



By *Mary Lou Jay*

With the experience that comes with 26 years of running his own business, Harold Moore is able to put today's troubled economy into perspective. "I went through the 1980s. To me that was a depression. What we're going through now is nothing like what we went through in '82, '83 and '84," says Moore, CEO of Moore Trosper Construction Company of Holt, Michigan.

Moore and his partner, Jim Trosper, started their business at the beginning of those hard times, when the company he was working for went bankrupt in 1982. "The first year we were in business we did \$600,000 in total sales, but I came from a company that had been doing \$20 million. Every employee that worked for us that year made more than Jim and I did," Moore says.

Training key to success

Moore, who grew up in Mason, Michigan, originally became interested in construction when he worked for a local builder on weekends during high school. After graduating from high school, he went into the carpenter

Tough Economy or Tough Projects, Harold Moore Meets the Challenge

apprenticeship program at Lansing Community College. He worked for Granger Brothers Construction Co. during his apprenticeship, eventually moving into the office as a field supervisor. In the early '70s he went to work for the Charles Featherly Construction Company in Lansing, and was chief estimator there when the company folded.

The fledgling Moore Trosper Construction Company grew in a few years from five to 25 employees. "Then in the next 10-year period we went from 25 employees to 50. It was a nightmare," Moore says. "We were too busy, and we didn't have the key players that we needed in position. We had the opportunity to get work, but we did a lot of work and didn't make any money on it."

The partners took time to regroup, cutting back on their workforce and implementing a new training program. "We brought our superintendents in on weekends and taught them how to estimate," Moore explains. "They were not educated at that time; they had come from the field."

Moore still believes firmly in training. "We implemented ISO 9000 in 2000, and that has helped us a great deal. The advantage is that we have duplicated our processes and written them down. To get bigger, we had to get the processes in writing," he says. But field experience is also critical. "We can bring all these kids out of college and have them run

spreadsheets and computers and all that good stuff, but sometimes it's better to have a little hands-on experience."

Doing what others won't

In its early days, Moore Trosper Construction Company focused on commercial renovation and remodeling, self-performing most of its carpentry, demolition and sometimes concrete work. It has also added construction management to its services.

Since the company's beginnings, Moore has carved out a niche taking on challenging projects. "I will do what other people can't do or won't do. That's how we built this company," he says. "The tougher the job, the better we like it."

One of the company's largest jobs was a design-build project for Michigan Packing Corporation. The \$11 million building spanned almost five acres, and Moore Trosper finished the entire process in just 13 months.

Other jobs have included the two-year renovation of Geagley Laboratories for the State of Michigan, and a Capital Area Transit Administration maintenance facility, both in Lansing. The company is just wrapping up work on Vandercook Lake Schools, on which it served as construction manager, and is starting the remodeling a rehabilitation facility for Eaton County Medical Care in Charlotte.