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DPR hires unassuming leader to secure biopharma projects

Silicon Valley / San Jose Business Journal - by [Sharon Simonson](#)

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At first glance, Michael Lynch looks like an unlikely candidate to spearhead the construction of cutting-edge biopharmacy laboratories and manufacturing plants.

At 61, he is not only a father but also a grandfather. His daily attire consists of practical shoes, sweater vests and khaki pants. And his hands are those of a carpenter or pipe fitter. No one would mistake him for a lab-coat wearing geek.

But business peers say drawing conclusions about Lynch based on first impressions is a mistake. After 40 years of building complex clean rooms and sterile environments common to the biotechnology and semiconductor industries, Lynch has honed his professional skills to a master's level. He doesn't need to worry about image, says Ted Collins, a senior vice president with a Philadelphia engineering company who has known and worked with Lynch for 20 years. His abilities speak for themselves.

"People who try to impress you with external things lack the confidence that he has,"



Vicki Thompson

Michael Lynch

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Collins says.

Add his people skills, and Lynch is a formidable force, his competitors say.

His technical know-how and personal touch are the exact qualities that company leaders had in mind when Redwood City-based **DPR Construction** hired Lynch this spring as the first national director for its biopharmaceutical practice, says Eric Lamb, executive vice president for Northern California, where Lynch will be headquartered. His hiring is not only a milestone in Lynch's life, it is also a milestone in the life of DPR.

Lynch's arrival helps DPR cement its national presence in biotechnology and biopharmaceuticals.

"There has been so much consolidation in the industry, so many companies have a national footprint, and we need to have someone speaking to the top levels, not just talking to the head of a region," Lamb says.

Lamb and other DPR executives learned only recently that Lynch was considering the job. The company searched for more than a year for the right person. As it turned out, "he was right here under our noses," says Lamb, who has known Lynch for two decades.

"In the early days of DPR, he would come in and talk to us about different work sectors and give us advice about the biotech industry," Lamb says. "He just makes people feel good."

Lynch moves to DPR

DPR is one of the Bay Area's largest general contractors, with projected 2008 revenue of \$2 billion. The company has more than \$780 million in biopharmaceutical projects in the pipeline or under construction. It recently opened a new office in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., to expand its presence in the industry. Besides its biotechnology practice, the company specializes in hospital and other health care-related construction as well as data-center and clean-room work for semiconductor and other information technology companies.

DPR's signature Bay Area projects include acting as general contractor for Stanford Hospitals on the \$186 million remake of the former Excite@Home headquarters in Redwood City into outpatient clinics and offices. It also built the new **VMware Inc.** corporate campus at Hillview Avenue and Foothill Expressway in Palo Alto's Stanford Research Park. Its other Bay Area clients include **Apple Inc.**, **Kaiser Permanente** and the city of Hayward.

Lynch and DPR already have relationships with national and international firms such as **Bayer Corp.**, **Genentech Co.** and Roche Ltd. Lynch has been hired to take the company's biopharmaceutical practice to a new level. He is expected to identify broad industry trends and company needs well in advance of their becoming public knowledge. This will ensure that DPR is positioned with the right people and services to secure new business. Lynch also will train his successors, as he has made it clear that he plans to work another five years or so then retire.

"This is an extremely regulated industry," Lynch says. "How we do what we do has to be done within specific guidelines as far as record-keeping and performance, and the idea of repeatability. Everything has to be done over and over again with great excellence, and that's not easy when you have a very flexible workforce and something has to look the same in San Francisco, Silicon Valley and Florida.

"But the great thing about all of it is that the industry is actually directly involved in saving lives. It's a business most assuredly, but it's also a noble undertaking, and that really gets your juices going."

From a man who once studied to be a priest, such words carry meaning they might otherwise lack.

Lamb has every confidence that Lynch is up to the task.

"We are very impressed by him," Lamb says. "He doesn't get ruffled. He is a very high-content individual who understands his work and construction details, and he's very helpful in terms of talking people through things."

John McIntyre, head of business development for Bovis Lend Lease, another large general contractor and a direct competitor to Lynch, agrees.

"I wish him luck -- but not a lot of luck," McIntyre says.