Behr Browsers Architects
Pushing the envelope on the cinematic experience
Kennedy Contractors has flexed from the tenuous position of working with one client during the market low of the late 1990s to several high points around $30 million, which is where it stands today. The company got to that point by focusing its attention in recent years on big-box retailers, institutional retail developers, and a few corporate industrial clients. Almost all the company’s business is repeat, a fact that Carp attributes to its emphasis on enduring relationships and the highest levels of service and quality.

Most of Kennedy Contractors’ work is concentrated in the southeastern United States, but, Carp says, “We will follow a client anywhere they ask us to go.” The company has built retail stores for Pep Boys, for instance, in Minneapolis, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. “We try to make the lives of the tenants’ construction reps easy. They pay us to solve problems for them.”

Currently underway is the conversion of a multistory building originally designed to be residential into a retail project, for which the owner terminated the original contractor and brought Kennedy Contractors in to complete the job. An especially challenging factor was the presence of a Bally’s fitness center operating in the middle of the construction area throughout the entire renovation process. Kennedy Contractors is also finishing up a retrofit of an existing...
"We do what it takes to get the job done. Neither of us would ask our employees to do anything we wouldn't do ourselves."

Michael Carp, President

The company recently completed construction on a new Buy Buy Baby store in Coral Springs, Florida, in fewer than 90 days. This brand is a new division of Bed Bath & Beyond — Kennedy Contractors’ biggest client — and a company that enforces heavy penalties for contractors that do not comply with its stringent schedules. "We pride ourselves on our ability to build jobs quickly with the high quality that retailers expect," Carp comments.

The economic climate, and the scale with which retailers and developers are cutting back, naturally presents challenges and requires adaptation from construction companies. Problem solving and flexibility have always been strengths of the company, so Carp and Kennedy are optimistic that they can endure the trying times. "We ask a lot of ourselves and our project managers," says Carp. "We do what it takes to get the job done. Neither of us would ask our employees to do anything we wouldn't do ourselves."

Describing himself and his partner as "chronic workaholics," Carp says the 50–60 hours each of them puts in each week represents a significant cutback in their previous workload. It helps that Carp can get by on just four hours of sleep a night. "You get used to it," he says, with a blend of mirth and stoicism.

For the future, Kennedy Contractors looks forward to moving into its own office building, which is in the final construction stages. "Our challenge over the next year or two is to weather the storm," says Carp. "I have the lives of 22 people in my hands. I’ve got to keep those people employed and at the same time grow the business." Given the company’s long history of skillful adaptation, prospects are bright that Kennedy will continue to withstand the extreme seasons of the market and emerge as strong as ever. ABQ.

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