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Bockstael Construction leadership team members (from left) Sarah Anderson, director of talent management, Dan Bockstael, co-president, Nick Bockstael, co-president, and CEO Carmine Militano. The Winnipeg firm was founded in 1912.

Fourth-generation Bockstael Construction triples staff, annual revenue in last decade, strives to earn its tagline Successful ‘journey of transformation’

MADE IN MANITOBA
 The back story of homegrown business success stories

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WHEN Bockstael Construction moved in 2016 to a second-floor office space on Paquin Road, it was supposed to be a three-year lease — five years max — and then the company would build its own Winnipeg headquarters.

Nearly a decade later, Bockstael is still leasing space. The joke around the office is the 112-year-old company has been so busy building for other people, it hasn't had time to build for itself.

The Bruce Oake Recovery Centre, West Broadway Commons, the emergency centre at Main Street Project, Falcon Lake Golf Course clubhouse — if you know any of these places, you're already familiar with a building Bockstael (pronounced Bock-stall) has constructed.

The Sherbrook Pool, Manitoba Museum, Canada Life's head office, Sookram's Brewing Company, the recreation centre in Gillam — these are a few of the places Bockstael has renovated or redeveloped.

Over the last 10 years, the company has worked especially hard to live up to its tagline: “Manitoba's builder.” Along the way, it has tripled its workforce to more than 180 people and tripled its annual revenue to \$220 million.

That success didn't happen by accident.

Since 2013, Bockstael has been on what chief executive officer Carmine Militano describes as a “journey of transformation” the company consciously undertook to grow its business.

The transformation was sparked by changes company leadership observed in the construction industry — consolidation, new market entrants buoyed by an expanding market and an increase in the average size of projects.

The ensuing transformation has included focusing on pre-construction services. Bockstael staff members work with design teams and clients so they can inform decision making



Work continues on a Bockstael Construction site at 308 Colony St. in Winnipeg. The \$77-million, 214-unit apartment tower spearheaded by the University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corp. is just one of 25 Bockstael projects currently in action.

throughout the process and meet clients' needs.

While construction companies have traditionally been merely service providers, Bockstael wants to be integral partners with its clients. The company has worked hard to earn its seat at the table as a partner and collaborator, Militano says.

Nick Bockstael, who serves as co-president, alongside younger brother Dan, credits the company's culture — community-minded, respectful and focused on continuous improvement — with getting it there.

“We do everything with excellence,” Nick says. “We want to do the best job we can when we're delivering projects.”

That commitment to excellence has received national recognition. In May, Bockstael was named to Canada's Best Managed Companies list for 2024.

Considered one of the country's pre-

mier business awards programs, the list recognizes privately owned and managed companies that demonstrate continued excellence in management abilities and business performance.

Bockstael was the only new name from the keystone province this year. The recognition came a few months after significant transitions in the company.

In January, previous CEO John Bockstael — Nick and Dan's father — stepped into the new advisory role of company chair.

Militano assumed the role of CEO after serving as president and Nick and Dan transitioned into his former role. All three are professional engineers.

Sarah Anderson, Nick and Dan's younger sister, joined her brothers in the ownership group.

Anderson has a background in business and real estate and works at Bock-

stael as director of talent management and business development manager.

The transitions ensure the company — founded in 1912 by Theodore Bockstael, a carpenter from Belgium — stays in the family for another generation.

“We're pretty proud to be a fourth-generation company,” Nick says. “I credit John, our father, with initiating that (succession planning) and setting us up for where we are today. He's always been a steward of the business and wanting it to continue on for many more years to come.”

While talking about the transition, Militano notes everything the company has survived: two world wars, the Great Depression and Great Recession among them.

“It's a story of resilience,” Militano says.

Bockstael currently has 25 construc-

tion projects on the go, with another 15 in the pre-construction phase.

The company is eight months into building 308 Colony, a \$77-million, 214-unit apartment tower spearheaded by the University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corp.

It is halfway through a \$136-million expansion of the Brandon Regional Health Hospital and the Western Manitoba Cancer Centre and it's wrapping up work on Align, a 16-storey, 397-unit development across from the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry campus.

The company has partnerships with Indigenous organizations such as the Manitoba Métis Federation, Shawenim Abinoojii and Treaty One Development Corporation, including a program with the MMF that connects Métis students with jobs in the construction industry.

Bockstael is also working on a renovation project for Lighthouse Mission.

Being involved in the community has been important to the company ever since Theodore built a dorm on the third floor of his house so fellow immigrants had somewhere to live.

He passed that concern for the community and sense of civic duty on to his son Robert. Robert passed it on to his son John, who instilled it in Nick, Dan and Sarah.

“We're here to help,” Dan says. “That's generally the first question I think that comes to mind in a lot of situations we find ourselves in: how can we help?”

The true value of a project starts, Militano says, once Bockstael has completed its work.

“That's when the mission begins — when we hand over the keys and the building is fully operational,” he says. “It's really about our clients' success and doing everything (we) can to help them get there.”

As they move the company forward, the Bockstaels and Militano have their eyes set on sustainable growth.

Along the way, they are finally making time to construct a building of their own. The design process has begun for a new headquarters, to be built on land the company purchased on Marion Street.

They'll move in in the next two years. “We really do love the ‘Manitoba's builder’ tagline that we have,” Nick says. “We don't really have aspirations to grow nationally and we're happy to continue to contribute here and give our community a good experience in the construction process — helping them build on time, on budget, with good quality.”

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