

New Technology

Technology Helps Contractor Continue to Grow Despite Tough Economy

by Karen Edwards, freelance writer for the construction industry

One look at Petersen Dean might make you reconsider the words tough economy. The company that began in 1984 with three employees is now one of the nation's largest privately held residential roofing companies with operations in five states including Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, and Texas. They continue to grow every year with a majority of their growth being realized in the last three years.

Petersen Dean has positioned itself to become a complete roofing and solar solution provider in the California market according to senior vice president of Solar Solutions, Bill Scott. Technology has played a large role in the company's success. "We've increased efficiency and profitability by embracing technology and services that improve productivity," said Scott.

One technology that has contributed toward Petersen Dean's growth is 3D aerial roof measurement and solar reports provided by EagleView® Technologies, Inc. EagleView invented the concept of 3D aerial roof measurements and has quickly become an industry standard in both the roofing and insurance industries. "We use an EagleView report on every single residential job that we sell," explained Scott. The report provides Petersen Dean with exact roof area, pitch, and square footage on each property. "Our field engineers have almost doubled their output. Before EagleView, they would design maybe three jobs per day and now they are doing five or six designs a day," explained Scott.

One of the keys to the increased productivity has been the time savings the engineers receive from working with the EagleView report. "Our engineers are saving so much time since they no longer have to draw the

entire property from hand measurements,” said Scott. “The EagleView reports are extremely accurate and jump start our engineering department.”

EagleView reports provide accurate measurements due to their ability to create 3D images and then extract the important measurements from the 3D diagram. The patent-pending software and process has been tested by major insurance carriers and roofing contractors for accuracy thousands of times with great success.

Some of Petersen Dean’s phenomenal growth can be attributed to the increased interest in solar energy and the company’s ability to offer both roof and solar solutions. But to become a leader in their market, Scott knew that Petersen Dean would need to do more than just offer services; they needed to ensure that they could deliver results and satisfaction to their customers. This meant identifying and embracing tools and technologies that would help them meet and exceed market demands and expectations.

As Petersen Dean positioned itself to be a leader in the California roofing and solar market, Scott said they began exploring aerial roof measurement services and techniques in order to improve their own productivity. “There’s only so much that you can do with Google Earth,” said Scott. “We needed a service that was going to be exact and that would be able to keep up with our increased volume.” After various trials, Petersen Dean discovered that EagleView was the only service able to meet its growing demands and provide consistent, reliable turnaround times.

“Our volume has gone up, and we’ve been able to handle the increase by adopting efficient practices,” explained Scott. “One of which is incorporating the EagleView report into every job.”

And it is not just for the measurements, “The reports are excellent sales tools,” noted Heidi J. Ellsworth, VP of marketing and sales for EagleView Technologies. “We are finding that contractors who have adopted the use of the EagleView reports in their sales and production processes are

seeing great success with increased profitability and higher closing rates. Petersen Dean is a great example of how to use the reports to not only improve efficiencies but also improve sales.”

Brinkmann Roofing, a division of Petersen Dean based in Houston, Texas, has also been able to ensure that business remains steady by staying on the front line with productivity tools and technologies that contribute to efficiency. Jason Brinkmann, Petersen Dean senior vice president and general manager of Brinkmann Roofing, said, “We are constantly looking for ways to generate more bids, stay competitive, and refine our processes.”

Many roofing contractors in the Houston market saw a spike in their business following Hurricane Ike in 2009 but that was short-lived. “With new construction stymied, it’s been challenging to keep business steady,” said Brinkmann. He understands the importance of exact material ordering, time savings, and risk minimization. “EagleView has been a great tool on all roofs and especially on the steeper and more cut up jobs where there is a higher risk of calculation error. It has saved us three or four hours per job.”

Texas hailstorms ensure that Brinkmann Roofing has its fair share of insurance work. “We do a tremendous amount of insurance work and we use EagleView to overcome challenges from the insurance company,” said Brinkmann. “We’ve had instances where we have a property as 25 squares and the insurance company may have 21. The EagleView report serves as an impartial third-party validation that settles any disagreement.”

Brinkmann sees additional growth opportunities in the future for solar. As Texas incorporates more incentive and rebate programs, the demand for solar systems will continue to increase. “As the solar market grows, we’ll be relying on EagleView reports for determining orientation and azimuth,” said Brinkmann.

EagleView Technologies’ president and CEO Chris Barrow said the company values feedback from contractors on how its services can help

contractors grow their businesses and increase profitability in today's construction environment. "Every day we listen to our customer's challenges and determine ways that we can help them to be more efficient by utilizing technology advancements," said Barrow.

The construction industry has seen staggering changes in the last few years. The decline in available jobs has led to increased competition as more contractors compete for the same projects. Taking advantage of technology and the new tools that are being created through technological advances has become a necessity for contractors to set themselves apart from the competition, and as in the case of Petersen Dean, to stand out as a leader willing to incorporate those tools for sustained growth and success.

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