

While members of Foodshare's volunteer facilities committee includes an engineer, a systems person and a finance person, she adds, "nobody really had the day-to-day skills to oversee this project, and we thought it would make more sense to hire an outside firm. We thought if we had to spend \$50,000 to avoid making a \$200,000 mistake, it would have been money well spent. And we thought Diversified could meet our needs, from the beginning to the end of our project."

She says Diversified's range of experience "was a real plus for us. They have consultants who are very knowledgeable in the construction industry." In addition to managing the construction, Foodshare liked the fact that the company would also be able to help design the distribution center's office components — analyzing work flow to ensure maximum convenience and efficiency — and help coordinate the move, which McAdam says would otherwise "be quite a chore for us."

Finally, she says, "it didn't hurt that their rates were competitive, and they were offering us a discount because we are a nonprofit."

McAdam says she has seen many instances where organizations try to undertake such projects themselves, without the expertise or resources to carry it off. That, she feels, is unwise.

In that kind of situation, she says, "they have to spend a lot of time learning about it, or they end up making bad decisions. I'm glad that we took the time to think this through, and I think it will make a much more successful and smoother project for us as a result." Hiring a project manager like Diversified, she adds, "makes an awful lot of sense."

Young agrees, saying while portions of the ISET complex are will be complete in May, and the remainder in early 2007, as far as Diversified's future with the University of Hartford is concerned, "there are other projects that the university has ongoing all the time. They range from small medium to large, and Diversified will have an ongoing presence, managing various projects on campus."

Pinckney and his staff, meanwhile, continue to love what they do. "There's a dynamic in project management — I still find it extraordinarily exciting, because your day does change. It's not mundane. There's always a challenge, and it's your responsibility to solve it." ■