

Brookstone Builders Inc.

Reliable, Secure and Creative Contractors Serving New England

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Paula Scales joined Brookstone Builders Inc. (BBI) in 1987 as corporate accountant, applying a strong background in finance and administration to the small construction firm in Manchester, N.H. At the time, the business had been operating for just three years, offering commercial and industrial construction and design-build services to regional customers. Today, the business has grown significantly. With a geographic footprint extending into Southern Maine and Northeastern Massachusetts, BBI has built a strong market presence. In 2006, Scales took over as president of BBI and purchased the company a year later.

“We are primarily a commercial general contractor,” Scales explains. “Most of our work is performing renovations to medical facilities, military facilities and for the pharmaceuticals industry. As such, our team is very attuned to working in occupied and secure environments. BBI has been around for nearly 30 years and most of our business is with repeat customers.” BBI is a small company, with only 15 employees. Working with a number of local, reliable subcontractors, the crew is able to deliver quality solutions to the complex needs of a unique customer base.

Creative Solutions

The company’s niche has changed over time, but the team’s dedication to quality performance and building lasting relationships remains strong. With clients in sensitive markets, Scales notes that many of the projects BBI has completed recently are confidential. The crew’s discretion and professionalism is a continuing bonus to clients in these sectors. Less sensitive projects include work for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and other public projects such as the Nashua, N.H., bus terminal and an auditorium in Concord, N.H., however Scales says her team has shifted focus over the last few years.

“We have evolved,” she explains. “We started going more into military work about seven years ago and pharmaceutical work about 10 years ago. Prior to that, our projects were mostly open market bid work. Project size has changed over time, too. Projects have gotten smaller. There are not a whole lot of big projects out there.” These changes are symptomatic of recent, national building trends. As the private sector shrank throughout the recession, the public sector picked up. As new construction slowed, business owners have maintained facilities by renovating and waiting to make larger investments.

Managing Market Changes

BBI's flexibility has allowed the business to stay steady even in the worst parts of the economic downturn.

"Sometimes you think things are picking up, but then the market changes and goes the other way," says Scales of the still volatile market. "It is really important for us to manage and monitor our business. Our biggest indicators are profit and loss. More important than numbers though, is good communication with our clients. If you don't have that you will not have a repeat client. You are always going to have something go amiss, but being able to work it out says something."

Because BBI has established a reputation for a high level of customer service, it is important that the company's strategic partners contribute to the same mission. "We sub out most of the work on our projects," Scales explains. "We do self-perform carpentry, doors and hardware. If there is a smaller scope for drywall, we do that ourselves as well. If it is larger, we sub it out. That varies by project. We tend to use a lot of the same subcontractors and vendors because we work in a lot of secure environments. We need repetition. Need to know who is on the jobsite and we don't want to go through security checks every day."

Scales and her team maintain a firm grasp on the business, although an aging industry has the owner concerned about future generations. "We need new blood," she states. "We need young people to come into the industry. To encourage that, we do a lot of on-the-job training when we can. We try to take on younger people, start them as laborers, then have them work with carpenters and try to mold them all the way up into superintendents. If this trend doesn't change, 10 years from now, someone will call for a plumber and they won't be able to find one -they'll all be retired."

BBI is working on building career employees and offering all of the right incentives. The business has a reputation for quality and safety, points of pride for the team and attractive traits to potential clients. As the market continues to change, Scales maintains a strong focus on versatility and performance. In both the public and private sectors, Brookstone Builders Inc. remains a strong player in the New England construction US industry.



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