

Passing the Torch

As you all know, Sal Mancini, a legendary leader of Skanska USA Civil will be retiring at the end of the year. Rich Cavallaro, EVP of Skanska USA Civil Northeast will be assuming the position vacated by Sal as he leaves the firm to enjoy his well-deserved retirement.

However, when changes like this occur within any company there can often be strong feelings of concern from employees who wonder what will be in store for them and the company.

Knowing that, we took this opportunity to sit down with incoming President, Rich Cavallaro to talk about his thoughts on the future of the company.

Rich Cavallaro, President Skanska USA Civil

Rich, what is your vision for USA Civil?

To grow the business and create challenges and opportunities for our employees guided by the Five Zeros and our Code of Conduct and finally, deliver exceptional financial results. There are two ways to do that—add services or add geography. We have a great list of services in Civil but we don't do everything we do everywhere we are. The first thing we're going to do is share expertise between regions. The next step is to grow geographically, either organically or by partnering with Skanska USA Building, like we're doing now with the Seattle office. Not only will this strategy lead to outstanding financial results, but it will create new opportunities for employees who may be willing to relocate or take on new challenges.

Can you say something about the first changes you've made to your management team?

My job is to break down the silos and make everyone believe that we're one company. If you look at the Northeast unit, they do the biggest projects and have people with a history of delivering. These guys have earned an opportunity to run a region. Though there is a risk in moving those people out of New York, we need to have people with their experience and expertise in other areas of the country. We simply cannot pursue some of the billion dollar projects we're looking at without being willing to move knowledgeable employees to work on those projects.

What is one of the most difficult parts of your job?

Last year was our best year ever. That success is tempered by the economy, which is a little disappointing because we should be celebrating more. Making sure everyone really lives and breathes the "OneSkanska" philosophy has been challenging, but we are making great strides and overwhelmingly, people seem to realize that what benefits the company will benefit them in the long run. However, people are often anxious when change comes to an organization. I hope they realize it's nothing to be afraid of.

What are you currently focusing on?

Some people have reacted to the CPP (Common, Practices and Procedures) process by saying, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” My answer is: if we want to be the company we are today, you’re right. But you cannot manage a large company with a national footprint using our current systems. We must build “OneSkanska” and that means that we have to run our company the same way from coast to coast. To that end, we’re integrating support services such as accounting, payroll, human resources and safety. It just makes sense and will also facilitate greater sharing of knowledge and best practices. However, this means that people will have to set aside their egos and I hope that everyone realizes that. To be the company that we want to be in the future, this must be done.

What matters most to you personally?

The Five Zeros, our Code of Conduct and our commitment to safety. These are assets that I believe sets us apart from our competition.

In the next few months we will officially be rolling out the revised Code of Conduct. Every employee of USA Civil in every office and on every jobsite will be required to read, sign and live by the Code of Conduct. We all know that a serious breach in ethics can ruin a company. This is something that the entire Senior Management Team takes very seriously. The Code of Conduct, coupled with the Five Zeros reflects the values that we hope every employee uses every day to conduct themselves when representing this company.

This applies to safety as well. We expect people to behave ethically with regards to safety and do not want anyone taking shortcuts that could endanger themselves or others. That is why every person working for this company is empowered—and expected—to stop unsafe work conditions that they may observe on any job. We value all of our employees, salaried and craft labor, and do not want anyone being fearful of speaking up about dangerous conditions on a jobsite. The opinions and ideas these people have matter because after all, they are performing the work so they know better than anyone how to work safer.

What kind of Business Unit President will you be?

Open, informal and inclusive. I will be a team builder, which may be my greatest strength. High-performing teams always outperform on expectations and I know that we have the people to take this company to the next level.

What would you want to be remembered for?

I want USA Civil to truly be a nationwide contractor. We are a large company, but we have only a small share of the construction market. I hope to help build a premier contractor that is the employer of choice and contractor of choice using the Five Zeros and Code of Conduct as our internal compass.

Most important, I hope to build an organization that people are proud to work for.