

Featured in this issue:

STAROSTKA GROUP UNLIMITED

How a women's clothing store led to the founding of this Nebraska construction firm

See article inside . . .



(L-R) Owners
Dave Starostka,
Danny Starostka
and Marc Starostka



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Phil McCoy

**Helping
to stimulate your
business**



Dear Equipment User:

Everyone associated with our industry is hopeful that the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act that was passed several months ago will soon begin to stimulate the economy, as it was intended to do. Billions of dollars have been allocated to rebuild our infrastructure, reduce energy consumption and fund new energy sources. All should eventually help put more businesses and individuals back to work.

Another critical component of the massive bill is the extension of the depreciation bonus and additional expensing, which were part of last year's stimulus plan. The depreciation bonus can be used on new equipment purchases, while additional expensing is good on new and used equipment alike. Both can save you in taxes. For additional information, contact your sales rep or one of our branch locations.

We're always looking for ways to better serve you. We appreciate your feedback, and in an effort to better do that, we've added a new page to your *RoadBuilders' EDGE* magazine, titled *Voices*. It's a forum where you can ask us questions and express opinions to which we'll respond.

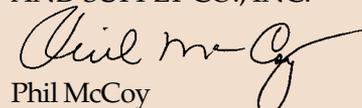


Also new for readers is an online video feature. Look for the video icon in an article, then visit www.videocpi.com to see Komatsu machinery in action.

We hope you take advantage of the other valuable information provided here about our quality equipment lines, featuring Komatsu. In this issue, you'll learn about the latest D275 dozer. If you're a truck user, check out the article on how liners can benefit your business.

At RoadBuilders, we stand ready to help you maximize your productivity and profits. If there's anything we can do to help you, call us or stop by one of our locations.

Sincerely,
ROADBUILDERS MACHINERY
AND SUPPLY CO., INC.


Phil McCoy
President



The RoadBuilders'

EDGE

A publication for and about customers of RoadBuilders Machinery and Supply Co.

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Find out how a women's clothing store led to the founding of this successful Nebraska construction firm.

GUEST OPINION

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With the new economic stimulus plan in place, find out how some states have already laid claim to "shovel-ready" building plans.

EQUIPMENT SELECTION

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PRODUCT NEWS

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KOMATSU & YOU

Rod Schrader, Komatsu's VP/GM of Mining explains how cutting-edge products help customers decrease per-ton costs.

DOLLARS & SENSE

Learn how the KOMTRAX 2.5 upgrade can save you money by providing valuable information.

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A SALUTE TO A CUSTOMER

STAROSTKA GROUP UNLIMITED

How a women's clothing store led to the founding of this Nebraska construction firm



Dave Starostka,
Owner

There probably aren't any construction companies in the U.S. that started the way Starostka Group did. In 1987, Dave Starostka, a 21-year-old Nebraska hog farmer, and his younger brother Danny, who had just left college after a year, decided to get into the women's clothing business.

"We didn't know anything about women's clothing or running a retail business, but a franchise opportunity was available to open the first off-price women's apparel store in Nebraska," Danny recalled. "We decided, 'What the heck, it's this or raise hogs.' It seemed like a good idea at the time."

Indeed, it was a good idea. The original store in Lincoln did well enough that the brothers decided to expand. Over the next few years, they opened several other stores throughout the Midwest. To save money, they did much of the construction work on the stores themselves.

"We were farmers," said Dave. "We knew how to do a lot of things and we weren't afraid of hard work. In addition to building our own stores, we also started building rental properties. Eventually, Danny started building spec houses in his spare time — sort of as a hobby."

Up through the early '90s, Dave and Danny continued with the women's clothing stores, the rental properties and the home building on the side. Then, in 1994, their cousin Marc Starostka, who had grown up with the brothers in the small town of Clarks, Neb., decided he wanted to come back home. Marc, who had earned a construction management degree from the University of Nebraska, had left the state for half a dozen years to work for Kiewit, one of the nation's largest contracting firms.

"When Marc came back and joined us, it opened a lot of doors," said Dave. "He'd been a civil superintendent for Kiewit, managing dirt and utility operations on large projects like wastewater treatment plants. With his expertise, we were able to expand our construction activities to include site work, underground utilities and specialty concrete jobs. Having Marc on board changed the scope of what we could do and what we would try. That's when we sold the clothing stores and went into construction full time."

A diversified and versatile company

Headquartered in Grand Island, the Starostka Group consists of Starostka Construction and Star Homes. Since turning to construction full time in the mid-1990s, the company has grown tremendously and now employs from 80 to 100 people.

"There are basically three divisions to the company and each has his area of expertise and responsibility," Marc explained. "Danny runs residential, Dave runs commercial and I run civil/industrial. That diversity and versatility are key to what we've been able to accomplish. Hopefully, when one segment is down, another can pick up the slack."

This year, residential is picking up the slack.

"We probably build more houses in the Kearney, Hastings, Grand Island area than any other homebuilder," said Danny. "Our business has actually been fairly steady this year. We expect to build near our annual average of 80 to 90 homes. Star Homes is one of the few companies that is still building spec homes. We build in all price ranges, from about \$150,000 up. Our only concession to



Danny Starostka,
Owner



Marc Starostka,
Owner

the economy is at the upper end of the spec market. Whereas we used to build some spec homes in the \$600,000 range, we now top out at \$300,000 to \$400,000."

"On the civil/industrial side, we're having to look outside of Nebraska for work this year," said Marc. "In Oklahoma, we're working with another Nebraska firm, Strobel Construction, to put in a crude oil off-load facility and we hope to be doing some pipeline work there as well. We're also doing some pipeline work in Las Vegas. That's not typical for us, but we do what we have to do to stay busy. We'd rather work around here but there just aren't any margins in civil jobs in the area right now."

"We're also traveling for commercial jobs," added Dave. "We own a number of Pamida stores and build those ourselves. We also do commercial work for other contractors, owners and developers — things like strip malls, libraries, nursing homes, large retail stores and plant additions. From St. Louis to western Wyoming, we go wherever the work is."

A family business

Starostka Group is a true family business. Dave, Danny and Marc are equal partners, along with their wives. Marc's wife, Teresa, works as office manager, while Dave's wife, Chris, and Danny's wife, Janet, stage houses. Each partner has veto power.

"Everybody gets his or her say, everybody has a vote, and every vote must be unanimous," said Marc. "If one of us is against doing something, we don't do it. Requiring unanimity keeps us in check. We propose, we argue, we make a decision and then we move on."

"In addition to family members, our employees are a large part of our success, acknowledged Dave. "Jan Wells, our secretary, has been with us since day one. Our guys in the field are great, especially our superintendents. When we work out of town, we always send a superintendent to run the job and they treat it like it's their own."

"Our philosophy toward every job is the same — do it right, do it on time and do it on budget," he added. "We try to eliminate all hassles and perform to the highest level to



Starostka Group owns a dozen Komatsu hydraulic excavators including the PC300LC-7 (above) shown here laying pipe across a slough in North Platte, Neb., and a PC400LC-5 (at left) working in a 19-foot excavation.

"Our Komatsu excavators are productive, reliable and last a long time, as evidenced by the PC400, which we bought used in 1996 and are still using today," said co-owner Marc Starostka.

ensure customer satisfaction. As a result, much of our work is for repeat customers."

Quality equipment and distributor support

To accomplish that work in a timely and cost-effective manner, Starostka Group turns almost exclusively to Komatsu equipment from RoadBuilders Machinery and Supply in Grand Island. The company has a dozen excavators ranging from a PC400 down to a PC78, three Komatsu wheel loaders (WA380, WA320 and WA200) and a D37 finish dozer.

"We bought the PC400 used in 1996 and we're still using it today," said Marc. "That tells you a lot about why we're high on Komatsu. It's productive, reliable equipment that lasts a long time. We've also found it to be very fuel-efficient."

Continued . . .



Versatility is strength of Starostka Group

... continued

"In addition to the quality of the equipment, we buy Komatsu because RoadBuilders is the distributor," said Dave. "We started working with them when they took over this territory seven or eight years ago and they've been great partners ever since."

"We have complete trust and faith in our RoadBuilders salesman Tony Randone, who's

a great friend in addition to being a business associate," said Marc. "We always know Tony's looking out for our best interest. Same with Grand Island Service Manager Clayton Brooks. We don't have mechanics on staff, so we look to RoadBuilders to keep us up and running. They respond quickly without nickel and diming us to death. From the guys here in Grand Island to Nebraska General Manager Doug Murray to Senior VP Gerry Buser and President Phil McCoy, we know everybody at RoadBuilders wants us to succeed, and they work with us to make that happen."

Last fall, the Starostkas could see that their work load was likely going to be light in 2009, so they made a strategic decision to pay off all their equipment debt.

"By paying off all the loans, we've been able to be more selective and only bid jobs we can make money on," said Marc. "It's difficult to see so many machines sitting, but it's easier to let them sit now that they're paid off. In the long run, we're convinced we'll be better off than we would be by bidding everything and racking up machine hours doing break-even jobs."



This Starostka Group operator uses a tight-tail-swing Komatsu PC228 to do excavation and utility work for a plant addition in Grand Island.

(L-R) Dave, Danny and Marc Starostka formed the Starostka Group in 1994 and work closely with Tony Randone of RoadBuilders Machinery and Supply on equipment matters. "We started working with RoadBuilders seven or eight years ago when they first came to Grand Island, and they've been great partners ever since," said co-owner Dave Starostka.

Optimistic about the future

While Star Homes' business has held up fairly well this year, Starostka Group's commercial and civil work load has fallen. "This is the first year Marc's civil group has ever dug basements for us on the residential side," said Danny. "In the past, he was always too busy, so we'd sub it out."

"It's not ideal to have so little work in our immediate area, but we're making do until the economy picks up," continued Marc. "Personally, I'm optimistic about the future. I think it's going to be good again by next summer."

"It seems like there are always opportunities if you're willing to take them," concluded Dave. "At Starostka Group Unlimited, we are willing to try new things and that's a big reason why we're hopeful about the future. As long as we remain true to our philosophy of doing quality work and delivering for our clients, we're confident that when the construction cycle turns back up again, we'll be in demand, and we'll be ready to hit the ground running." ■



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IMPERFECT, BUT WELCOMED

Equipment distributors call stimulus package "a step in the right direction"

AED (Associated Equipment Distributors) welcomed passage of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. "For the last several months, our top priority in Washington has been to enact stimulus legislation containing infrastructure funding and business tax incentives," AED President Toby Mack said. "While imperfect, the final stimulus bill achieves most of AED's major objectives. It's a step in the right direction, which, we hope, will help reverse the economic downturn, get our members back on firm financial footing, and lay a solid foundation for America's future economic prosperity."

As a member of the steering committee of the Americans for Transportation Mobility, and through our membership in the Clean Water Council, the Transportation Construction Coalition, and the Water Infrastructure Network, AED has been a leading advocate for substantial infrastructure investment in the stimulus bill.

AED identified more than \$80 billion in stimulus infrastructure spending, including:

- \$27.5 billion for highways and bridges (half of which must be obligated by the middle of June);
- \$4 billion for sewer construction;
- \$2 billion for drinking water construction;
- \$4.6 billion for Army Corps of Engineers projects;
- \$1.3 billion for airport construction.

Tax incentives too

AED also led efforts to ensure that tax breaks were included in the stimulus package. Among the tax incentives are:

- An extension of the 50 percent depreciation bonus and \$250,000 Sec. 179 expensing levels through 2009 (For more information, go to www.depreciationbonus.com);
- An expansion of the home purchase tax credit, which increases the first-time home buyer's credit to \$8,000, extends it through the end of 2009, and eliminates the requirement that home buyers taking advantage of the credit pay it back over 15 years;
- A one-year delay in the implementation of the 3 percent government contractor withholding tax, currently set to go into effect in 2011. ■



Christian A. Klein

This article provided by Christian A. Klein, AED Vice President of Government Affairs.

The economic stimulus measure enacted in February will result in an additional \$27.5 billion worth of highway and bridge funding, with the vast majority of it to be spent in 2009 and 2010.



THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS IMPACT

States already laying claim to “shovel-ready” building plans

It didn't take long to lay claim to the first project funded under the economic stimulus package. Within 10 minutes of President Barack Obama signing the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act into law on February 17, construction began on replacement of a Missouri bridge.

Like others around the country, the bridge fell under the category of “shovel-ready,” a term that denotes, among other criteria, the ability of a project to be started within 90 days. The idea behind the “shovel-ready” moniker is to give ready-to-go projects top priority, delivering a quick jolt to the economy. When the Congressional Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure was drafting its Rebuild America proposal for consideration in the economic stimulus plan, the committee said such projects had been “fully vetted and approved at the state and local level” to reduce the chance of funds being used on unneeded projects.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contains billions in spending for infrastructure projects such as highway resurfacing and new construction.



Obviously, the state of Missouri did the necessary homework for the bridge to be ready for funding once Obama signed the act into law. It met the criteria for being “shovel-ready,” which includes: the project meets the normal eligibility requirements under the existing federal highway, transit, or other grant programs; the project has completed all necessary design work and right-of-way acquisition; the project has completed all environmental reviews; the project is on the state plan, and, if applicable, metropolitan plan; the project is ready to be put out to bid, and contracts can be awarded and work underway within 90 to 120 days of enactment.

The first of the funds, \$26.6 billion, was released the first week of March, ahead of schedule, and states were already putting the money to work addressing highway and other infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure needs represent only a portion of the \$787.2 billion economic rescue plan, a mixed bag of spending, tax breaks and aid that was designed to slow unemployment, stimulate the economy and extend aid to ailing state budgets. Although not as large as Obama had campaigned for, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act does provide for short-term and some long-term investment in construction projects many see as critical to revitalizing crumbling infrastructure, modernizing schools and buttoning up buildings to reduce energy loss, among other needs.

“There’s no doubt the stimulus will have a positive impact for construction businesses and their workers across the country,” said Stephen Sandherr, Chief Executive Officer of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC). “When you get beyond the politics and



Under the economic stimulus package, it's hoped that more than 3 million jobs can be saved or created.

the policy, the fact remains these investments will put people to work, save businesses and help rebuild infrastructure."

Tax breaks

The billions of dollars in infrastructure, modernization and new construction spending is expected to put a large number of workers back on the job, as many as 3 million to 4 million, with a large percentage of those in the construction industry. Jobs will spread beyond the construction site as the need for bookkeepers, controllers, auditors and others overseeing financial aspects of the projects will be needed. Engineers and architects are part of the mix as well.

When workers get back on the job, they'll find less payroll taxes taken from their paychecks, as part of the plan calls for a break of \$400 per individual — \$800 per couple — over the next two years. Estimates show the tax break will put an extra \$13 per week into workers' paychecks this year and \$8 next year.

If their employers use equipment, those business owners will see a break when buying machinery. The stimulus plan extends the depreciation bonus on new equipment purchases and Sec. 179 expensing limits on new and used machinery that was part of last year's tax refund plan.

In addition to estimating the number of jobs to be created by the construction funding, AGC also calculated the benefits to personal earnings and gross domestic product (GDP). AGC Economist Ken Simonson noted that the \$135 billion for construction would increase personal earnings nationwide by \$75 billion and add \$230 billion to GDP.



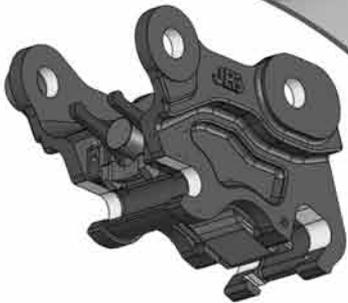
The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes significant monies for construction of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

"Whether or not you wear a hard hat for a living, these construction investments will make a difference for the better," said Simonson. "Beyond the immediate benefits, the new infrastructure projects will make businesses more efficient, commuting more reliable and our economy more prosperous for years to come."

While Obama's historic presidential win, which played a key role in passage of the economic stimulus act, was a major newsmaker in 2008, The Construction Writers Association voted the financial crisis and its effects on building as the top construction story of 2008. Many are hoping a turnaround in the construction industry will top the list in 2009. ■



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EQUIPMENT SELECTION

LOOKING FOR VALUE?

Komatsu equipment can help you lower your bids and improve efficiency on the job

The current economic environment, which has resulted in increased competition when bidding projects, presents a classic Catch-22 for contractors. The catch is this: your bid has to be lower than ever in order to win the job, but can't be so low that you don't make money on it.

In order to be successful, both on the bid and on the job, you have to maximize your efficiency. Having productive, reliable equipment that delivers low owning and operating costs can go a long way toward delivering the efficiency you need.

"At Komatsu, our goal is to design, manufacture, sell and support equipment that delivers true value to the customer," said Erik Wilde, Komatsu Vice President, Product Marketing. "Machine productivity and reliability are two key elements of value as it relates to equipment. So are purchase price, longevity, resale, the cost and availability of replacement parts, and the cost and quality of service. Between Komatsu and our distributor network, we believe we deliver the best overall value in the equipment industry."

Komatsu quality starts in design and engineering. Research and development are cornerstones of the company's philosophy, and even during the current downturn, Komatsu continues to invest heavily in R&D.

"Within the industry, Komatsu is recognized as a technological leader," said Wilde. "We're confident that the construction cycle will turn back up — and relatively soon, we hope. When that happens, we want to be ready with cutting-edge products that people want and need."

Good results today and tomorrow

In bringing those designs to reality, Komatsu manufacturing plants use top-quality materials

and processes to ensure that each machine is built to precise specs that will enable it to work exactly as it was designed and engineered to do.

"The truth is, most brand-new machines will deliver decent results," said Wilde. "The question is, for how long? How long before you start experiencing costly downtime. How long before you start getting hit with hefty repair bills? How long before you want to sell the machine? And what are you going to get for it when you do sell it or trade it in?"

"At Komatsu, we make equipment for the long haul," he added. "That gives the owner choices. He can keep his Komatsu machine for many years and run it to the end; he can rebuild it for a second life; or he can trade it in or sell it and receive top dollar for it. The choice is his based on how he likes to run his business. All can be cost-effective equipment ownership

Continued . . .

Quality is built into each Komatsu machine at the factory, including the Chattanooga (Tenn.) Manufacturing Operation. Despite the current economic downturn, Komatsu continues to invest heavily in research and development in order to remain a technological leader in the equipment industry.



Erik Wilde,
VP Product
Marketing



The best equipment “bang for the buck”

... continued



Lee Haak,
ReMarketing Director

styles, and all are viable options with Komatsu because of the quality of the equipment.”

New or used

The fact that Komatsu equipment is built to last is important, not just to new-equipment buyers, but also to used-equipment buyers.

“Larger and stronger parts, better design, technological superiority — all of those traits make Komatsu a great used-equipment buy,” said Komatsu ReMarketing Director Lee Haak. “Because of the quality that’s built into Komatsu products, we’re able to take the additional step of inspecting and rating all of our used machines. After they meet Komatsu’s criteria, we certify them, which allows distributors to sell them with a warranty, eliminating much of the risk associated with buying a used machine.”

According to Haak, Komatsu Distributor Certified used machines provide value owners can count on.

“Obviously, the main reason people buy used is because of the lower price compared

to buying new. But that lower price, in and of itself, does not make a used machine a good value. As with buying new, value is determined by many factors, including downtime, repair costs and longevity. At Komatsu, especially with our Distributor Certified machines, we’re confident we can deliver the value that used equipment buyers are looking for.”

Added value with KOMTRAX

In the past few years, Komatsu has added even more value to its equipment by making the KOMTRAX machine-monitoring system standard on virtually all new Komatsu machines. A satellite-based tracking system, KOMTRAX not only delivers basic information like machine location and service-meter readings to an owner or equipment manager, but on some models it also includes production information such as fuel usage, idle time and load factors. Komatsu was the first manufacturer to install such a system standard, and provides free communication for five years.

“KOMTRAX allows us and our distributors to help customers with machine problems, sometimes even before the customer knows he has a problem,” said Wilde. “And because we started it much earlier than any other manufacturer, we have more experience with it and are better able to show customers how they can use it to their benefit.”

The total package

With its commitment to R&D and technology, its state-of-the-art manufacturing plants and processes, and its strong support structure, Komatsu is widely recognized as one of the leaders in the equipment industry. Its commitment to helping customers be more efficient on the job makes it one of the value leaders as well.

“Generally speaking, the best equipment value is going to be a top-quality machine that you buy at a fair price, and for which good support is readily available,” said Wilde. “At Komatsu, that’s what we try to deliver with each and every machine, and in doing so, provide the best equipment bang for the buck for our customers.”

For more information on the latest Komatsu models, give us a call or stop in at our nearest branch location. ■

Equipment users can expect long-term success from new Komatsu machines like the PC400LC-8 (below) based on the success of older Komatsu units like the PC400LC-5 (right). Despite being out of production for more than 13 years, it’s easy to find Dash-5 models still at work on jobsites from coast-to-coast.





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THE D275AX-5 "SIGMADOZER"

Komatsu brings its innovative blade design to its 449-horsepower dozer

The efficiency and productivity of Komatsu's revolutionary Sigmadozer blade, first seen on the D155AX-6, is now available with the 449-horsepower D275AX-5 dozer.

"The design is very similar to the D155," said Komatsu Product Manager Les Scott. "Like the D155, it will automatically allow the D275AX-5 to push 15 percent more dirt compared to the standard semi-U blade. If you're moving dirt, the Sigmadozer should be your machine."

Scott said the new frontal design adopted for digging and rolling up at the center of the blade increases soil-holding capacity while simultaneously reducing sideway spillage. It also reduces digging resistance, producing a smoother flow of earth, enabling the dozing of larger quantities of soil with less power. With a blade capacity of 19.1 cubic yards, users can move significantly more material without increasing fuel consumption. The Sigmadozer uses a new blade-linkage system that holds the blade closer to the tractor for improved visibility, enhanced digging force, and reduced lateral sway of the blade.

"It's all due to the blade design and how it cuts the soil," Scott explained. "As it's going through the soil there's less resistance, so the tractor can actually push a little faster. That allows the dozer to pile more material in front of the blade and hold it there."

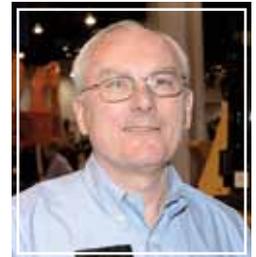
Optimal productivity

The Sigmadozer's extra-low profile provides machine balance and a low center of gravity while the Hydrostatic Steering System (HSS) provides smooth, quick and powerful control in varying ground conditions. The K-Bogie undercarriage system improves traction and

component durability while the new track-link design reduces maintenance costs by making it easier to turn pins, with improved pin reuse.

Further adding to the productivity of the D275 are the very latest features in operator comfort, creating a quiet, comfortable environment where the operator can concentrate on the work at hand. The cab's new hexagonal design and large tinted glass windows provide excellent front, side and rear visibility.

"This is a good opportunity for us to once again step out in front of our competition," he said. "We have a dozer now that is, without question, more productive than anything else out there." ■



Les Scott,
Product Manager

Brief Specs on Komatsu D275 Sigmadozer

Model	Operating Weight	Output	Blade Capacity
D275AX-5	113,600 lbs.	449 hp	19.1 cu. yd.

The D275AX-5 Sigmadozer pushes 15 percent more dirt than Komatsu's conventional model.



For more information on the D275AX-5 Sigmadozer — and to see video of the machine in action — go to www.videocpi.com



CUSTOMER-DRIVEN QUALITY & INNOVATION

VP/GM of Mining says those are the main reasons for Komatsu's success



Rod Schrader

This is one of a series of articles based on interviews with key people at Komatsu discussing the company's commitment to its customers in the construction and mining industries — and their visions for the future.

Rod Schrader became Vice President/General Manager of Komatsu Mining about four years ago after holding numerous positions with Komatsu, including Director of Product Marketing and Planning for the construction division. He joined Komatsu in 1987, three years after graduating from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, Ind.

"I oversee about 750 people in the mining division, more than half of whom are based at our Peoria manufacturing operation," said Schrader. "That number has grown in recent years as we've more than doubled the number of machines produced. We've done that without an increase in our footprint by being more efficient and hiring a great staff of people who are dedicated to quality products. I am very proud of what they've accomplished."

Accomplishments have included new products that are more efficient and productive so that users get better per-ton costs in their mining operations. That's something Rod is very happy about.

"I got into this business because I enjoy equipment, and seeing customers use Komatsu products to build their businesses and succeed makes me very proud," said Schrader. "Komatsu is a very customer-oriented business, and because of that, we've increased our market share."

Rod enjoys spending time with his wife and their three teenage children and attending their various activities.

QUESTION: Komatsu has continually gained market share in the mining industry. Why is that?

ANSWER: There are several reasons why Komatsu continues its solid reputation in the mining industry, including a dedication to outstanding customer service, not only from the company but from our distributors. Our mining division is now 100-percent ISO 9001 certified, which we believe is important because it shows our customers we're serious about our manufacturing processes, and in turn, their success. We believe we know the market better than our competitors, and we're building solid relationships and trust with our customers.

We have a saying: "Quality beats time-to-market," which means that we won't rush a product just to get into the marketplace. When we build a mining product, we take the time to ensure that it's going to be productive and efficient. Anyone involved in the manufacturing process has the ability to stop production if he or she believes there's an issue that needs to be dealt with before it can move on to the next stage of development. When customers buy Komatsu mining products, they're making a long-term investment that they expect to last 10 to 15 years. It's our duty to make sure they're making a wise investment by buying Komatsu.

Finally, we're committed to innovative products that will make our mining customers more profitable. For instance, in the past three years we've introduced several new products, such as our 960E and 860E electric-drive trucks that offer greater hauling capacity with more efficient operation to improve per-ton costs.

We've gone from DC to AC drives, which are more efficient and reduce maintenance. We've matched the engines to the drive systems to maximize efficiency.

QUESTION: What other innovations are in development or have been implemented?

ANSWER: We've begun to introduce our autonomous, or driverless, trucks. We now have two fleets running in mines and are working to add additional fleets. Autonomous haulage allows the user to run a 300-ton payload 930E, for example, through the entire load cycle without having a driver. The results have been very good. Again, it's going to lower the per-ton costs versus having a truck and driver. It's a specialized tool and it's not for everyone, but in the right application — where the user has a long haul, for instance — it's fantastic.

Komatsu's new 280-ton 860E-1KT trucks are the first of their kind to use a Komatsu drive-trolley system. They work with overhead electrical trolley lines and a pantograph mounted on the truck. As the truck comes under the lines, up to 1,800 volts of electricity go through the system to drive the wheel motors. It produces faster propulsion uphill, while reducing engine rpms. The result is lower fuel consumption and emissions.

All our new machinery comes standard with Komatsu's Vehicle Health Monitoring System (VHMS), which monitors the health of major components, so owners, users and fleet managers can remotely evaluate a machine's condition and operations. Information from the machine is transmitted via satellite and the Internet to the user, Komatsu and our distributors. VHMS reports vital information such as operating condition, service meters, trends, fault and event codes, engine performance and machine operating history. Each day, users can log onto a secure Web site and check their machinery as easily as they check the latest news, weather and sports online.

QUESTION: How much input does the customer have in developing these products?

ANSWER: A lot. All our product development comes from a combination of ideas from our engineering and product-development personnel, our distributors and our customers.



Innovative products such as the 960E electric-drive truck (above) and the 860E-1KT (left), which uses a Komatsu drive-trolley system, continue to set Komatsu apart when it comes to mining machines, according to Vice President/General Manager of Mining Rod Schrader.

We collect feedback from our customers about the key priorities they need and want in their machinery. Then we set about building those machines by incorporating their ideas into emissions and other mandated standards. Because of their input, we've developed other products to help them run not only their equipment, but their mining practices more efficiently. One example is our Modular Mining software products, such as the IntelliMine Management System for open-pit mines. It has a dispatch system that tracks auxiliary equipment, water trucks, blending, crew lineup, fuel-service management, inventory reporting, payload analysis and other information.

QUESTION: What does the future hold for Komatsu mining and the industry as a whole?

ANSWER: We'll continue to work on improvements in our current products and develop new ones.

This generation of Komatsu mining equipment is revolutionary, and we expect to see continued growth in market share as our customers experience the results of our focus on quality. We expect mining to remain strong overall, and Komatsu is committed to being a leader in the industry. ■



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MACHINE MONITORING SYSTEMS

KOMTRAX 2.5 upgrade adds valuable information to lower your operating costs

Users of Komatsu's original KOMTRAX wireless machine-monitoring system already get lots of benefits — such as the ability to remotely track service-meter readings, machine location, operating error codes and other information to help schedule maintenance.

Now, with a KOMTRAX 2.5 upgrade, users can get all those benefits, plus additional information, such as fuel consumption and idle time. Like the original version of KOMTRAX, users of KOMTRAX 2.5 get five years of free communications from the date of purchase.

"Adding fuel consumption and idle time gives the user valuable information on how the machine is being used, and if that fuel consumption is during productive times or when the machine is sitting," said Ken Calvert, Komatsu Director of IT Support. "Constantly idling during nonproductive times wastes fuel and lowers profits. KOMTRAX 2.5 gives users the information they need to adjust running times. The idea is that it leads to less fuel consumption, thereby paying for itself rather quickly."

According to Komatsu, idle time typically accounts for about 20 percent of a machine's fuel consumption during its lifetime. When fuel prices are high, cutting that down can be a significant savings. Calvert gave an extreme example of how KOMTRAX 2.5 was used to track idle time and fuel consumption on what Komatsu termed "the most idled excavator in North America."

"The machine was tracked during a full month," explained Calvert. "During that time it consumed nearly 1,100 gallons of fuel. That wouldn't seem like a lot if the machine was productive during that entire time. However, the machine only worked 50 hours and idled for 570. That's an incredible waste, but with KOMTRAX 2.5, the owner or equipment manager could have

seen early on the trend that was taking place and corrected it. It would have saved a lot on fuel costs."

Available for all types of machines

KOMTRAX 2.5 is available not only for excavators, but dozers, wheel loaders, skid steers and other Komatsu equipment. "No matter what type of machinery you use, KOMTRAX can help you lower your owning and operating costs," insisted Calvert. "KOMTRAX 2.5 is a step up in machine monitoring and management."

For more information about KOMTRAX, contact your local Komatsu distributor, or log on to www.komatsuamerica.com for a demonstration of how KOMTRAX works. ■



Ken Calvert,
Director of IT
Support

To see if your specific machines are eligible for the KOMTRAX upgrade, go to: www.komatsuamerica.com/KOMTRAXupgrade



Komatsu's new KOMTRAX 2.5 wireless monitoring system offers all the advantages of previous KOMTRAX systems plus fuel consumption and idle-time information. Available now, KOMTRAX 2.5 can be installed on almost any machine, and retrofitted to machines that have older KOMTRAX systems.





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MORE LOADS

Adding polymer liners to Komatsu articulated trucks can add to your bottom line

Articulated truck users trying to make the best of a “sticky situation” or who want their beds to last longer and have higher resale values should consider installing UHMW-PE Polymer body liners for Komatsu HM Series trucks. The liners are available for Komatsu’s popular-size HM300-2, HM350-2 and HM400-2 models.

“The poly liners can be installed before the user takes delivery of a new truck or at any time after,” said John Bagdonas, Product Marketing Manager for Komatsu’s Working Gear Group. “Most truck users associate poly liners with projects where they have to haul wet, mucky or sticky soils because they help ensure the materials are ejected from the bed when they dump. It helps ensure they’re not carrying materials back to the loading area. That’s the most common use, but they’re also appropriate in other circumstances as well,” he added. “For instance, the liner protects the bed from abrasive materials, so the bed lasts longer, which equates to higher resale value. Additionally, because the liners are formed from a lightweight polymer material, customers can use them in areas where noise may be a problem. They’re great sound suppressors.”

Added advantages of the polymer liners are that they weigh nearly 75 percent less than traditional steel liners, meaning trucks can carry more material per load when weight is a factor. Despite being lightweight, the liners are durable with exceptional wear characteristics. They’re impact resistant, impervious to moisture, operate within a wide temperature range and offer protection from corrosion and chemicals.

Bagdonas noted that liners are available in three grades — one made of recycled materials for basic protection, a mid-grade liner and a premium model. All specifically fit

a particular-size truck, or customers can place a custom order.

Analysis shows quick return on investment

A sample payback analysis that compared an HM400-2 truck using the mid-grade polymer liner and one without showed that having the polymer liner helped users move more material. Data showed that the lined truck hauled an additional 192 tons of material in an eight-hour day.

“In the analysis, the lined truck carried back less material to the loading area,” noted Bagdonas. “The conclusion gained from the analysis was that those extra 192 tons per day would lead to customers recouping their investment for that particular liner in less than three weeks. That’s a phenomenal return on investment.” ■



John Bagdonas,
Product Marketing
Manager Working
Gear Group



Polymer liners are available for popular-size Komatsu HM articulated trucks and help protect the bed as well as make dumping sticky materials more efficient.

I-35 bridge tops AGC list of most significant projects

Completion of the new I-35W bridge that replaced the one that previously collapsed in Minneapolis was named the most significant construction project of 2008 by the Associated

General Contractors in March. The bridge was completed three months ahead of schedule, and helped rebuild Americans' confidence in the safety of the nation's bridges, according to AGC incoming President Doug Pruitt.

The new I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, named AGC's most significant construction project of 2008, was completed three months ahead of schedule. It was among other projects recognized for their complexity, innovation and success.



It was one of 13 projects recognized by AGC for complexity, innovation and success, among other factors. Other projects included work on the Boston Symphony Hall and the National Park in Washington, D.C.

"These projects are the very embodiment of the potential and promise of the nation's construction industry," said Pruitt. "These projects are more than a simple task, they are the kind of jobs that challenge our skills, stretch our imaginations and capture our fancy." ■

Commission proposing mileage fee to replace gas tax

The National Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission, organized under SAFETEA-LU, is proposing a 10-year phase-out of the current gas tax and implementing a fee based on miles driven. It concluded that the gas tax is underfunding transportation needs, and implementing a

user-based system based on mileage would be more beneficial.

During the 10-year phase-out, the commission proposes hiking the gas tax by 15 cents per gallon for diesel and 10 cents for gasoline. ■

New rules require government contractors to disclose criminal law violations

Those wanting to do government-funded work will be affected by a new law that requires employers to disclose evidence of violations of certain criminal laws by their employees or subcontractors, according to an article in the *Legal Times*. Mandatory disclosure applies to contracts with a value that exceeds \$5 million and a performance period of 120 days.

Contractors are required to timely disclose information to the office of the Inspector General when they have credible evidence that any person in their own business, an agent or subcontractor has committed a violation of federal criminal law involving fraud, conflict of interest, bribery or gratuity violations. ■

SERVING YOU BETTER

KOMATSU ADVANCED TECHNICIAN COMPETITION

Training event brings out the best in distributor service technicians

The 13th Annual Komatsu Advanced Technician Competition (KATC) showcased some of the nation's top heavy equipment technicians as they took part in the contest held at the Komatsu Training and Demonstration Center in Cartersville, Ga.

"Komatsu distributor technicians are among the best in the industry, and KATC allows them to shine as they work to troubleshoot and problem-solve typical and atypical machine issues that they may encounter in the field," said KATC Director Wade Archer. "It's more than just a competition, though. We provide educational seminars as well. The goal is to make our technicians even better, so they can go back to their distributors and work to serve customers by reducing downtime and repair costs."

Technicians competed in seven individual machine categories, with one hour to troubleshoot a machine and diagnose two problems that were preset by Komatsu personnel. They were judged not only on whether they correctly identified the issues, but how they arrived at the problems. They had to demonstrate their ability to properly use all tools, including service manuals and computers. Communication with the customer was also a key component.

Team contest

In addition to the individual contests, a team competition was held where distributor technician teams competed under similar circumstances to diagnose and fix problems on a BR580JG crusher.

"Technicians in the team contest were not told ahead of time what machine they would be working on, whereas they know what equipment they'll encounter in the individual

competition," said Archer. "We believe simulating real-life situations makes them better at what they do. It helps them realize they have multiple resources to draw from when they do a service or repair."

Contest winners received trophies and prizes, including cash awards for first through third place. Visit www.kactraining.com/atc for more information on KATC. ■



Wade Archer,
KATC Director



Contestants were judged on their ability to use resources such as manuals and computers as they diagnosed and fixed a problem with a particular machine. Komatsu personnel acted as "customers" whose machines weren't running properly. They also served as judges.

The team competition focused on a "mystery machine," which turned out to be a BR580JG crusher. A team of distributor technicians had to find the problems associated with it.



BEYOND THE STIMULUS

Federal budget provides additional funding for infrastructure work

While the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, better known as the economic stimulus plan, has been getting all the publicity since being signed into law in February, it's important to note that the \$787 billion worth of spending and tax cuts in it is *in addition to* regular governmental spending.

In March, Congress passed and President Obama signed that "regular" government spending measure, which was an omnibus appropriations bill to fund government

Water and sewer infrastructure will see major funding increases this year and next from both the regular federal budget and the new economic stimulus plan.

programs through the rest of the 2009 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. Typically, the bill would have been finalized last September, but with an election on the horizon, Congress decided to put off final decisions until the new administration was in place.

Many items in the omnibus bill will directly impact the construction industry, including:

- \$40.7 billion for highway construction
- \$5.4 billion for Army Corps of Engineers construction programs
- \$3.5 billion for airport construction
- \$829 million for drinking-water construction
- \$689 million for sewer construction

Up from 2008

Most of the figures are higher than, or the same as, FY '08 funding levels. Funding for highways, for example, was increased by \$484 million compared to last year. Then, if you add in \$27.5 billion worth of economic stimulus money for highways, you get about a 70 percent funding increase compared to the previous year. Of course, not all of that \$27.5 billion will be allocated in 2009. In fact, a larger amount of that total will actually be spent in FY 2010 — but the increase for both years is substantial.

With the 2009 spending plan now in place, Congress is already working on the 2010 budget. Many feel that until the economy regains a more solid footing, next year's budget will continue to require a larger-than-normal amount of spending on public projects. ■





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VOICES



Welcome to VOICES, the new feedback forum for *RoadBuilders' EDGE* readers.

We want to know what's on your mind — and we want to share your thoughts with other industry professionals. VOICES gives you the opportunity to comment on issues of interest regarding the construction industry, Komatsu equipment, articles you've seen in this magazine — or almost anything. It also invites your questions. Unlike a traditional "Letters to the Editor" column, VOICES will answer your questions, respond to your comments and address the issues you care about. We hope you'll take the opportunity to participate in the conversation with us about what's important to you.

Please e-mail your questions and comments to: EdgeEditor@constpub.com

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Here are the types of questions and comments we hope to receive:

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTION: When will economic stimulus money actually be spent on construction projects? How can I find out what jobs are being let in my region?

ANSWER: So-called economic stimulus money is already flowing. Much of the road and bridge money is already assigned to projects. The U.S. Government's www.recovery.gov Web site is a good source for general information on stimulus spending.

As for local construction projects to be funded with stimulus money, you should check with the state DOT and local municipalities. State or local industry organizations might also have good and updated information on area projects.

QUESTION: Every day we read about companies being in difficult financial straits — even the big auto makers. How is Komatsu faring during this economic downturn?

ANSWER: Like most businesses, and all heavy equipment manufacturers, Komatsu has felt the effects of the worldwide economic slowdown. Sales are down from a year ago. Nonetheless, despite the pain, and in stark contrast to other major companies, like U.S. automakers that are in danger of failing or requiring bailouts during this recession, Komatsu remains profitable. As the world's

second-largest manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, Komatsu looks forward to returning to a more normal business environment, later this year, we hope.

COMMENTS & REPLIES

COMMENT: I'm happy to see the government has passed a so-called "stimulus plan," but I don't think it's big enough. I would have liked to have seen a lot more than \$27 billion for roads and bridges. Our transportation needs are much greater than that and with more money, we would be able to put a lot more people back to work.

COMMENT: I saw the article in the magazine where the Komatsu D51 dozer won an award for best new design. I just wanted to say that I bought one last year and totally agree that it's a cut above other dozers. The visibility to the blade is outstanding, which helps make it an excellent final-grade tractor.

REPLY: The D51 was the first of the new Dash-22 series of mid-size dozers from Komatsu. Since then, three smaller units, the D31, D37 and D39 have also been upgraded to the Dash-22 version, which features a super-slant nose and cab-forward design that puts the operator closer to the blade. ■



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