

AFTER **130** **YEARS,**



REPRESENTED BY
Schwabe

STILL BREAKING GROUND

Considering Lease Crutcher Lewis was founded in 1886 and grown in an industry not known for embracing change, you might think the company is set in its ways. But you'd be wrong. Whether it's carving new paths for a more diverse workforce, driving efficiency into an inherently inefficient construction process, or advancing a culture of employee owners, Lease Crutcher Lewis isn't content to rest on a well-earned reputation for excellence. The company's 300 employee owners are pushing boundaries and setting new standards for the industry.

We caught up with CEO Bart Ricketts to discuss the many challenges facing the industry and how Lease Crutcher Lewis is tackling them head on.

Lease Crutcher Lewis has deep Pacific Northwest roots. How has our region's culture shaped your business?

People in the Northwest really relate to positive relationships and predictability. There is also a "pioneering spirit" that is a hallmark around here. With that comes incredible ingenuity and resourcefulness. That

persevering mind-set provides a great foundation for our culture of innovation and continuous improvement. It's what our clients have come to expect, and it's part of the Pacific Northwest ethos.

It's fair to say that the construction industry has been historically dominated by men. However, you've made considerable strides in increasing the number of women engineers and project managers. Why is this important and how did you do it?

Diversity of all sorts really provides better value for our clients. If you have

a diverse workforce, you have diversity of thought. If you have diversity of thought, you have better solutions to challenges. At the end of the day, construction is about solving a series of problems on the job every day. It takes diversity of thought to really drive good solutions in our business.

In order to get that diversity, you need to rethink how you recruit and what you do with that talent once you find it. We've had great success hiring people who come from non-traditional industries and backgrounds—teachers, for instance, are some of the best trainers and communicators we have in our company.

We've been able to increase the number of

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women in the company because we've shown them a career path and demonstrated a significant amount of trust and respect. They see that there's a path to promotion and leadership. They've also been very proactive in telling that story back to the community. When you see them out in the community or on a jobsite

or in the boardroom, you see how much value they're driving for our clients. We've been very successful, but it's because of their success.

How do you build a culture to promote diversity and innovation?

I think it all starts with having the right environment at work where people feel comfortable. There's been a lot of research done on human productivity, and people do their best work when they're comfortable. They can bring their "whole self" to work. They don't have to fit within a specific role. They can just be themselves. So a lot of what

we're trying to do with our diversity initiative is to just make sure people of all walks of life feel comfortable here. If you're comfortable here, you're doing your best work. If you're doing your best work, you're going to be putting your great ideas forward. It's making us that much more of an innovative company.



Bart Ricketts, CEO

Lease Crutcher Lewis is unique because it is employee-owned. How does that fuel innovation?

Employee ownership is really the bedrock of entrepreneurialism in our business. When you're an owner, you think like an owner and you act like an owner because you are an owner. Because we are a company with broad ownership, people here are always looking for that next best thing...that next little piece they can add to the puzzle that makes us a more valuable contractor.

Everything we do revolves around the "Plus 1" mentality. The Plus 1 mentality is about learning from the good work being done by your co-workers and then improving on it. It's about making things incrementally better each time. It's a continuous improvement mantra we have within the organization.





But that all starts with being an owner and wanting to make a difference. If you do a good job on your current assignment for a client, you're probably going to get the next project.

Can you give a specific example of Plus 1 in action?

There's some great work being done around construction scheduling. We started using pull planning several years ago, getting our front line carpenters and laborers

involved in planning the work. The key to this is driving planning down to the people actually doing the work, the experts. It worked so well that we were taking weeks and months out of our construction schedules.

Spring boarding from that experience, we've since applied the same concept to our process in preconstruction... bringing in subject matter experts on specific building systems, trade sequencing, etc., to help create the best plan for construction and best value for the client. During these peer reviews, the goal is to use our collective knowledge to challenge assumptions and push and pull on logistics, material supply chain issues, construction means and methods—all of which have an impact on cost and speed of delivery.

Have you seen safety improvements through innovation?

Safety is the number one core value within our business. We believe we can get to a point where we have zero incidents on the jobsite. But it takes the entire company working and pulling in the same direction to make that happen.

Big innovations come along when you give people the technology and power to create safe work environments. We use a platform called Predictive Solutions, which provides real-time recording of safety observations in the field. We're getting less and less focused on the metrics of incidents on the jobsite and more focused on how many unsafe conditions we can prevent. That's the real innovation. What's the predictive, forward-looking indicator? Not the backward-looking metric of incidents on the site. We're giving people the technology to record an unsafe condition and the authority to stop work and correct it.

Describe your company in three words.

Employee-owned. Innovative. Inclusive.

