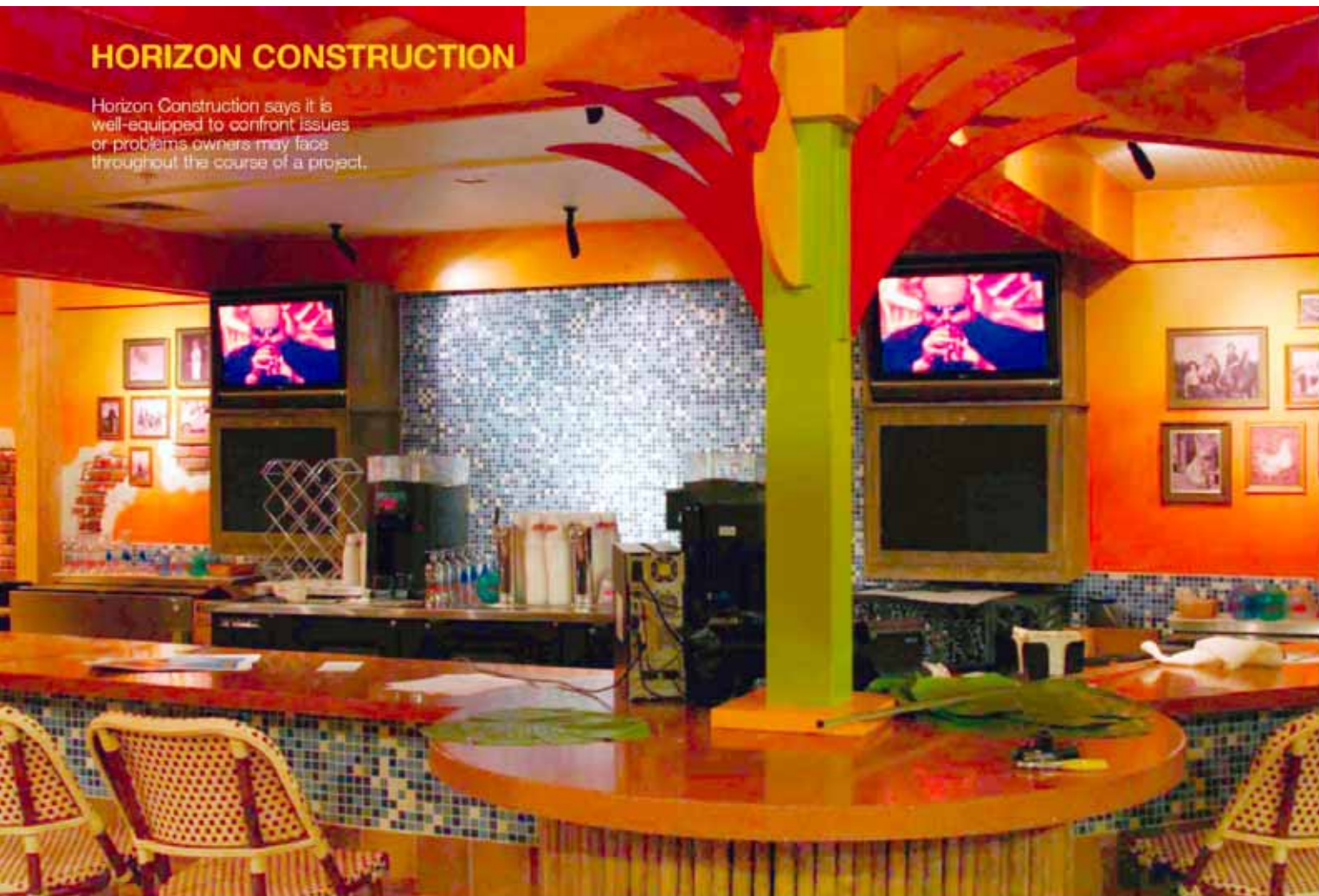


HORIZON CONSTRUCTION

Horizon Construction says it is well-equipped to confront issues or problems owners may face throughout the course of a project.



Big Projects on its Horizon

Horizon Construction has built a name for itself by constructing high-quality senior-living facilities, and, in 2004, successfully began moving into the indoor water park segment.

BY KATE BURROWS

When Horizon Construction was founded in 1983, few construction companies specialized in senior living facilities. Founder Chuck Heath was passionate about fulfilling this need in the market, and worked to build facilities that would allow seniors to live independently before moving to nursing home facilities. His grandmother was placed in a nursing home facility for far too long, in his opinion, and he felt that if facilities were designed specifically for the elderly, time spent in nursing homes could be drastically reduced.

CFO John Faust says Horizon Construction develops facilities that meet the needs of seniors, and work to ensure many hazards are eliminated in the designs of the units.

"We have to make facilities accessible," he says. "There can't be any barriers to entry, we eliminate steps, provide automatic door openers wide hallways.

"We also need to consider the height of light switches, outlets and cupboards,"

he adds. "We are always looking to new ways to meet our seniors' needs."

For example, many of the facilities based in Wisconsin feature underground parking garages. Since slips and falls during icy or rainy weather are extreme hazards for seniors, the company eliminates much of the danger by providing heated, covered parking.

In addition, Horizon Construction encourages a sense of community in its facilities. By constructing community rooms for social events, residents can stay more active. "This is even more important, since much of our clientele are widows or widowers," Faust says. "Sometimes, family members don't live in the area, so their parent would end up feeling isolated in their own home. But here, we try to keep people socially active, with areas for potlucks and movie nights, to keep people from feeling isolated."

A New Market

Although the company remains an active developer of senior living facilities, it moved into constructing indoor water parks in 2003.

Horizon Construction
www.horizondben.com

Sales: \$110 million

Headquarters: Verona, Wis.

Employees: 50

Services: Senior living facilities and indoor water parks

John Faust, CFO: "We're very critical of ourselves, in the sense that we're always trying to do things better."

The company may have “stumbled upon” this market, but it has become a growth area that Horizon sees a great deal of potential in. “What happened is that we had a number of jobs that we were completing in Wausau, Wis., and investors saw the quality of work we were doing,” Faust says. “They asked us to construct an indoor water park in town.”

The project included a hotel and indoor water park and, although the company was comfortable constructing the hotel portion, it lacked the experience necessary to build the aquatic features. It hired people with this experience and spent a great deal of time developing a proposal. “We eventually won the contract, and after that project, we were able to secure another similar project in Waukesha, Wis.,” Faust explains. “After that, we just continued to grow in this segment.”

Partners in Success

The company relies on its core group of subcontractors to complete projects within time and budget limitations.

Through the years, the company has developed strong relationships with a

number of subcontractors, according to Faust. When performing work outside the state, the company travels with its local base of contractors. “We know they can perform and have done a great job in the past,” Faust says. “So, when we take the risk of working in other markets, we are able to perform a lot of the work with our prequalified subcontractors.”

Specialized work such as indoor water parks requires reliable, proven subcontractors. “The additional cost of subcontractors traveling with us is offset by knowing the product can be built much more efficiently,” Faust asserts. “If subcontractors don’t have a lot of experience in our segment, the pricing won’t be as efficient, so it’s worthwhile to work with our local subs.”

Fast-Paced Environment

Horizon Construction employees are determined to improve their skills and continually grow their knowledge of the

segment. “We’re very critical of ourselves, in the sense that we’re always trying to do things better,” Faust explains. “If you’re not used to that type of culture, it’s very difficult to do well around here.”

Focus on Owners

Visitors continually recognize Horizon Construction’s energy in the office.

“There’s so much going on in our offices, because people are always working hard to make sure each job is high quality and the customer has everything they need,” Faust says.

The company is well equipped to confront issues or problems the owner may face throughout the course of a project.

“We have been and currently are owners and managers of the types of projects we build, so we understand exactly what the owners’ concerns are and the difficulties they deal with, which sets us apart,” he asserts. ■

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