

Paganini Communications Inc. Leads in Industry Change

EMERGING FROM 50 YEARS OF TRADITIONAL WORK

Paganini Electric Corp.,

San Francisco, was founded in 1948 as a traditional electrical contractor. Since 1998, the company has maintained two divisions: Paganini Electric Corp. (traditional electrical contracting) and Paganini Communications Inc. (low-voltage work); the latter is operated as a separate business. There are approximately 140 employees in the company as a whole.

"Paganini Communications Inc. was established due to an ever-growing demand for low-voltage service from our customers as well as the industry," said Larry Andrini, vice president for Paganini Communications Inc.

"However, we share information on customers, projects and prospective opportunities between Paganini Communications and Paganini Electric on a daily basis," Andrini said. "We also hold regular meetings to ensure that all current and future customer needs are met."

Paganini Communications Inc. performs all types of low-voltage work.

"We have adapted, over the years, to fulfill the changes that the low-voltage industry has demanded," Andrini said. "However, our core business is tenant improvement work throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area. This involves mostly horizontal network cabling, from new multifloor projects to the typical adds, moves and changes."

The company also is involved in fiber optics, riser management, closed-circuit TV and distributed antenna systems.

All of Paganini Communication Inc.'s field employees have gone through the multi-year National Joint Apprenticeship Training Program (NJATC) prior to becoming technicians. This program offers classroom education on all low-voltage systems as well as hands-on field work.

"All of our field technicians are California state certified and have also been trained and certified by multiple product manufacturers for the installation and design of their systems," he said.

The company has found that the most effective way to market its low-voltage business is

having a great reputation throughout the industry and word-of-mouth from repeat customers.

"We have also established a marketing program that involves regular customer visits and maintaining customer service and response-time commitments," Andrini said.

The company also does meet-and-greets. This involves setting up an appointment with a prospective customer, whether it is an end-user, a general contractor or a consultant.

"We sit down with them and explain our services," Andrini said. "We also bring some brochures and other literature."

They present past performance documentation, such as photos, test results, as-builts, references, current certifications and the resumes of the workers who would be involved in the project. Prospective customers respond well to these meetings.

"Besides learning about what we can offer, these meetings provide them with a comfort level with our ability to make sure that all of their requirements will be met," he said.

Andrini is a member of a number of professional committees and industry associations and organizations in the Bay Area. While these commitments take up a lot of his time, his involvement adds a lot of credibility to the company's professionalism when he and his colleagues are talking with prospective customers.

Working with manufacturers and distributors also is a critical component of success for Paganini Communications Inc.

"Having relationships with manufacturers leads to our company becoming certified and trained by those manufacturers," he said. "This, in turn, allows us to pursue the projects

that require those particular manufacturers and types of certifications. Manufacturers have also established relationships with customers, and they frequently introduce us and assist in the follow-up correspondence."

Distributors are important to relationships.

"Not only is it important to have good relationships with them in order to obtain preferred pricing, but they are also a great source of information on projects that we might not otherwise hear about," he said.

They are also able to offer information on what is going on in the industry.

For Andrini and his colleagues, the most difficult part of the business is finding the time to do everything, ranging from meeting with prospective customers to keeping up with the ever-changing low-voltage industry.

"Everything is moving faster now than in years before," he said.

Andrini said it can be difficult to find the time to get out and meet with prospective customers.

"However, it is important that we continue to do this, especially when we are busy. You don't want to wait for things to slow down and then start looking for new work," he said.

One benefit is being able to offer customers full end-to-end solutions on any or all of their projects.

"We see ourselves as a one-stop shop," Andrini said.

In terms of the future, Paganini Communications Inc. is looking into getting more involved in the design and programming of security and audiovisual systems, instead of just performing the cable installations of these systems.

For the company, this is a solid strategy of growth and prosperity. ■

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