

Forte Spotlight: Western Nevada Supply

There were two men with one vision and, so, the Blue Team was born. In 1964, fueled by dreams of providing unparalleled customer service, the Blue Team put Western Nevada Supply on the Sparks, NV, business map. Blue Teamers, Jack Reviglio and Bill Higgins, started the company as a wholesale plumbing distributor in a rented 1,200 square-foot warehouse on Glendale Avenue. Plumbing was the foundation of the new business, and it filled many needs in its region.



Western's explosive growth matched the building boom outside Reno. Reno's growing economy and the Blue Team's approach to doing business largely spurred the company's sales and expansion. The Blue Team listened to its customers, went above and beyond their expectations, and proved to be a flexible and attentive partner. Just a few years after opening, Western moved to a 7,000 square-foot facility on 2.5 acres. In 1973, the company's growth necessitated another move, this time to a 10-acre site, which has since expanded to 20 acres today, with 40,000 square feet under roof. Expanding service areas demanded more attention and prompted the Blue Team to open Western Nevada Supply branches in Elko, Carson City and Winnemucca in Nevada, along with South Lake Tahoe, Bishop, Susanville and Truckee in California.

"The founders' leadership is an important part of our history," relates Jeff Mecca, showroom manager for Western Nevada Supply Co. "Their hands-on management in every aspect of the business led not only to its survival, but to its growth and the ability of the company to serve contractors and builders in two states."

In 1967, Jack's brother, Tom Reviglio, joined the firm. Tom brought to Western his knack for marketing. Sensing a market need and an opportunity, he initiated a waterworks sales department that has become a very successful business unit. Plus, Tom proved himself to be exceptionally good at customer relations. "He knew how to approach any customer—from a business owner to the guy in the trenches,"

says Jeff. "That kept generating new business."

After Tom, a second generation of Reviglios entered the family business. Each member contributed his unique skills, supplementing and enhancing Western's business efforts. Jack Reviglio's oldest son, Ted, joined the firm in 1983. Having previously worked in a HVAC department, he brought to the company his managerial competence and extensive technical back-

ground. Ted served as a branch manager in Elko and Carson City, and is currently the Truckee branch manager.

Ted's brother Rick Reviglio became a member of the Blue Team in 1992. Rick learned the plumbing industry first-hand, spending five years with a plumbing products manufacturer. At Western, he put to use not only his finance background, but also his newly acquired distributions skills. Rick brought Western up to speed with modern technology and initiated a company-wide, fully automated computer system that included point-of-sales, inventory control, collections, finances and enhanced customer service tools. Today, Rick is Western's vice president and general manager.

With its philosophy of hiring the most qualified people in the industry, keeping a large inventory and truck fleet, as well as longer service hours, Western distinguishes itself from the competition. The Blue Team also offers a diverse line of products including plumbing, waterworks, HVAC, irrigation, hydronics and solar, industrial





(PVF), and tools. Western opened its first decorative showroom in 1991 in Sparks. Later the company added showrooms in Carson City, NV, and Truckee, CA.

While product diversity is a huge plus, Western believes it is making a mark first and foremost with its customer service.

"We have built our reputation on customer service and we build on it," relates Jeff Mecca. "In our showrooms, we greet every customer and every visitor feels welcomed. We still believe that the customer is always right, and how the customer feels is the most important part of the transaction. Our staff is a team of true professionals who do their best to accommodate every need."

Jeff says Western's main focus is on creating a unique experience for its customers. At Western, they get complete information and recommendations on products' features, functions and benefits—something, Jeff points out, that separates order-takers from showroom professionals who listen and consult.

Moreover, the company strives to project and deliver on the powerful message—"We are going to create an experience of a lifetime for you! We'll put your stress and challenges away!" Jeff emphasizes that one of Western's goal is to make sure that no one ever leaves its showrooms disappointed. Every visitor should be able to find something he or she is looking for, and that requires smart decision-making and a great product mix.



"At Western, it's always a team effort, a collective solution.

We factor in the needs of our customers and consult with designers and architects with

whom we have close relations. We also reach out to our reps and get their opinion. Their feedback and ideas are important to us, because we want to stay ahead of trends. That means a new product shouldn't be dated before we put it on the shelf. Another source of our decision-making is our employees. We always seek their buy-in. When your people are excited about a product, they are going to sell it."

To make customers return for more, Western showrooms work hard to keep their displays attractive and fresh. "We don't try to reinvent the wheel," explains Jeff. "But we are very attentive to product location and do our best to help the product catch attention. If one location doesn't seem to work, we move the product to another or try to update and enhance its previous location. We use moveable walls and keep our displays sharp."

Western also employs savvy marketing and training. Since the early 1970s, the firm has used specially equipped and painted "job vans" that have become its branded marketing and advertising vehicle. The big blue vans not only have a welcoming "Visit our kitchen and bath showroom!" line that immediately attracts attention, but are also stocked with building materials to be kept at job sites, a handy service for contractors that don't need to run back and forth to the store for every little thing they might need.

"The trucks have been a great marketing tool. Today we



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have 300 job vans traveling to our customers and getting the word out," relates Jeff. "We have also advertise in magazines, on TV and sponsor many sporting events such as the Reno Rodeo, with much success. Additionally, we like to host designer and architect nights and open houses that also have been very successful."

The company runs its own Blue Team University to educate its customers and the engineering community on new products and technologies. Jeff says the University offers a wide variety of hands-on training classes throughout the year for both employees and customers. "The pressure from the competition and the Internet is as high as ever," explains Jeff. "Training is one of the ways to build a rapport with customers—by educating ourselves to be able to help them with projects and educating our customers to build interest in our products."

Western's community-minded spirit also appeals to its customers and employees. The company has established itself as an active sponsor and fund-raiser for many local organizations and events. Throughout the years, the Reviglios and Western's employees have volunteered and given generously to many worthy causes. The Blue Team is known for regularly supporting schools and children's sporting activities. Moreover, it initiated an internship program for local youths that allows them to work for the company in the summer months and learn new skills. Many program graduates continue to work for Western part-time while attending school, and there have been several cases when the interns returned to work full-time after graduating.



The Blue Team Fleet



A year ago, Western Nevada Supply joined Forte. "We looked for the opportunity to partner with a buying group for quite some time," says Jeff Mecca, "and have found a lot of mutual respect and knowledge at Forte. We appreciate opportunities to network with other members and always look forward to spending time with teams from other showrooms. There is so much to discuss and learn. What trends are coming? What products work for them and what don't? What customer service enhancements do they plan for their showrooms? What are their thoughts on vignettes and showroom flow?"

We look to Forte to help grow our knowledge of the industry. We also want to bring more value to Vendors and look forward to partnering with them."

Western will continue the hard, but gratifying, work of polishing its reputation for integrity, reliability and customer satisfaction. While focusing on its core business and customers, it is constantly searching for ways to grow and prosper. As Jeff puts it, "We always challenge ourselves to find organic growth in any economic situation. With the ever changing economy we have learned that—I quote—'success is never final, and failure is never fatal; it's courage that counts.'"