

GRANGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC

By: Sarah Hall

Les Granger has no use for people who misrepresent the truth.

Granger, CEO of Granger Construction Company, Inc., values trust and integrity above all else, and those values form the foundation of his company.

“There is an understanding among the staff—this is how we want to present ourselves to our clients,” said Chris Montrose, Vice President of construction at Granger. “They know they are fully supported in making decisions, providing straightforward and honest information to our clients.”

Granger went into the construction industry after he graduated from high school and his family sold the farm on which he grew up. He learned carpentry and masonry and later opened his own firm, working as a subcontractor, general contractor, and developer.

By the early 1990s, Granger was looking for something more.

“At a certain point in my life, I said, what do I enjoy doing the most? The answer was constructing buildings,” he said. “I love the creative process of putting a building where there once was nothing. I still have a passion for that.”

Thus, Granger Construction Co. was born in 1992. The company focused almost solely on retail construction up and down the East Coast until 2008, when, as Granger said, “retail business did not slow down—it stopped overnight.” The crash forced Granger to diversify; now the firm also works with clients in the hospitality, multi-residential, healthcare, light industrial and most general commercial markets. The company is also focusing more on what sales and marketing manager Don Kowell calls “pre-construction services.” This service provides real-time input on cost, constructability, and schedule during the planning and design phase.



(L-R) Les Granger, President and CEO, Chris Montrose, Vice President of Construction

“We’re good at managing and coordinating a project,” Kowell said. “While we still participate in the private commercial bid market, we’ve been doing more of the pre-construction / construction management approach on projects.”

Under this approach, the firm, led by Montrose, will evaluate a project to determine the needs of the customer and put together a team of subcontractors that will best fulfill those needs. Granger said it is faster and more efficient than the traditional means of putting a project out to bid, and it often nets better results.

This has proven to be a successful approach for anyone looking to build or develop.

“If you can put the right team together of owner, designer, and contractor, I can almost guarantee you we can come up with a more successful project than doing it the traditional way of hiring an architect to draw something, then going out for competitive bids to general contractors,” he said. “The process can get there that way, but it takes longer, and it is harder to get the value placed in the right spot. If an owner can articulate what they would like to get out of a project, what their goals are, and in turn have the right architect who can put their vision on paper while working with the general contractor, this will ensure the design is both conceptually and financially in line with the owner’s expectations. Putting together the right team of people up front will generate the best value for the owner’s investment.”

While Granger Construction Company does some travelling, the bulk of their business is local, which is the result of a conscious effort to focus on the central New York region.

“We are focusing on trying to stay in New York,” Granger said. “But at the same time, repeat customers ask us to go and look at opportunities in different places. We still have solid resources up and down the East Coast.”

Granger Construction also does a lot of repeat business, made possible by the good relationships the company maintains with its clients.

“I think our relationships are built based on the fact we are just a group of hardworking people who are straightforward,” Montrose said. “We do not pull punches with our clients.

We tell them facts—not always what they want to hear. We give them the information they need to make the best decisions possible to achieve the overall outcome they desire.”

Granger Construction also strives for complete transparency with others in the construction industry.

“We try very hard amongst ourselves and with our subcontractors and our suppliers to do what we say we are going to do—treat them fairly, pay them correctly,” Granger said. “This attracts quality subcontractors who seek to work with us on our projects.”

The culture based on trust and integrity permeates everything Granger does, including his interactions with his employees.

“It is really important that I can trust everyone I work with,” he said. “Everybody in the company has wide open access to everything, but that requires a trust that they will treat that information with the confidentiality that it should have.”

That culture accounts for the longevity of Granger’s staff, many of whom have been with the company for a decade or more. Kowell said that is what has kept him there for more than 15 years.

“It is the family atmosphere, the trust and the faith that we have in each other,” he said. “When we get busy, we all help each other out. This attitude is across the board.”

That said, Granger emphasized that employees’ real families must always come first.



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“We view ourselves as our employees’ second family, but their real families come first,” he said. “We recognize the importance of this, and we adjust for it.”

“When someone has a medical issue or something like that, we all cover for each other, help each other out, that type of thing, and it has just been a refreshing situation to experience,” Kowell said.

Montrose joined the company more than 20 years ago as a project manager. He worked his way up through the ranks to his current position as VP of construction. He sees his future as being at Granger, something that pleases Les Granger as he looks toward the end of his working days.

“I considered myself retired about 10 years ago,” he said. “Now I only work five days a week.

Montrose, the team builder, has been an active part of the growth process. In that focus, Montrose’s responsibility is to look for new talent to help lead Granger into the future. Among his picks is project manager Mike Eger, who joined the company about 13 years ago.

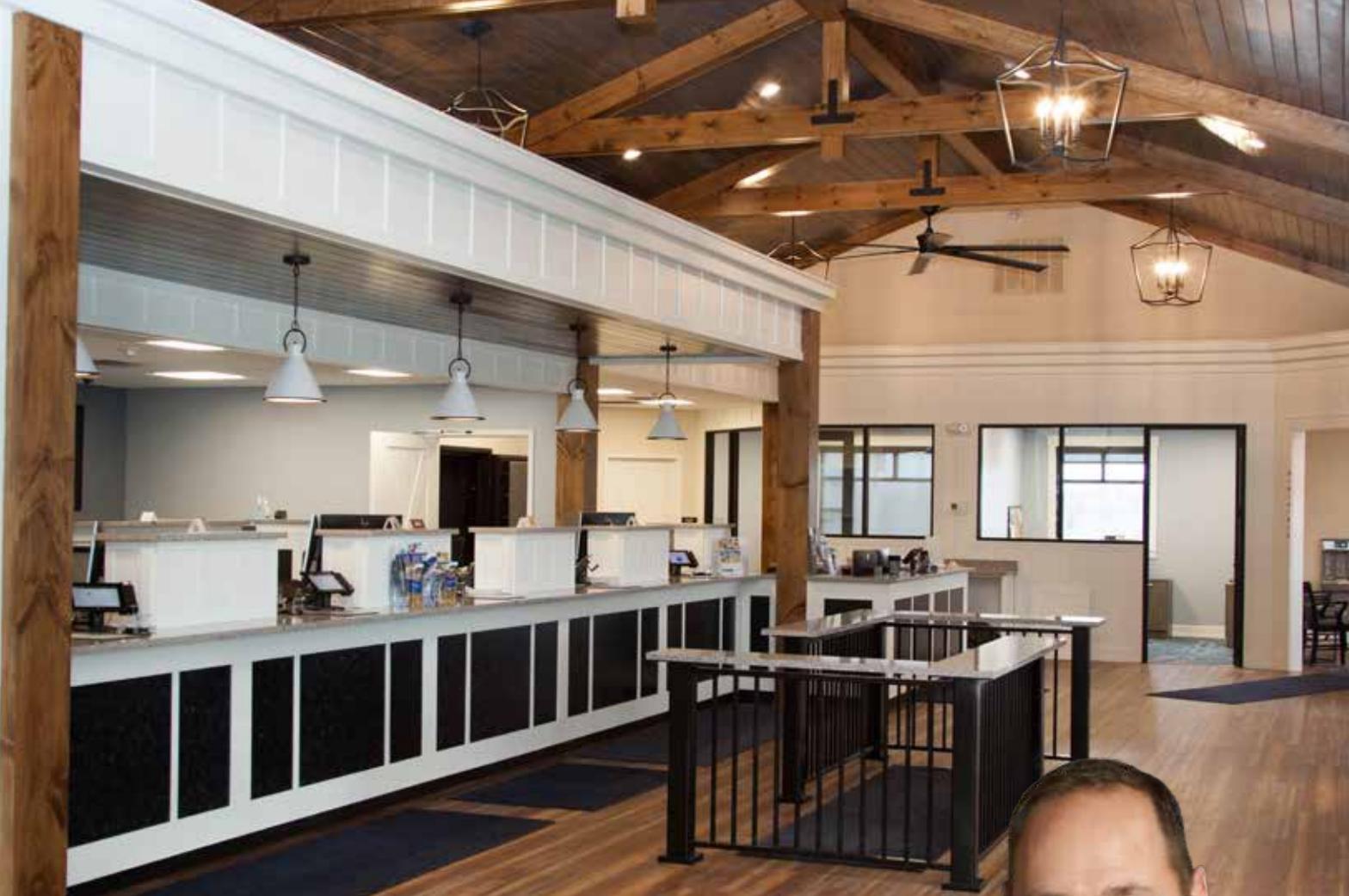
“He came in and started by coordinating subs on a job site and pushing a broom. He soon after became a project manager,” Montrose said. “His character, skill set, and his drive match up well to how we want the future of the company to be shaped. He will be one of the people who helps shape it.”

“Mike is a future leader in training,” Granger said. “He came here out of school. Right now, he is operating in project management, but we expect him to play a full leadership role down the road.”

As a leader, Granger does not micromanage his people. He understands that while different employees take different approaches on various issues, everyone at the company is headed to the same destination.

“If an employee knows what the target is, and he approaches it with integrity, he does not have to do it the same way I do it,” Granger said. “But there is integrity to what he does. We do not have rules that before Chris approves a contract, there are 32 different signatures to get. He has the authority to do his job. I can trust that he is making the right decisions.”

“For ourselves and our clients, we feel we have the right team to be successful—a team you can trust has the customer’s best interest as its priority,” Montrose said. “We have a good group of people who are all driven for the company and our clients to be successful.”



Empower Federal Credit Union, Central Square, NY

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Vice President



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