



Good Management Recognizes Quality Equipment

Chicago is the third largest city in the country with a population of 2.8 million. If you include the geographic area commonly called “Chicagoland”, the numbers jump to 9.7 million, making it the 26th most populous metropolitan area in the world. The Windy City is a major hub, both for industry and infrastructure. In 2008, the city hosted 45.6 million domestic and overseas visitors, many coming through O’Hare International Airport, the second busiest airport in the world. It is adjacent to DuPage County, which also happens to be the home of Dunnet Bay Construction, an award winning Chicagoland construction company.

Chicago is a major transportation hub for domestic and international trade and is also recognized as a global financial center. Its skyline is hallmarked by four of the five tallest buildings in the United States. It’s a compendium of

architectural building, bridge, highway, and institutional and residential design. There is always something, including construction, going on. It’s a rare occasion if you can ride the Tristate Tollway (I-294) from its Wisconsin border through the Chicago area to its Indiana border without encountering several miles of highway construction. And this is only one of the numerous arteries that pump an endless stream of cars, trucks and buses through the city.

When you look at a place like Chicago, or any of the other major cities in the country or in the world for that matter, you cannot help but appreciate the value contractors, the construction industry and the construction equipment manufacturers bring to civilization and society.

Meet Dunnet Bay Construction

One of the members of this elite group is 20-year old Dunnet Bay

Construction, which is located in one of the city’s western suburbs, Glendale Heights. It has received numerous awards for outstanding achievement, including the Bridge Contractor of the Year from the City of Chicago, Contractor of the Year for both New Bridge Construction and Major Bridge Rehabilitation from the Illinois Department of Transportation, and Contractor of the Year from the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority.

How does a young company achieve such recognition in a market as fiercely competitive as Chicago? The opening paragraph on its web page sets the stage: “The Company was started in 1990 with a simple idea, to complete challenging projects with excellent results. This can be achieved with the singularity of purpose and personal attention possible in a closely held company. Dunnet Bay has the desire to hire and reward the most

Stability, performance, versatility and reliability are only some of the characteristics that Dunnet Bay's owners and operators attribute to these machines.

qualified construction professionals for securing, managing and completing these challenging jobs. For the owner, this means prompt, action-oriented responses from on-site project managers, which is complimented by an experienced staff and management team."

Doug Stuart and Tod Faerber started their company in 1989 in Arlington Heights and have been in the current location for approximately six years. The company has grown and according to Stuart, one of the owners, "We typically run 150 to 160 employees during the season and have cut back a little in the winter months. I'm not sure what it will be like this year. It's really hard to tell. We typically do bridges in the Chicago area, roadwork foundations. We do our own demo and structural." Dunnet Bay covers the Chicago metropolitan area from the Wisconsin to the Indiana borders, including some of the most heavily traveled highway and bridges in the country with some of the nation's worst traffic congestion. It's a tough, demanding work zone.

Stuart went on to explain that because of Chicago's current economic status, the private sector has really been slow and isn't showing signs of quick recovery, and that the public sector has been better...but not a lot better. Most of the stimulus money went to the school system to keep it going and very little reached highway construction. However, Dunnet Bay landed a nice contract the first week of May that involves doing latex overlays on Interstate bridges.

"It's a nice job but overlays don't create new jobs," Stuart said. "We'll take the work but typically we would be doing complete bridge replacements. So far this year it's been mostly overlay work, not new or replacement construction."



Dunnet Bay uses the Liebherr crawler cranes for hoisting as well as driving sheeting for footing and foundation work. According to Doug Stuart, owner and partner, the company depends on the cranes because of the amount of bridge work that they do.

First Liebherr Machines

Dunnet Bay acquired its first piece of Liebherr equipment in 1999 when it purchased a crawler crane. They have steadily increased their inventory, adding excavators, loaders and more cranes. "We have 19 pieces of Liebherr equipment," Stuart commented. "There are two 853 crawler cranes and one 855; some loaders and mostly excavators, a mix of crawlers. For the crawlers we have a number of 944s and 904s for the wheeled machines there are 900, 902, 914's and a 922. For bridge and roadwork, you can't beat these machines."

Milwaukee-based American State Equipment is Dunnet Bay's Liebherr dealer. It is owned by Stephen Kraut, is the oldest Liebherr dealer in the country and one of the few to sell crawler cranes. "They are a great dealer, really strong on support," Stuart says. "They have a full line of equipment, including the crawler cranes, and have well trained field service people who can come out and do service work on the jobsite."

Stuart adds, "They've been very helpful in designing our equipment. With Liebherr you can pretty much put together your equipment the way you need it. Engineering wise they'll build anything you want. This gives us a lot of flexibility in our equipment selection, especially with the excavators, because we use a lot of different attachments."

Dunnet Bay finds that crawler and rubber-tired excavators are best suited for a lot of its projects. They do foundation work as well as demolition, earthmoving, utility, road and bridge maintenance and construction, and find that attachments give them the flexibility to do a lot of work with the same machine. They have drills, breakers, shears and compaction attachments. They also have a rotating concrete milling attachment for vertical milling surfaces.

"The demolition and foundation work are where we use a lot of different attachments," Stuart explains. "We have four sheeting drivers for the excavators. The foundation work requires a lot of

“With Liebherr you can put together different combinations of stick, boom, counterweights and hydraulic flows that make it possible for you to do all these things.”



Dunnet Bay does its own demolition work utilizing the Liebherr excavators' versatility to use hammers, shears or grapples or other attachments. The machine's stability makes it possible to meet challenging jobs.



These machines are not only capable of making a mess, they are also capable of cleaning up after themselves.

earth retention. With the excavators you can dig, drive sheeting, auger holes with the same machine. With Liebherr you can put together different combinations of stick, boom, counterweights and hydraulic flows that make it possible for you to do all these things."

Superior Electronics

According to Stuart they do approximately 95 percent of the equipment maintenance themselves. They have one man who is responsible for the company's 50 pieces of equipment. "If we have something that's going to be time consuming, we'll call in an outside service," he said. "And when business picks up we'll probably get outside service help. I think that the electronics on the Liebherr equipment

is really superior. We tried other manufacturers and in the work environment they're sensitive and hard on electronics. Liebherr electronics have really held up well."

Stuart went on to say, "Liebherr equipment is well engineered. Well, they are the best. By the time we get one of the excavators accessorized we have put a lot of money into the machine and we look for the best quality machine we can find."

Dunnet Bay still has all of its Liebherr equipment and has not sold or retired any of the Liebherr machines purchased. Stuart pointed out that not all of the equipment was purchased new and that they had acquired several used, with the oldest one probably going back to the early 90s. They are



According to Doug Stuart, the operators really like the Liebherr excavators because they are operator-friendly, very responsive and comfortable.

all still running and from a maintenance standpoint, they don't cost a lot.

Stuart went on saying, "The operators like them but there is a little learning curve with them because they are typically heavier than what they are used to. We didn't go for light fast machines. We want something that is going to perform well over a long period of time.

"You're really not looking for fast cycle times. You're looking at what you've accomplished at the end of the day," Stuart continued. "We're more interested in the precision and control the operator has over the machine, so that when it makes a move it's correct and there's no wasted motion. That's more important than how fast it swings. In bridge-work we'll use the excavators for lifting as well as digging. All the machines are equipped with quick couplers so they can drop the bucket and quickly and easily replace it with a lifting attachment. This way we don't lose time waiting for another machine. On a lot of our smaller jobs we'll do the digging, drive the sheeting and do the lifting all with one machine."

Dunnet Bay has been surviving the economic challenges through good management. According to Stuart, "We've trimmed a little going into winter but really, we always run a tight shop. We never anticipate work being better than it is and we don't see a lot of improvement this year. In fact, what I see is a lot of small jobs where typically we'll have a couple of big anchor jobs. They just aren't there."

The company currently has a number of bridge rebuilding jobs on the books and is looking for more. Chicago is a tough market and will remain challenging for the rest of this year. Dunnet Bay is surviving because it has achieved the delicate balance between good management recognizing and buying good equipment. ■