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Site Prep Work Leads to Growth for Pustola & Associates

By Maura Bohart
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Stephen Pustola, founder of Pustola & Associates of Naugatuck, Conn., had a design-build firm that did everything, taking customers through all steps of the process from design to permitting to construction. It was a successful operation, but Pustola wanted to do more. His company wasn't doing the site preparation work itself.

"We were subbing that work out, but I knew it was an area that we needed to grow into," Pustola said.

In Brewster, N.Y., Westchester Tractor was planning to build a new facility. Pustola was eager to help.

"We were courting the job to at least get the building side of the project," Pustola explained.

The courtship would lead to a happy dealer-customer marriage between Pustola and Westchester Tractor.

Pustola wanted a skid steer for some personal work he was doing at home, so he decided to buy one from Westchester. That's when he met John Apple, president of Westchester Tractor. Apple has helped Pustola choose many pieces of equipment.

"John Apple has made that [equipment purchasing] process very easy and has been excellent in pointing us in the right direction when we are selecting the right equipment for each job," Pustola said.

When Pustola purchased his skid steer, the little machine inspired him.

"Operating that piece of equipment got my wheels going and propelled me into starting the site work side of my business," he said.

But there was a problem.

"One thing I knew for sure was that I was not qualified to operate this equipment and that the best way to get qualified operators was to go out and hire them."

Although Pustola & Associates did develop a few operators from its own staff,

it had to hire several operators. Pustola's staff began to grow — and so did its inventory of equipment. As the company grew, it continued to buy from Westchester.

"We have dealt pretty much exclusively with Westchester Tractor," Pustola said. "Our crew has been comfortable with our decision in buying New Holland equipment ... and I like the fact that much of the product line is manufactured in the United States."

One machine Pustola is particularly proud of is a Kobelco SK350 with a special American Eagle paint job.

"It is certainly a real eye catcher," Pustola said.

Pustola currently is using the SK350, along with other machines at the former site of the Perkin Elmer Facility, a 30-acre (12.1 ha) site along Route 7 in Norwalk, Conn., that was contaminated and needed remediation. The facility is 400,000 sq. ft. (37,161 sq m) and its buildings range from 30 to 50 years old.

Pustola's trusty equipment is helping the company with site work, utility work, drainage improvements, underground electrical, parking islands, and 1,500 ft. (457 m) of 36-in. (91 cm) RCP for drainage.

The owner of the project is i.park Inc. of Greenwich, Conn., another company Pustola & Associates has a good relationship with. I.park often purchases existing structures and modifies them to suit their new tenants. It puts together a financing package, acquires the property and questions tenants about how the building will be used.

Once needs have been identified, Pustola steps in. Its architectural and engineering staff puts together a plan to modify the building.

"This is a very convenient arrangement for i.park," said Pustola. "We can start doing electrical or HVAC design while our site crew has already started the site development. This is a huge savings of time for



John Apple (L), president of Westchester Tractor, has helped Stephen Pustola, president of Pustola & Associates, with many of his equipment purchasing decisions.



This Kobelco SK350 excavator with special American Eagle commemorative paint job was first displayed at 2005 ConExpo.



A Bomag BW211D-3 soil compactor prepares the base for a parking lot.



This New Holland LW190B with a 4.5-yd. (4.1 m) bucket has proven to be a workhorse.



This New Holland E50 mini excavator proves to be quite handy for utility work.

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Conn. Design-Build Firm Expands Into Site Prep Business



A Kobelco SK210LC excavator helps Pustola & Associates scoop up dirt at a remediation job in Norwalk, Conn.



A New Holland D95 grades some earth.

i.park."

The Perkin Elmer project started in late 2006 and will be completed by the end of 2008. It is using several pieces of equipment purchased from Westchester, including a Kobelco 210LC 45,000-lb. (20,412 kg) excavator; a New Holland D95 wide track dozer; a New Holland E50 mini excavator; a Kobelco SK350 75,000-lb. (34,019 kg) excavator; a Bomag BW211 soil compactor; and a New Holland LW190B 4.25-yd. (3.9 m) loader.

Eliminating the Blame Game

By managing all facets of a job, Pustola said his company simplifies things for project owners.

"When you are working with us and we are handling your entire project all excuses are eliminated," Pustola

explained. "The frustration of the contractor blaming the civil engineer or the architect blaming the contractor is eliminated. All of the burden is on our shoulders and we have no place else to lay it."

History of Pustola & Associates

When Pustola started in the construction business, he performed only engineering work, but he was laid off from his civil engineering job in the late 1980s and there was no new work available.

He decided to enter the construction side of the industry and he asked a developer he'd been working with if they would like help building their project.

"It made [more] sense to get more work out of an existing job than it did to go looking for new projects," Pustola

said.

In 1995, he founded Pustola & Associates Engineers/Constructors LLC to act as a general contractor, performing construction work in addition to design and architecture. At first, Pustola subbed out much of the work, but over time, as it acquired new equipment and new employees, it developed teams for many different parts of the job. Today, Pustola performs most of the work itself, with occasional subcontractors for building work.

The company has experienced strong growth over the twenty years it's been in business, and this year, it will reach a \$30 million milestone.

"Our employees' attitudes of being eager to help have been the key to maintaining our repeat customer base," said Pustola.



A New Holland front loader cooperates with a new Holland excavator to move some dirt.



I.park often hires Pustola to help it renovate existing buildings, modifying them to meet the needs of their new tenants.