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ENTREPRENEUR

Building on a foundation

Vision Builders Co., Inc.

Construction management firm finds niche in retail and restaurant arenas

by Sean McFadden — Journal Staff

FRAMINGHAM — When you're the new kid on the block, Anthony Gagliardi has discovered, there isn't much time to take a breather.

Ever since he established his own construction management firm, Framingham-based **Vision Builders Co. Inc.**, about a year and a half ago, Gagliardi has found himself performing at a frequently exhaustive pace. And in the moments when he hasn't been doing the actual work, he's been pondering new ways to expand his client base.

"When you're new, you're new," the 33-year-old general contractor says. "Basically, you have to win people over on a very limited track record. There was no room for me to ever make a mistake, so there was a lot of pressure in that."

The foundation Gagliardi has built his company on is this: He's tackling strictly private-sector projects, with an emphasis on retail and restaurant clients.

Since April 2005, Vision Builders has completed 41 projects, with eight more on the books this year so far. Projects costs ranged from \$15,000 for the renovation of an existing Mattress Discounters store to \$280,000 for the build-out of a Work 'N Gear location. His typical gross profit is between 10 percent and 20 percent of the project contract cost.

Gagliardi's strategy is to go wherever his clients' work takes him. Last year, that was Massachusetts 70-percent of the time. So far this year, though, the bulk of his projects have actually been outside the state. The high dollar value of some of those projects enabled Vision Builders to reach \$1.5 million in revenues in 2005, with \$2 million projected for this year.

The emphasis on the private sector marks a major shift in focus for Gagliardi, whose previous business, the now defunct AMG Construction Co., performed the bulk of its work for the public sector, such as school



Anthony Gagliardi, president of Vision Builders Co., at the site of client Work 'N Gear in Avon. Gagliardi's general contracting firm, which is focused on the retail market, is zeroing in on the \$2 million revenue mark this year.

Fast Facts

Anthony Gagliardi incorporated Vision Builders Co., Inc., a general contracting and construction management firm specializing in build-outs and renovations for private sector clients, in April 2005.

Last year, 70 percent of those projects were in Massachusetts. So far this year, the bulk of projects have been out of state.

renovations. By the time the firm, which had been started by his father, Antonio, closed in 2004, Gagliardi says he was burnt out.

"I was always under the gun with lawyers and stressed out workers, and it was very difficult to create a positive atmosphere and motivate people to work in the right direction," Gagliardi says.

His goal with Vision Builders, says Gagliardi, was to manage growth more tightly. From a marketing perspective, he's spent about \$17,000 on a Web site, collateral materials and public relations efforts. At the same time, he's avoided significant labor expenditures by utilizing a pool of 5 to 30 subcontractors, rather than employing any permanent staff members.

"I didn't want to get into a situation where — and I learned this from the other company — if you have mouths to feed ... I've sometimes taken on work just to keep people busy," Gagliardi says. "That's just digging a hole for yourself."

That philosophy, he says, has let him hold out for work in the retail market, a niche that requires more specialized services — basically speed without compromising quality —

for projects that usually require a two-to-five-week turnaround.

"Developing a niche market is very important," observes Robert Pertucelli, president of Associated General Contractors of MA. "If a firm keeps a narrow focus on a niche, I think they will do quite well."

While he's completed a bar renovation at Boston eatery Bob's Southern Bistro and the transformation of an Applebee's restaurant into Firefly's Bodacious Bar-B-Que and Beyond, Gagliardi's two major clients right now are retailers Work 'N Gear and Mattress Discounters. He's already worked on 26 stores for the former and 13 for the latter.

Scott Filleul, director of construction at Work 'N Gear in Weymouth, says competitive pricing gives Gagliardi an edge. "He is able to bring jobs in on time and on budget," Filleul says.

Gagliardi says it's been a challenge juggling the demands of that workload with a busy home life that includes a wife and 6-month-old son. But Gagliardi is banking on his work ethic and positive word of mouth to further build his foundation.

About Vision Builders Co.:

Vision Builders is a nationally-Recognized new breed of general contracting and construction management firm with a business model that places equal emphasis on the quality of the client experience as the quality of the finished product. It focuses on developing close working relationships built upon shared vision, open dialog, and skilled craftsmanship. The private firm, established in 2005, works with new and existing companies in a variety of industries that require renovations and construction build-outs. Vision Builders has completed projects for several restaurants, well-known retail operation Work 'n Gear, with locations in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and national Chain Mattress Discounters, with location in Virginia and Massachusetts.



*If you can envision it,
we can build it.*



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