



PROVIDING SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGING ASSIGNMENTS

Capital City Services Celebrates 40 Years in Business

by Carol Scott

Forty years ago, Wayne Norman, owner and President of *Capital City Services*, started his business on a tight budget. He purchased a 10-year-old International Harvester Metro step van, the first company vehicle, for \$73 and offered plumbing services that first year. The business has been growing in size and scope of services ever since.

Today, Capital City Services serves the Mid-Atlantic region in all areas and phases of general construction, utility work, mechanical and infrastructure, and wastewater and water

treatment plants. It is the only private company in Virginia to offer MICROTRAXX™ service for cleaning box culverts, confined spaces and other hazardous areas, and is among a few select contractors that own dedicated air and hydro excavation equipment.

EXPANSION OF SERVICES

Growth has been a constant for the company over the past four decades. "Within five years of starting out, I bought a 1963 Myers jet truck, a sewer jet truck. It had the distinction of being the first jet truck sold east of the Mississippi,"

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Wayne Norman, Owner and President, Capital City Services

Norman says. He added a backhoe and a dump truck for installing sewer lines and water lines. At that point, he and six employees ran a total of five or six service trucks for air conditioning and heating, plumbing, sewer drain work and jetter service.

In the 1980s, the company began offering pipe and culvert cleaning, underground utility locating and hydro excavation, and in the 1990s expanded services to include wastewater and water treatment plant maintenance and repair.

Today, the firm employs 14 people and operates 40 trucks. "Our

multifaceted, hardworking crews represent a lot of devotion and dedication to providing diverse services across multiple sites," Norman says. "We might clean lines today. Tomorrow we may inject foam to stop a leak while working at a wastewater plant or a prison. Even though we have a small team, everyone has their talents. They understand the uniqueness of what Capital City Services does."

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGES

The Capital City Services team works long hours. "Sometimes we start at five in the morning and we

finish at 10 or 11 at night. We get a job done—we don't back down," Norman says.

To reward his team for finishing a particularly difficult assignment and completing it ahead of schedule, Norman gives bonuses. He also provides bonuses at Christmas.

One exceptionally challenging job involved a defective storm sewer. Capital City Services' solution included the installation of 88 QuickLock repair systems, a nine-day process involving the insertion of stainless steel sleeves through 250-foot-long pipes. Another endeavor involved

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cleaning a 17-year-old water treatment plant in Suffolk, Virginia, using a SUPERPULSATOR® water clarifier. Three distribution channels, standing 4 feet high by 8 feet wide by 120 feet in length and located in an underground area of the plant, had filled with river sediment.

"We do a lot of confined-space entry work that involves going into a hole, a tank or a tunnel that may possibly present a dangerous environment to function in," Norman says. Generally the company ventilates the space so its workers don't have to wear respirators. "We really encourage and promote safety," he continues. "All of our technicians are certified in everything from confined space entry to first aid and CPR to ensure we are in compliance with OSHA regulations."

Often the team will perform a simulation at the shop before going into the field to undertake an involved situation, enabling workers to anticipate what problems they may experience to ensure success. "We like the challenge of different situations. That's what it's all about. And we use cutting-edge equipment to solve our customers' problems," Norman says. A project could consist of leak detection, repairs to leaks or taking on assignments that haven't been done before.

"Eighty percent of our work is repairing what another contractor has done. We either repair or clean—one of the two," Norman says. "Infrastructure is our forte."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Capital City Services' clients include state and federal agencies,

universities, military bases, municipalities, correctional facilities, hotels and resorts, residential customers and property management companies. The company also services water and wastewater treatment facilities and plants at major corporations, including Honeywell and DuPont, both in the Richmond area.

The company prides itself on providing creative solutions. When one client, Richmond Dairy, had a roof leak on its building, Capital City Services' staff fabricated a giant milk-bottle cap to top off the milk bottle-shaped building. Viability and cost-effectiveness also play an important part in delivering the best project results for each customer.

"We build relationships through integrity. When we tell someone we will take on a job, we follow through. Many clients have been with us for years," Norman says.

He adds, "It's not just client relationships, but also relationships within the firm that we focus on building. People like our Financial Officer, Faye Lickey, who has been with us short-term, has already proven an integral part of this company's growth."

FROM A CUSTOMER'S POINT OF VIEW

The company believes its relationships with its clients, vendors, suppliers and colleagues is the number one key to its success. Tom Arezzi, Director of Maintenance at Capital City Services, was first a customer before joining the firm. As the Director of Maintenance of 10 properties for an apartment management company and new to Virginia, he called on Norman to assist with

a high-maintenance, high-cost lift station that needed servicing.

Arezzi recalls giving Norman his usual lecture to contractors about expecting a fair price for the job. "Norman let me talk and then stepped forward, shook my hand and said, 'It's going to be good to work with you,'" Arezzi recounts, adding, "I usually scare contractors with that speech because they don't have Norman's integrity and his honesty."

When Capital City Services started on the lift station, Arezzi was surprised to find Norman at the work site. "Usually you don't see owners—people at his level—beyond the first meeting, if at the first meeting at all...but Norman is always there. Even when I had a water main break on Christmas Eve, he came out," Arezzi says.

When Norman asked Arezzi to come on board a few years back, he didn't hesitate. "I value his integrity and commitment to customers," Arezzi says.

This year, Arezzi is helping publicize the company's 40th anniversary. "And how do we plan to celebrate it? Norman's probably just going to keep chugging along. We'll have to slow him down to celebrate it at all," he says.

PREPARING FOR MORE GROWTH

With no intention of slowing down, Norman is preparing for even more growth. In the past two years, he has invested in major excavation equipment. "Next, I plan to purchase a Pow-R Mole digital steerable system for thrust boring and pipe bursting," Norman says. "With these

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Wayne Norman

Capital City Services' Wayne Norman at the Bluestone Dam in Hinton, West Virginia. This site is also the home of John Henry, the "steel-driving man."

tools, we can abandon the defective line and bore a new line adjacent to the abandoned line—on grade, with precision. It will burst the old pipe without having to excavate the ground."

Always willing to try something new, Norman says, "If you want to be successful, do what other people don't want to do or do what other people cannot do." He's living up to the Capital City Services' tagline, "Solutions Only Experience Can Provide"—with 40 years of experience. ☞

Carol Scott, a Florida-based writer, enjoys listening to AEC leaders and facilitating the sharing of their stories with others in the AEC industry.

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