

DOWN TO EARTH

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EAST & WEST EXCAVATING, LLC

See how this Grand Forks company builds its reputation by bucking conventional wisdom



Jeff Jordheim,
Co-Owner



Chad Lee,
Co-Owner



BEK CONSULTING, LLC

Learn about the resources and staff that have led to sustained growth for this Dickinson contractor



Lonnie Kern,
Vice President



BEK CONSULTING, LLC

Having the right resources and staff leads to sustained growth for this Dickinson contractor



Lonnie Kern,
Vice President

Lonnie Kern was working for his brother's homebuilding company in 2013 when he formed an idea.

"I was digging foundations and doing residential sewer and water hookups," recalled BEK Consulting, LLC Vice President Lonnie Kern. "My background was in municipal work, and I wanted to get back to that. I saw some opportunity in that area."



Mark Lardy,
General Manager

Kern took the idea to his brother, Brian, who provided financial backing and became the president of the new company. Five years later, BEK has grown from three employees and \$1 million in business to 32 employees and \$20 million.

"We've had some good growth, but early on it was tough," Kern added. "We were asking people to take a leap of faith since we were a startup. Even those I had relationships with were gun shy at first, but once they saw that we were for real and not going anywhere, we built some momentum."

Another move that led to growth was the addition of General Manager Mark Lardy in 2014.

"He's a top gun," stated Kern. "He handles estimating and project management, and brings a lot of insight to the table. When Mark joined us, it opened a lot more doors. We had worked together before – Mark was actually my supervisor – and I knew I wanted him in the company. It was a move that has paid off."

Today, the company focuses its efforts in western North Dakota in addition to Kansas and Montana. "We handle anything from a basement dig to a \$10 million utility-installation project with road repair," detailed Kern. "We start and finish on time. Roughly half of our work is pipe and utility installations, and we also have the resources and staff to handle a variety of other jobs."

Moving parts

Large projects with several complicated maneuvers are commonplace for BEK Consulting. In 2017, it completed a \$3.2 million reconstruction job in Bismarck along University Avenue and tripled the section's capacity for handling storm water.

"That area of the city has issues with flooding, and this project was aimed at fixing it," noted Lardy. "We tore up the streets and removed the existing 24- and 48-inch concrete pipe. Along Bismarck Expressway, we installed 1,100 feet of 8- by 4-foot box culvert and created a catch basin. On 12th Street, we replaced the 24-inch line with 1,350 feet of 45- by 73-inch arch storm pipe. Then, we put it all back together and prepared the roads for paving."

BEK Consulting served as the general contractor for the six-week project. It handled all of the underground aspects and subbed out the paving.

"It was a good-size project for us," said Kern. "This type of job is what makes us tick. We've built our reputation by completing work like this."

BEK Consulting supplemented its extensive fleet of Komatsu equipment by renting a PC650LC-11 excavator. Here, it's used with one of the company's D61PX dozers on a jobsite in Bismarck.





This crew from BEK Consulting uses a Komatsu PC490LC excavator to build a water basin at the intersection of University and 6th Avenue in Bismarck. “We love the Komatsu excavators for their fast cycle times and operator-friendly controls,” said Vice President Lonnie Kern.

Komatsu equipment

When it came time to build a fleet, Kern turned to General Equipment & Supplies, Inc., and Sales Rep Aaron Brothen for Komatsu equipment. It’s a decision he continues to make.

“I’ve always liked Komatsu, and when I was looking for equipment, General Equipment was by far the most helpful,” recalled Kern. “I am loyal to them for that. They have been in-tune with our needs since day one, so I don’t need to go anywhere else. General Equipment’s service is over-the-top; they’ve been phenomenal.”

BEK rents and purchases equipment regularly to keep its fleet stocked with fresh Komatsu equipment, most notably, excavators.

“We love the Komatsu excavators for their fast cycle times and operator-friendly controls,” said Kern. “We like to keep new machines in our fleet. We own three wheel loaders, two dozers, five excavators and we rent a PC650LC-11. They are awesome.”

Kern and BEK Consulting are also big fans of Komatsu D61 dozers.

“Working in utilities, the operator’s vision from the cab to the blade in the D61 is so important,” detailed Kern. “With this dozer, we can see everything. We don’t worry about wiping out curb boxes or hydrants. Our operators like the visibility, and the machines handle very well.”

Kern counts on the crew at General Equipment’s Bismarck branch for service as



BEK Consulting Vice President Lonnie Kern turns to General Equipment & Supplies Sales Rep Aaron Brothen for all of his Komatsu equipment and service needs. “They have been in-tune with our needs since day one.”

well. “We don’t have any mechanics. General Equipment coming out and servicing our new equipment, through Komatsu CARE, for the first 2,000 hours or three years is a great asset for us. Even after Komatsu CARE is up, I still have them perform maintenance. I know it’s getting done, and done right.”

Long future

With growth coming at a rapid pace during its first five years of operation, BEK Consulting has a bright future ahead. Kern says that continued expansion is the objective, but it must be under the right circumstances.

“We’ve been lucky to have success and growth at a good rate early on,” noted Kern. “It has been organic, and that’s the goal. We’ve never grown to fit a number. We don’t want to get bigger unless we can service it. I think there is a lot of opportunity for us to evolve in a sustained manner in the future, as long as we continue to deliver quality results.” ■