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Applying Best Practices to Create Value in the New Economy

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How do you do it?

"Five years ago one of our competitors said to me 'you have the most customer-oriented company I have ever seen, how do you do it?' and I said there is no simple answer to that question."

Peter Nosler, DPR Construction co-founder along with Doug Woods and Ron Davidowski, remembers this conversation with a competitor as he contemplates winning a best practices award in the category of Customers. DPR Construction, which according to many is a construction company revolutionary in its approach to customer satisfaction and organizational structure, was founded in 1990. "People are the heart and soul of the company," Nosler explains. "What we have built in the last 10 years is an organization of individuals whose collaborative interplay has extended to include all members of the project team, creating a collaborative approach that is unique to the industry and better serves our customers."

In the 1980s, the trend for contractors was to focus on customer needs by playing a bigger role in the design of the project. DPR has taken this one step further by recognizing that owners need and deserve substantial expert input in the pre-construction phase of any project. "We are dedicated to having the right kind of talent, technology and appropriate disciplines so that we can help owners spend their money more efficiently and optimize the functionality of their facility," Nosler says. "Our employees are positioned to interact with owners on the spot, making decisions and commitments, rather than being restricted by a hierarchical corporate structure." DPR has also implemented a Customer Satisfaction Survey program that is unprecedented in the industry, whereby owners are encouraged to offer feedback during a project and, based on their input, often see changes and results.

Perhaps the most critical difference between DPR Construction and other companies in this industry is that DPR is a general contractor focused on being a master builder rather than a construction manager. "Because we have more than 3,000 craft personnel on staff and do work with our own workforce, we can solve problems more proactively and offer more scheduling flexibility," Nosler points out. "Self-performing the work stimulates the creative, problem-solving aspect of this business, which has been forgotten by so many other construction companies out there. DPR does not just manage the process, we participate in it, bringing value and a new standard of quality to our customers."

