



Impressive talent

South Jersey's talent base is work-ready, which means competition for that talent is high

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President – GREYHAWK

How competitive is the labor market in engineering, construction and consulting?

The No. 1 challenge in our space is attaining and retaining resources. I serve as an adjunct professor teaching construction engineering courses at two local universities and I am able to see first-hand the talent that is coming through our institutions of higher education. The level of talent and their preparedness for the professional world is impressive, and this is reflected in the fact that most, if not all, seniors have jobs lined up well before graduation. What GREYHAWK has seen as a challenge is competing with general contractors in our region. We are competing with these organizations as we are both trying to align with and attract younger staff. It is an issue in all sectors we're working in right now.

One of our challenges is attracting credentialed professionals. Our clients look to us as advisers and holding credentials such as Certified Construction Manager (CCM), Professional Engineers (PE), Project Management Professional (PMP) and contractor licensing provide them with some assurance that their projects are being led by an experienced team. Oftentimes, contractors can hire staff that does not need to be credentialed. So they can grow staff internally over a longer period of time. Our focus is to hire degreed or experienced professionals who can make effective decisions on the owner's behalf.

How do you see the South Jersey market changing?

The short answer is a movement of the industry back to our urban centers: Camden, Gloucester City, Vineland, and Atlantic City, to name a few. What happened in Jersey City and other urban areas in North Jersey is

what can happen here in South Jersey. We are in close proximity to Philadelphia. We have seen development in Camden with American Water, Michael's Development, Conner Strong, ResinTech, Rutgers School of Nursing and a few other developments on the waterfront. I recently attended a construction symposium held in a hotel in Camden and 10 years ago no one would have even considered developing a hotel in Camden. With the investment in infrastructure, the time is now to recreate the urban centers here in South Jersey.

What is your outlook for the sector over the next two to three years?

I think you'll see that the infrastructure bill will have a universal effect on everything, particularly in our region. That investment in, and completion of, infrastructure projects that are planned or ongoing will only make our area more economically attractive. Recently, there have been some of tax incentives in Camden tied to the entertainment industry for studios creating a "mini-Hollywood." This exhibits South Jersey leadership's creative approach to attracting business to the region.

GREYHAWK continues to focus on the higher education, healthcare and of course K-12 education markets. Although several hospitals have been built in the South Jersey region, there's room for more. Whether it is assisted living or long-term care facilities, life-sustaining facilities will be part of the mix. Additionally, the offshore wind market will have a significant impact on the ports along the Delaware River. There is now manufacturing occurring at the Port of Paulsboro, and the companies entering the market will be much more sustainable for the community in terms of job growth. ■