



2011 (The Shaw Café for Shaw Cable)

Growing with the Times

With 30 years under its belt, TriBuild Contracting (Calgary) Ltd.'s diverse and loyal client base has kept it moving forward despite the rough economy

By Kelli Lawrence

The economic hard times of recent years hit Canada's construction industry with exceptional force—but to look at Calgary's TriBuild Contracting, one might wonder if the whole crisis was a bit overblown. Now, with nearly 30 years in business and several employees on board for most of the journey, TriBuild's diverse and loyal client base has kept the business growing even when others were forced into a holding pattern. But then again, it was a troubled economy that launched TriBuild to begin with. "For the first few years, I don't think we thought of doing more [than interior construction]," says TriBuild president Fred Baxter. "But it was only 5–10 years later that we looked at expanding and going into different directions."

1982 tribuild contracting ltd. is founded

Fred Baxter, John Leskow, and Hans Kreuz had worked together at an interior-construction company for three years when the economic recession of the early 1980s left all three of them unemployed. Armed with a winning assortment of skills—Baxter as an estimator and general manager, Kreuz with trades knowledge, and Leskow as a carpenter and on-site foreman—the three decide it's best to go into business together. "We had a project for Canadian Hunter [an oil-and-gas exploration company], through our previous company, that was lined up, and we were supposed to start soon," Baxter explains. "So when the other company closed down, we just went to the designer and the client and said, 'Three of us are here that were going to do that project anyway—and we'd still like to do it, but through TriBuild instead.'" It became the company's first project.

1986 starting from the ground up

“From 1982 to ’85, we basically went from job to job, doing the work on-site to make money for wages,” Baxter recalls. “Those first three years were quite tough.” But TriBuild gets its first from-the-ground-up assignment when the Calgary Women’s Shelter needs a new facility in 1986.

1987 the first major multifloor development

An 11-storey construction/renovation project for Mobil Oil marks TriBuild’s first multifloor development of repute. The project leads to more work within the industry, including for Shell Canada. By 1988, TriBuild’s days of being housed in a small, rented industrial bay are numbered; Baxter, Leskow, and Kreuz complete an all-new facility that TriBuild moves into the following year.



2001

2001 the calgary data centre

Following solid growth and diversification in the 1990s (TriBuild renovated the medical facilities of Crossbow Auxiliary Hospital and easily rebuilt restaurant chains for KFC), the company finds a new niche in data centres, the first of which is for TELUS.

2003 data centres on the rise

By 2003, TriBuild has completed 28 power and A/C upgrades to TELUS facilities throughout southern Alberta. “You’re constantly working in a ‘live’ environment,” says Baxter of the around-the-clock operation

of most data centres. “You can’t just turn things off to work on them. And the centres are also extremely sensitive to dust and temperature changes. There are a lot of factors involved, and it takes several years of experience to have guys in there that know what to look out for.”

2006 hans kreuz retires

“He was very good with people, with communications, well organized—just a very likeable person,” Baxter says of Kreuz, who began fazing himself out of TriBuild in 2003. Remaining partners Baxter and Leskow make four additional employees shareholders of the company, paving the way for TriBuild to continue flourishing.

2008 first leed gold project

As devastating as the 2008 economic nosedive is for much of the construction industry, TriBuild manages to find a silver lining when the merging companies of Suncor and Petrol Canada require TriBuild’s renovation services for a LEED-certified project. “We’re doing 59 floors for them—it’s just over a million square feet,” Baxter says. “We work on 6–10 floors at a time; they vacate and shuffle

people's offices around in order for us to get it finished. It's been a major, ongoing project for us [and is] a whole lot of work, which fortunately came at a very good time."

2011 nearing a 30-year anniversary

With TELUS, Suncor, Shaw Cable, and the Calgary Board of Education among its wide span of current customers, Baxter takes pride in the company he helped create. "Our goal was to work the office-renovation market, since that's what we had been doing," he says. "But over the years, I think we've done a lot more than we expected when we started."



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