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Heart Construction sees 'phenomenal' growth

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ST. PETERSBURG — Heart Construction LLC has more than doubled its sales volume in 2007, completely blowing away the company's five-year plan and setting it on a new path.

In 2004, the company saw less than \$1 million; in 2005, \$2.2 million. Last year, it posted \$4.5 million, and 2007 has seen \$15 million in sales volume and \$10 million already booked into 2008, according to Managing Director Joyce Mitchell.

That has made Heart Construction this year's Building Trades Business of the Year.



Mitchell

Honesty, integrity and sticking to what you know are critically important in the industry, Mitchell said.

"Those are key," she said. "You're only as good as your last job in this business, so you have to stay competitive and deliver a quality project every time."

As part of this, Heart asks each client for a reference at the end of a project, asking them to comment on the company's performance and also asking for input on ways to improve service.

Company Highs

Mitchell was recently named a finalist in the *Tampa Bay Business Journal's* 2007 Business-Woman of the Year awards, and Director of Operations Gennaro Di Nola was appointed

to the city of Tampa Variance Review Board by Mayor Pam Iorio.

"We're doing phenomenally well," Mitchell said.

Di Nola said they were honored to hear about the Business of the Year finalist award, especially because of the short period of time the company experienced growth. "To already make one of the finalists was really nice," he said. "It just says our company's going in the right direction."

Part of that direction includes paying top dollar to employees. Heart pays its staff 10 to 15 percent above average, Di Nola said.

"I never have to hear twice about someone working on a job site until 5 or 6 at night," Di Nola said. "It's all about our employees. It keeps them really loyal."

Employees are given the power to make independent decisions on projects, and the company stands behind them. This adds to the team feeling and is partly why turnover is low, according to nomination materials.

Out and About

Di Nola figures Heart is one of the fastest-growing companies in the area. The general contractor currently has 27 projects in the works, one of its largest being the Suncoast Mall at State Road 52 and the Suncoast Highway. It broke ground at the end of September at the 16-acre site.

But Di Nola's favorite job at the moment is a project for Hillsborough Area Regional Transit. Heart is building red canopy bus shelters, making this project one of its most-seen, he said.



"Everybody can see it across from Raymond James Stadium," Di Nola said. "It gives you satisfaction when you see it. You think, 'I dreamed it and I built it up.'"

In the community, Heart has been a corporate contributor to the Upper Pinellas Association for Retarded Citizens, Boley Center for Behavioral Health and other charitable organizations. The company is involved with the Mayor's Beautification Program in Tampa and is a sponsor for the Learning to Grow, Growing to Learn program.

Heart's strategic plan for the next five years is to continue its growth pattern to become a \$20 million-a-year firm. It also plans to increase its client base and streamline processes.

As part of this, the company will add three employees in the next 18 to 24 months — a project manager, a project engineer and someone who will oversee business development. The company currently has 10 local employees.

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