

## Doing a little extra goes a long way

By Anthony Iovino, AIA, PP, LEED



Architects Anthony Iovino and his partner, Ed Arcari

One important detail I learned during my apprenticeship is that our business, while rooted in science and art, is essentially a service business. And like any service business we have to respond

to our client's needs. Delivering those services effectively results in a referral, and hopefully another project.

Real estate brokers, web designers, attorneys, and all other services professional alike need to balance along that fine line of taking care of a client and taking care of their business. Have you ever found that in life or in business, doing a little extra for someone goes a long way?

I believe that people remember when you go out of your way to help them and are appreciative of the effort.

If you look at any successful business you will find that they establish relationships with their customer base. They are not there to take what they can from that client, rather they understand that today we are helping them with this project and on another day, we will be helping them again. Gaining that trust from a client is the result of being respectful and responsive.

We built our business, now in its 18th year, on word of mouth. We have established strong foundations with our clients and have many repeat customers. In these

tough times good service pays off.

In addition to having a solid client base, our firm has been able to weather the storm by being diverse. Like many other service firms we need to have a wide catchment area since it is not every-day someone needs architectural services. Geographically you need to find the territory where your services will sell. We focus upon our local area and are regularly across the Hudson for corporate interiors or up and down the state for municipalities. Given our location, lower New York State is fair game as well. Our diversity is also in the services and clients we serve. We have many public and private sector projects to balance the demand.



Momeni Carpets in Carlstadt

Many of the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce (MRCC) members are service businesses and deal with both public and private clients.

In our profession and perhaps

yours, both sectors are near frozen. A thaw is needed to free up capital thereby keeping all of our businesses healthy. For us, the public sector is an important part of the economy here in Northern New Jersey. Recently, with municipal budgets getting tighter due to the financial condition of the state, less money is available for capital projects even though the building environment has not been better in years. Our public projects, including three very recent bids for local towns, have come in 20 to 30 percent lower than budgeted.

There is a real dichotomy in the reasons to go ahead or to delay projects these days. The arguments for going ahead with a

project include the lower costs for materials and tight profit margins from hungry contractors, which have produced much more competitive bids. Our communities can certainly use the construction related jobs. This, combined with the cost for bonding being historically low, has created a favorable building climate. The argument for not doing the work now is that the public, more specifically the voters, will not understand nor appreciate spending more dollars during this recession. The challenge then becomes to educate the public on the value of moving forward with improvements funded by 20 or 30 year bonds that are paid off in good and bad times.

The same is true for the private sector. Corporations and companies of any size have to watch their bottom-line's and respond to shareholder interests. Yet, a company looking beyond the present is likely to recognize the value in planning for expansion and improvements today. We only have to look back three years to see an environment where materials and overall construction costs were rising in the double-digit range year after year to historic heights.

We are optimistic for Northern New Jersey and in particular, the Meadowlands area. With momentum building for the 2014 Super Bowl, and from the New Meadowlands Stadium and Xanadu, we believe our area will grow. Being involved with the MRCC has shown us that the local business owners have the desire and know how to do exactly that. We are proud to be located here and to be a part of our community's future.



Hasbrouck Heights municipal building

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