

PATNER CONSTRUCTION, INC.



BUILDERS THRIVE BY SERVING MAJOR AIRPORTS AND UNIVERSITIES

by **Gina L. Diorio**

Above: Peikoff Alumni House, Gallaudet University, Washington, DC. Originally built in 1881, this historic renovation features custom-made timber from Washington state, hardwood floors, and the original stained glass windows.

WORKING FOR A LARGE, WELL-RECOGNIZED company is one thing; setting out on one's own is another entirely. And while experience translates, public perception does not always immediately follow. David Bredbenner experienced this firsthand when he founded Patner Construction, Inc. in January 2000.

"In the beginning, it takes time to build your clientele as well as a name for yourself," Bredbenner says. "When you start out on your own, you have

to prove you have the experience and skills to handle the big projects."

Bredbenner, however, was up to the challenge. Although his intended co-founder and partner backed out of the business venture at the outset, Bredbenner persevered, working out of the basement of his home. And in a scenario uncharacteristic of the vast majority of start-up businesses, Patner turned a profit its first year of operation. More importantly, however, during that year



1510 H Street, Washington, DC. This project included demolition of all interior finishes, replacement of existing utilities, building a façade and a multi-level basement parking garage.

Bredbenner laid the foundation for a company that, in 2007, ranked 89th on *Entrepreneur Magazine's* Hot 500 Fastest Growing Businesses in America.

In the early days, Patner Construction worked almost exclusively in the aviation sector, tackling jobs at metropolitan Washington, DC's major airports: Dulles International, Ronald Reagan

Washington National, and Baltimore Washington International. This focus shifted, however, in 2001, when Chuck Mays—a former colleague of Bredbenner—joined the company. With expertise in institutional and commercial projects, Mays facilitated Patner's entry into these sectors.

"We have different strengths," Mays

states, "and that's how we complement each other and have grown." Today, the company's projects are approximately one-third aviation; one-third institutional, including universities and hospitals; and one-third development oriented, such as office buildings and interior office fit-outs. And although Patner concentrates its work primarily in the Maryland/Virginia/Washington,

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David Bredbenner, Founder

DC area, projects have taken the company as far south as North Carolina and as far north as New Jersey.

According to Mays, the key to the company's success is negotiating with clients in lieu of hard bidding. “Though the industry standard is hard bidding, 85 percent of our work comes from repeat clients,” he says. “We place great value on the long-standing relationships our team develops with our clients.”

These client relationships are backed by a solid record of quality and service. “We're customer-service driven,” Bredbenner states. “General contractors provide basically the same services, so it's the customer service to your clients that's going to keep them coming back to you.”

For Patner Construction, this service includes everything from providing a quality product to maintaining open client communication. “We're strong believers that if you get an e-mail or phone call, whether it's good or bad, you better answer it and get it resolved,” Mays explains.

There is no doubt this commitment is one reason that, after only eight years in operation, Patner Construction already

has a portfolio of nearly 1,000 projects varying in size from \$28 million down to a few thousand dollars, with approximately 60 percent of the projects ranging from \$500,000 to \$2 million. Though each job provides a showcase for the company to display its skills, several projects in particular stand out:

- Federal Inspection Services (FIS) area at Dulles International Airport: For this \$13 million occupied renovation of the 70,000-square-foot US customs and immigration facility at Dulles, Patner had to complete the project while maintaining site safety and full functionality for the 4,000 individuals that passed through the facility each day. Additionally, because FIS areas are secured areas, all workers were required to obtain security clearance.
- 1510 H Street, NW, Washington, DC: Located within site of the White House, this \$11 million project, currently underway, consists of the comprehensive renovation of an existing 60,000-square-foot, 9-story building, including the demolition of all interior finishes, the replacement of existing utilities and building façade, and the construction of a multi-level basement parking garage.



Mary Graydon Hall, American University, Washington, DC. A complete retrofit of this facility was completed, including a student entertainment center with state-of-the-art light fixture dimming system, conference rooms, public restrooms, and student information center.

PATNER CONSTRUCTION, INC. AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
FAIRFAX, VA

AREAS OF SPECIALTY:
AVIATION, INSTITUTIONAL, AND
COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJ-
ECTS

AVERAGE ANNUAL REVENUE:
\$50 MILLION

AVERAGE PROJECT SIZE RANGE:
\$500,000–\$2 MILLION

EMPLOYEES:
40

HOSPITALS &
SCHOOLS

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CONSTRUCTION, INC.

• Peikoff Alumni House, Gallaudet University, Washington, DC: Originally built in 1881, the alumni house was formerly a gymnasium and home to one of the country's first indoor swimming pools. For this project at the world's leading school for the hearing impaired, Patner deconstructed and then reconstructed the building for a finished product that is a meticulous and beautiful historic renovation. Alumni and visitors can now walk directly on the pool site (which is covered with glass and illuminated by in-floor lighting), and the custom-made exterior wooden façade and trim maintain the structure's Victorian style. One major—and

unique—reason Patner secured this contract is that the company guaranteed it would complete 20 percent of the project utilizing hearing-impaired contractors, and throughout the duration of the job, crews relied on interpreters to work with many of the project managers.

With jobs such as these, it is little wonder Patner Construction has never had to advertise; its record speaks for itself. And as the company enters its tenth year, Mays and Bredbenner are committed to continuing to provide the same attentive and detailed customer service that has become the Patner trademark. ABQ

Hampton Inn, Warrenton, Virginia—Base building hotel boasts 104 guest rooms, indoor heated swimming pool, two conference rooms, and a business center.



