

Lean, Mean and Covering the Scene

R.L. Engebretson

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Now on its 18th year of business, R.L. Engebretson (RLE) is a family-run construction business based in North Dakota that employs 35 people, bringing in a steady \$7 million in revenue a year. Despite the economic downturn, the firm has remained successful and recently opened an office in Minnesota.

RLE is able to offer its customers a wide range of services by combining several aspects of the building process, including architecture, interior design, construction, steel

frame construction and graphic design. In addition, RLE is well-versed in crisis management and has a team available 24 hours a day to provide emergency flood reconstruction, roof failure repair and mold remediation, among other things.

The architecture component of the group has the ability to perform schematic design, design development, sustainable design and master planning, mainly in commercial and institutional sectors of construction.





The company, which began in 1992, is the brainchild of Rick Engebretson, still owner and CEO. Engebretson received his architecture degree in 1972, and he has nearly 40 years of experience in the construction, architecture and interior design industries.

Rick is assisted by a project manager, Vern Cleveland, who has been in the construction industry for 35 years, and who worked his way up from a laborer to be a lynchpin at RLE, where he has been since 2002.

Building More Than Buildings

Currently, Cleveland is managing a project for a Scheels Sporting Goods store in Schlitterbahn Vacation Village in Kansas City, Ka. The retail store is designed to attract vacationing children and families. Sitting on a winding river, the large building features smaller vendor shops along the side of the structure that juxtaposes the river (these smaller storefronts are to be rented to separate retailers).

Inside the store, RLE managed the installation of unique features, like a 16-car Ferris wheel and an 11,000 gallon salt water aquarium that customers can walk through for a "magical" experience. Another

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*Trogstad Engineering, is a **mechanical engineering firm** that provides consulting services to architects, building owners and contractors.*

Specialties include: heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) and domestic plumbing.

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Trogstad Engineering was established to provide quality HVAC and plumbing consulting to clients that include architects, developers and contractors. Many of our valued clients, such as R.L. Engebretson, have evolved into loyal relationships that have been maintained throughout numerous projects and years.

In today's construction environment, project schedules are shrinking, while expectations and responsibilities of the design teams continue to expand. Trogstad Engineering utilizes creativity backed by strong engineering knowledge to overcome these challenges.

interesting aspect of the building is its intense reliance on natural lighting.

“There are a few things that are kind of unique, one is the amount of day-lighting that’s brought into the building to help them enhance the product that they are selling,” explains Cleveland, who adds that special features are indented to make the store a popular lure in the tourist area. “It’s an attraction, a draw that brings people in, and you might say kids remember it and it brings them back again.”



The 220,000 square foot building also uses its special features for their eco-friendly aspects. For example, all of its lights are set to an “extensive timing system” so less energy is used during lighter periods of the day.

Scheels is one of RLE’s most loyal customers. Over the past decade, the firm has built several large stores for Scheels, particularly enjoying the unique, theatrical aspect the company places on retail construction. Cleveland says that Engebretson appreciates having earned a handful of these loyal, longtime customers.


“[Clients] see our worthiness and everything that we do in providing them what they need and that we make sure everything is done correctly,” explains Cleveland, adding that the firm offers clients “a real, full gambit of services,” making RLE an attractive, one-stop-shop for clients.

Standing Out Among Competition

Indeed, what makes R.L. Engebretson stand out the most remains its “diversity of experience,” says the founder. “I’m a real estate broker, general contractor, architect, mechanical engineer,” says Engebretson, listing his company’s many specialties. Being so diverse has definitely helped the company weather the bad economy of late, Engebretson continues. He says that he sees the economic situation in the United States slowly “starting to improve” and believes his company will not only survive the downturn, but thrive with its gradual dissipation.

Until then, he plans to be cautious and “keep it lean and mean,” knowing healthy growth is in the future for his well-rounded firm. ■

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