

Traffic Planning & Design Inc.

Best Civil Engineering Company in the United States

Produced by Karen Walker & Written by Eric Gundberg

Imagine being the owner of a company that was named one of the best civil engineering companies in the United States by a national level industry trade journal. Nice, right? Now imagine being named as one of the best civil engineering companies in the country every year for a decade. Traffic Planning & Design Inc. (TPD) is such a company.

CE News has consistently ranked TPD, which maintains four locations in Pennsylvania and one office in New Jersey, within the top 10 best mid-sized civil engineering companies in the United States. In 2009 TPD was ranked number one.

Kevin Johnson, owner and founder of TPD, outlines the company's history in the industry as follows: "I started the company in 1989 with six people, and we specialize in transportation planning and highway design services. We've always had a healthy mix of public and private work. Over the years, the company has just grown. We currently employ roughly 95 personnel."

The company has drawn a large number of employees from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), which gives it an edge when competing for jobs in both the private and public sectors. "Our clients know that we have people who thoroughly understand the approval process and what it's going to take for a project to be approved," explains Johnson.

Recent Projects

TPD's high-profile status within both Pennsylvania and New Jersey has allowed the company's team of professionals to work on some fairly remarkable projects. Johnson outlines the details



on some of his favorites as follows:

"We completed a study and highway improvement design for the Cabela's store in Hamburg, Pa. With six acres of retail space under one roof, the improvements to the local road network to both address existing deficiencies at the 1950s-era interchange of Route 61 at I-78 and to accommodate the 6 million visitors a year destined for the site was a challenge. However, what was even more challenging was the schedule we met. With the scope of improvements in the traffic study approved by PennDOT on the first of February, the two-year process of designing, obtaining approvals and constructing such a significant amount of road and interchange improvements had to be completed in only six-and-a-half months for the pre-Labor Day opening. We greatly appreciated the governor acknowledging our efforts at the grand opening."

TPD also completed the study and highway improvement design for the 2.5 million-square foot Atwater Corporate Center project in Great Valley. “Prior to our involvement, traffic backups on Route 29 stretched over a mile-and-a-half each day,” continues Johnson. “This existing traffic congestion was going to make it difficult to obtain project approvals. We developed a plan and used computer simulations to show that the road improvements associated with adding an additional lane of travel for over a mile in each direction to link with the four-lane section to the south would not only accommodate the site-generated traffic, but would also eliminate the existing backups that regularly made it onto the afternoon radio traffic reports.”

Competitors Quick to Hire

Even with these impressive projects in its portfolio, TPD hasn’t been immune to the economic slowdown that has drastically curtailed construction projects in the United States. TPD was forced to conduct two rounds of layoffs before Johnson was comfortable that his staff was the “right size” for the company’s work volume. He’s proud to note, however, that his former employees didn’t stay unemployed very long.

“We were very reluctant to let anyone go because we’ve invested so much time and money on training,” says Johnson. “We reluctantly had to let some employees go, and I was very happy to hear that my competitors were hiring them almost immediately because they know how much we’ve invested in our staff.”

In TPD’s industry sector turnover at the best civil engineering companies usually hovers right around the eight- to nine-percent mark. The environment that Johnson has created at TPD, however, has not only encouraged a far lower rate of voluntary attrition, it has even meant that in some years TPD has had zero turnover.

It must create a lot of pressure – along with a justified sense of pride – to have your company ranked as one of the best companies in America for which to work. For Kevin Johnson, though, it’s just another feather in his cap in the long list of awards that he and his company have been awarded. Now that the company is the right size, Traffic Planning & Design Inc. is ready to take off again. •



Signal Service Inc.

1020 Andrew Drive • West Chester, PA 19380
Tel: 610-429-8073 • Fax: 610-429-8076

