

WALLS & CEILINGS

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Top 50 Contractors of 2014

Walls & Ceilings' Second Annual Top 50 Contractors.

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Welcome to Walls & Ceilings' second round-up of what the magazine views as a large collection of the best contractors in the country. This gathering brings together the industry's most progressive and resourceful group.

For this "competition," we asked contractors to provide us with standard company information and why they feel they are among the top contractors out there. It was great to read from all the different and varying voices. We learned a lot.

All of these Top 50 contractors have displayed numerous skill-sets that warrant them great. In fact, visit any of the company's Web sites and you'll find a portfolio that will display the level of finish these masters provide. Several of the companies have actively pursued software and technology—such as estimating programs and BIM—to market themselves and enhance their business. Others have embraced the sustainable and green building movement to offer niche services, such as installing ICFs and SIPs. All in all, their talents have sustained their business model and made them industry leaders.

The turn-out of submissions was very strong and encouraging. It pleases the magazine to see all the companies that sent in their submissions to be a part of this annual feature. We anticipate that the number of entrants will only climb for next year and we look forward to reading and accepting all future submissions.

A Center for Creative (P)arts

Austin-based Structura show-and-tell why the subcontractor should be among the Top 50. Project photos by Thomas McConnell

It may be a generalization but it would be no fallacy to say that Texas holds some of the most progressive and enterprising wall and ceiling contractors in North America. Countless times this magazine has profiled the state's largest and most progressive contractors. While it could be construed the magazine is playing favorites, consider that Texas' land mass dictates a large collective of subcontractors in this trade. That perhaps does give them the advantage but also consider that the state also had a slightly but definitely stronger economy than other parts of the country during the Great Recession. While its borders won't grow, Texas' population and need for new construction and renovation are a constant cycle (for now). But while this again would seem plentiful to contractors, the flip-side is a land that can be brimful of low bidding, fly-by-nighters and less-than average workmanship. Past *W&C* past cover stars, such as MK Marlow, Southwest Lath & Plaster, BakerTriangle, et al, have each shared their pains of the days blown; estimating projects only to be passed over. But what these companies have learned and what makes them great is the attention to detail, carving out niche services and above all excellent work.

For these same attributes, Structura Inc. has similarly displayed its mark on the state by providing high-profile jobs with strong end results. The Austin-based company is a general contractor with core markets being industrial, manufacturing, high technology centers, healthcare, retail and corporate office space. Its niche services are that it self-performs trades in drywall, acoustical ceilings and concrete.

“Kevin Jones, Structura Co-founder and COO, and I did not want to be a GC that subcontracted all of the work, like most are these days,” says Structura's other Co-

founder and CEO Russell “Rusty” Morgan, who both graduated in Construction Science from Texas A&M. “Rather, we wanted to self perform as much as possible and grow our crews in the carpentry trades. We provide metal stud framing, drywall, ceilings, rough/finish carpentry, doors and hardware installation, other specialty installation, as well as concrete foundation and site work.”

The employer of 90 is a member of the Associated General Contractors, American Institute of Architects, Urban Land Institute and the Real Estate Council of Austin.

A Healthy Outlook

From its inception seven years ago, which was started by Morgan and Jones, the company went straight into rapid growth. Yet, it wasn’t to last and suddenly Structura experienced a rapid decline during the recession. But it quickly bounced back and this year already the contractor reports having a record year.

“Thanks to Texas’ very robust economy, we are having a great year and working on some bigger projects with lots of work in backlog,” says Morgan. “We are poised for continued growth and continuously looking for good people in all major cities in Texas.”

What’s more optimistic is the outlook the company sees. By the company’s predictions, the economic boom will continue for the next five years throughout all of the major Texas markets.

“The oil and gas industry in Houston, San Antonio and south[ern part of the state] is projected to continue to grow over the next 10 to 20 years,” he says. “With approximately 150 people a day moving to Austin and Houston, both the population growth and corporate growth will drive a strong commercial construction development environment. Residential is at a peak growth period right now. Commercial, retail, and then infrastructure projects including roads, schools, churches, hospitals usually cycle right behind residential growth. So, we see five years of strong growth in our markets. Having said that, with the news of how great Texas is, a lot of competition has come to town. We also see manpower becoming a major issue with the heavy workload.”

A Fun Project

Recently, the company completed a project in its local Austin. Morgan and Jones refer to this project as a “dream” project with a “dream” client.

“The nature of this project is directly in our strike zone—high profile, downtown, high-rise building, with multiple project stakeholders providing input in the process,” he says, citing that at the company’s request, it remain anonymous. “In addition, the latest

technology for numerous building materials, building systems, and several atypical materials, you would not normally use in the building finishes process make this project unlike any other. The final product is strikingly impressive, which we are proud to have been a part of.

“The client boasts about their new work environment as one of the most enjoyable work spaces, for the most creative and cutting-edge talent in their industry,” Morgan continues. “In many ways, this space and work environment exceeds the level of creativeness and inspiration of some of the facilities designed and built for Google and Apple Computer.”

STG Design served as the architect for this project, while Structura wore several hats as the general contractor, drywall and ceilings contractor.

A Radical Work Space

The scope of the project was 120,000 square feet of interior remodeling. In addition to all the specialty trades, drywall and ceiling systems were installed by Structura, as well as the fireproofing. The building was designed to have a lot of exciting features: On the fourth floor is a dining room with an exterior party/event deck that has a view of the State Capitol building. When exiting the elevators onto the client’s showcase sixth floor, there is a multi-color gigantic neon-like “bubble” wall. The most notable feature is the polished red, decorative 40-foot curved concrete reception counter. The bar even has matching red curved concrete under counter cabinet doors. On that same floor, employees can watch 46 HD monitors (also called a video wall) that spans two floors up with structure removed between floors for a mezzanine effect that allows twice the volume of uninterrupted natural light.

“The walls and ceilings reflect the company—unique, fun and far from average,” says Morgan. “For example, two truck beds were recessed in the walls equipped with mini refrigerators stocked with beer to complete their ‘tailgating’ theme.”

Armstrong Woodworks Grille product line was used, as well as its ceiling tiles and aluminum edge trim. Hunter-Douglas Contract’s Techstyle ceiling grid and ceiling tile system with the company’s wall trim components were integrated flush with the oversized light fixtures. Allied Building Products served as the distributor for this project.

“Allied Building Materials has continued to be an exceptional business partner for our drywall and acoustical team,” says Jones. “We can always rely on them to be our technical advisor and one-stop shop.”

Until then, *W&C* congratulates all the Top 50 winners.

Company Name	Location	Total Revenue	Peak Staff	Residential %	Commercial %
1. Ark and Dove Drywall	Mechanicsville, Md.	N/A	5	70	30
2. Baker Drywall and Triangle Plastering	Mesquite, Texas	125,859,000	1540	2	98
3. Bayside Interiors Inc.	Fremont, Calif.	N/A	500	0	100
4. California Drywall Co.	San Jose, Calif.	110,000,000	500	10	90
5. CC Tradesmen	Gatesville, Texas	14,980,000	320	0	100
6. Central Ceilings Inc.	South Easton, Mass.	43,700,000	150	0	100
7. Columbia Architectural Products Inc.	Beltsville, Md.	2,000,000	6	0.1	99.9
8. DaFore LLC	Fredericksburg, Va.	4,749,302	56	1	99
9. Duggan & Marcon Inc.	Bethlehem, Pa.	50,000,000	300	0	100
10. E&K Companies Inc.	Elmhurst, Ill.	180,000,000	1,200	0	100
11. Elite Wall Systems	Deer Park, N.Y.	2,500,000	35	0	100
12. ESCO Services LLC	Fern Park, Fla.	9,100,560	65	0	100
13. Expert Construction Inc.	Cleveland, Ohio	2,168,672	25	0	100
14. F. Richard Wilton Jr. Inc.	Ashland, Va.	N/A	100	20	80
15. F.L. Crane & Sons Inc.	Fulton, Miss.	79,119,425	500	1	99
16. Forks Lath & Plaster Inc.	Mekinock, N.D.	2,500,000	20	5	95
17. Fred Shearer & Sons Inc	Portland, Ore.	24,000,000	200	1	99

18. Gerritsen Drywall & Plastering	Solvang, Calif.	900,000	30	90	10
19. Granite State Acoustics Inc.	Bedford, N.H.	2,000,000	25	1	99
20. Heartland Acoustics & Interiors	Englewood, Colo.	7,300,000	50	0	100
21. Heggem-Lundquist	Denver, Colo.	23,000,000	250	5	95
22. Ironwood Commercial Builders Inc.	Oakland, Calif.	10,000,000	100	0	100
23. Island Acoustics	Bohemia, N.Y.	60,000,000	250	0	100
24. Ivester Drywall & Painting Inc.	Charlotte, N.C.	5,000,000	80	90	10
25. Jacobson & Company Inc.	Elizabeth, N.J.	59,761,260	350	0	100
26. James River Exteriors LLC	Richmond, Va.	7,900,000	150	20	80
27. JD Traditional Industries	New York, N.Y.	18,300,000	125	0	100
28. KHS&S West	Las Vegas, Nev.	283,551,920	966	0	100
29. Leonardo Construction	San Francisco, Calif.	1,000,000	5	95	5
30. Lone Sun Builders	Albuquerque, N.M.	5,000,000	70	2	98
31. Martin Integrated Systems	Orange, Calif.	N/A	62	0	100
32. MKB Construction	Chandler, Ariz.	<u>11,600,000</u>	<u>180</u>	1	99
33. Nevell Group Inc.	Brea, Calif.	55,000,000	350	5	95
34. New Image Drywall LLC	Pueblo, Colo.	6,532,653	80	2	98
35. OCP Contractors Inc.	Holland, Ohio	56,430,000	470	0	100
36. Paul Johnson Drywall Inc.	Phoenix, Ariz.	34,500,000	2,000	10	90

37. Prime Wall Systems LLC	Georgetown, Texas	5,000,000	72	60	40
38. Professional Drywall Construction Inc.	West Springfield, Mass.	22,000,000	160	0	100
39. Reitter Stucco & Supply Co. Inc.	Columbus, Ohio	5,000,000	40	35	65
40. RG Building & Development	Madison, Conn.	Madison, Conn.	12	100	0
41. Ronsco Inc.	New York, N.Y.	10,000,000	100	0	100
42. Shields Incorporated	Winston-Salem, N.C.	31,757,707	60	0	100
43. Southeastern Group	Charlotte, N.C.	7,800,000	36	85	15
44. Southwest Lath & Plaster	Garland, Texas	2,800,000	45	0	100
45. Structura Inc.	Austin, Texas	Austin, Texas	125	0	100
46. Tarlton and Son Inc.	Fresno, Calif.	38,000,000	340	1	99
47. The Raymond Group	Orange, Calif.	132,000,000	800	0	100
48. Trisco Construction Services LLC	Lima, Ohio	1,000,000	25	0	100
49. V&C Drywall Contractors Inc.	Kapolei, Hawaii	20,000,000	100	10	90
50. Valley Acoustics Inc.	Youngstown, Ohio	3,000,000	50	5	95



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