

Leaving Bechtel to start a new business

BY JON BELL
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Construction engineer John Henri faced a decision in 1993.

Henri had opened Bechtel Corp.'s Portland office and liked working in Oregon for the global engineering and construction company.

But regularly commuting from Portland to Bechtel's San Francisco headquarters was cutting into family time, and Henri wasn't too keen on the prospect of moving and pulling his kids out of school.

"So I basically left Bechtel to stay in Oregon," says Henri, a 30-year veteran of the design and construction industry.

After leaving Bechtel, Henri had planned to find some other work in Portland until his kids were out of school. But along the way, he started doing some consulting, and just six months later, Henri had 10 people working for him — and the J.J. Henri Co. was born.

Today, Henri's company is a well-known construction management business specializing in large, complex projects in both the public and private sectors. The company has managed projects ranging from a \$50 million Tillamook Cheese processing plant to a \$150 million silicon wafer manufacturing site for Mitsubishi Silicon America. On the public side, J.J. Henri has managed \$43 million worth of facilities and renovations for the Lake Oswego School District and a new \$15 million facility for Tillamook Bay Community College.

Henri himself, now 60, got his start in the industry with a civil engineering degree from New Mexico State University in 1972. After graduating, he worked first for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and then CRS Sirrine Engineers, Kaiser Engineers and the silicon wafer company SEH America.

His experience in the semiconductor arena is what helped his company take off in its early days.

"For about the first four years of the company, we did a lot of work in semiconductors," Henri says. "That's what people knew me for."

After completing projects for the likes of Intel Corp. and Hewlett-Packard Co., Henri diversified his growing company in part to avoid the cyclical nature of the semiconductor business. The firm started pursuing public sector projects like schools and prisons and moving into private sector work in the food industry.

"I really like the more challenging projects," Henri says. "I like puzzles and working with other human beings to accomplish a big goal."

Henri says today about half the company's work is in public education and half is in food. Annual revenue is about \$2 million. The company manages anywhere from \$120 million to \$150 million worth of construction every year.

Henri attributes the success of his company to the fact that his employees are cross-trained in J.J. Henri's specialty areas so that they can migrate almost effortlessly from one project to the next. That approach allows Henri to keep his staff at around 20 people.

Such an approach also lets J.J. Henri be more selective about the work it does.

"We don't shotgun our work," Henri says. "We could probably get a lot more work if we did, but we'd rather select the projects we want to do and try to win them."

J.J. Henri won the North Clackamas School District's \$229 million bond project in 2006, a massive overhaul that has included six new schools and major remodels of four others.

"John is a person of very high integrity and he's a very highly experienced project manager," says Garry Kryszak, capital projects manager for NCSD. "He's a very calm

individual and has a good way of working with the superintendent and principals and everyone else involved.

Kryszak also says that Henri has brought a much-needed private sector savvy to the project.

Such public sector projects, funded by bonds passed before the economy took a dive, have helped keep J.J. Henri pretty solid throughout the recession. Federal stimulus money has been beneficial for some projects as well.

Henri is a married father of four who loves to ski and backpack. He also serves on Lake Oswego's city council.

Looking ahead, Henri says he's putting a management team in place that will carry on the business once he steps down. But that's not likely to

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President, J.J. Henri Co.

happen for at least another five years.

"I don't see me bugging out too soon," he says. "There's still too many things I like to do here."

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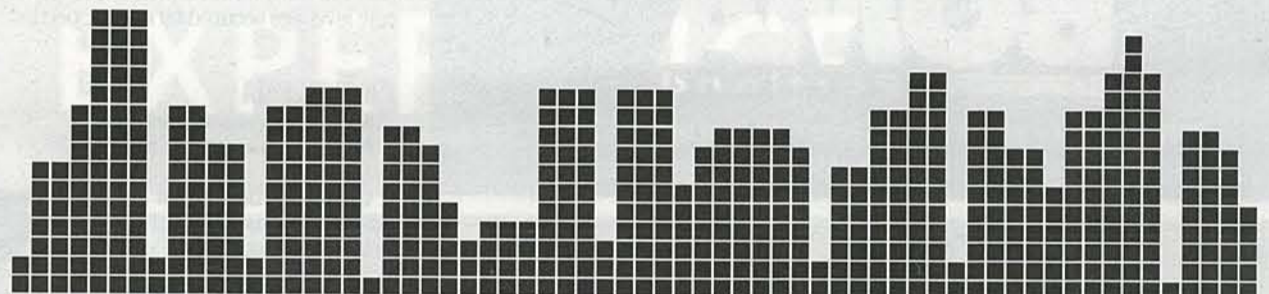
CATHY CHENEY | THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

John Henri says his project management business emphasizes food processing and public schools.

In the Spotlight

JOHN HENRI

President
J.J. Henri Co.



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