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Great 16

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in a down market

EXPECTATIONS

Randall  Reilly

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SMALL Operation

BIG Expectations

Southwest Rock Products' Queen Creek plant hosts three ready-mix producers on site.

Times are tough for aggregate operations these days, but Southwest Rock Products, headquartered in Queen Creek, Ariz., hasn't changed anything about the way it operates its company. According to Managing Partner Chris Reinesch, Sr., operations have been running cost effectively since the company began.

"Nine years ago, we started this company on a shoestring," says Reinesch, Sr. "I had a three-month lease on a piece of property."

Today, the family-owned company has several aggregate plants and mobile custom-crushing plants that produce just about any type of product which is used in a variety of construction projects ranging from roadwork to airport work to construction of the Arizona/Mexico border fence. How does the company continue to prosper and grow? According to Reinesch, Sr., it's all about attitude and doing things the right way the first time.

Good product, good people

Probably first and foremost on the list is the quality and dependability of the product produced. "It's neat

to have an operation like Queen Creek where we can actually bring a customer out to see what we're about," says Chris Reinesch, Jr., sales and purchasing manager and son of the managing partner. "When they get that product on the job, they're not worried about it because they know it will meet spec. They gain a lot of that comfort level over time because they can come out here to see how we run our operation. They know we're not going to shortcut things."

Making and keeping a good reputation with customers is extremely important in these poor economic times. "It's a testament not only to our business, but also to the people working for us," Reinesch, Jr. adds. "We have guys who come in half an hour early just to sit around and talk before they actually start working. It creates a family-type culture — everybody cares about what's going on. They take a lot of pride in the business' success."

That attitude shows in the cleanliness of the plant. There are no parts or damaged pieces of equipment lying around, and the concrete slabs beneath the crushers and screens are clean. Even the warehouse is neat and orderly with everything in its place. "I have not seen another operation as clean and well maintained," says Steven Hood, co-owner of the company and nephew of Reinesch, Sr., "and it's like that 365 days a year."

One of the ideas embraced by Southwest Rock Products involves manpower. The company oper-

ates Queen Creek plant with only 15 employees. "We've never had an extra body, that's the way we operate," Reinesch, Sr. says. He believes he has the best employees in the industry, but he also expects them to be able to do any job. "All the plant foremen work and are as dirty at the end of the day as the lowest guy on the totem pole."

"We all work, and we all do everything," Hood adds. "We built the office, warehouse, and shop ourselves. We don't hire somebody else to come out and build something for us when we can do it ourselves, and everybody pitches in for the common goal. Our guys are willing to do anything at any time, and not just do it, but take pride in doing it. We have worked hard to get good people."

Well-maintained equipment

Most of the plant's mobile equipment is manufactured by Caterpillar. "I've always been a Cat individual," Reinesch, Sr. says. "They make a wonderful piece of equipment, and when you have a dealership like Empire, you have support when you have a problem." The company meets with representatives from the dealership on a weekly basis to discuss any problems, handle invoices, and stay up-to-date on any new equipment developments.

"Empire does rebuilds on our major components," Hood says. "Any other maintenance, we do ourselves."

The company is known for getting more hours out of its equipment than expected. "We have units out there that have 35,000 to 36,000 hours on them right now," Hood says, "and we don't anticipate getting rid of them. They're still good machines."

Reinesch, Sr. attributes the plant's well-maintained equipment to his employees and the business-family-type culture. He expects his employees to do what's right and take care of the equipment, and they do.

Digging deeper for profits

When Southwest Rock Products leased the Queen Creek plant property, it was on the heels of another aggregate operation that believed the area was practically mined out and had only a couple of years

worth of aggregate left, but Reinesch, Sr. had other ideas. "We're doing things here that nobody in this area has done," he says. "Typically, everybody has taken 30 or 40 feet off the top and that's it. Right now, our deepest pit is 180 feet. I probably have 20 years of remaining reserves."


Reinesch, Sr. considers the plant's trommel to be the most important piece of equipment they have. "It allows us to mine the high clay-content material," he says. "It's made by Fisher Industries and is a remarkable piece of equipment. This entire plant is built by Fisher Industries. We tell them what we want, and they make it for us."

In addition to providing aggregate for contractors in the asphalt and construction industries, the Queen Creek plant hosts three ready-mix producers on site. "We give the ready-mix companies limited space," Reinesch, Sr. says. "We try not to allow bigger areas because it consumes too much surface, which obviously takes up pit area. Our job is to produce their aggregate, sell it to them, and deliver it to their site efficiently."

Special bridges are placed over the ready-mix companies' stockpiles for quick and easy material delivery.

A trommel allows the Queen Creek plant to mine high clay-content material found in the pit.





Bottom-dump trucks feed material directly into the ready-mix companies' stockpiles.

Dealing with regulations

Like all aggregates operations, Southwest Rock Products deals with the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). Reinesch, Jr., who handles all company dealings with MSHA, says that things have changed with MSHA the last couple of years. The standards of enforcement are becoming stricter and each inspector sees things a bit differently, making it difficult to stay ahead of the curve.

"However, we have an exemplary record when it

comes to MSHA," he adds. "We take pride in what we do here, and the last thing we want is for these guys to come in here and find something we missed. We're doing what we absolutely need to do to make sure we provide a safe work environment."

The company works with its neighbors and other agencies to meet all required standards. "We, as an industry, need to be better stewards about longevity and how people respect us," Reinesch, Sr. says.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards are extremely strict in Maricopa County, where another of the company's plants is located. So, the company has adopted the stricter EPA standards and tries to implement them in all of its plants, knowing that those standards will soon encompass the entire state.

As for noise, almost everything is below ground level at Queen Creek, so most of the noise goes up instead of out. "The nearby homeowners love us," Reinesch, Sr. says. "They understand industry, they understand they need us, they understand we're going to dig holes, but they also understand we are a company that cares. They can drive by and see that we take care of our plants."

"They had the opportunity to see the people who

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had the property before we had it," Hood adds. "We cleaned it up. It's amazing how the property changed."

Southwest Rock Products even has a plan for leftover concrete from the ready-mix companies. "These retaining walls are made from leftover concrete," Reinesch, Sr. says. "It's an unbelievable way to go, and it doesn't really cost anything. The ready-mix companies buy the forms and the molds. Then all we do is set them up and tear them down."

When leftover concrete can't be used for the retaining walls or comes in late in the day, it is simply run back through the crusher.

Doing things the right way

Reinesch, Sr., boils the success of his company down to one thing . . . doing things the right way. "If you ask your people to follow and support your culture, you can expect to enjoy a very successful business," he says. "It will give you good maintenance, quality production, cleanliness of the plant, and, ultimately, an impeccable safety record. That's the best success story." **AM**

Queen Creek Equipment List

Custom built structures with Svedala VGF (2)	Westec 35-foot thickener
Overland conveyor (1,600 feet by 42 inches)	AzFab 40-foot thickener
H4000 Svedala cone	AzFab durability cell (2)
EJ Jay 54-inch rollercone 2	Krebs cyclone (2)
H4000 Svedala Cone	Caterpillar generators (3)
26 x 36 Svedala jaw	Caterpillar 988H loaders (2)
26 x 50 Pioneer track jaw	Caterpillar 988F loaders (2)
Pioneer 6 x 20 screens (3)	Caterpillar 980H loaders (2)
Pioneer 6 x 16 screen	Caterpillar 140G motor grader
Lime silos (2)	Grove 50-ton rough terrain crane
36-inch twin screws (4)	Caterpillar 943 forklift
30-inch single screws (2)	Caterpillar 420E backhoe
Fisher 36" lag washers (2)	Caterpillar D8T dozer
Fisher trommels (2)	Caterpillar D9T dozer
36-inch x 18-foot coarse material washers (4)	Custom-built bridges for aggregate delivery to batch plants (4)
4 x 8 buzzer screen	Fisher Industries conveyors



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