



(L-R) Ryan Harris, Craig Mathison and Russ Felderman

# Cutting Costs Without Sacrificing Quality

Fort Wayne's Felderman Design-Build is a single source design-build construction firm.

article by Christine Velagapudi • photography by Steve Vorderman

**C**utting costs in today's economy is a way of life, but doing it without sacrificing quality is a challenge. Fort Wayne's Felderman Design-Build does just that. Felderman is a single source design-build construction firm with in-house designers and engineers, which is an approach that's taking hold in the construction industry, but Felderman has done it since its inception in 1975.

Felderman operates under the

philosophy that quality, completion dates and costs can be controlled by keeping responsibility for a building project under one roof - that of the design-build firm. The design-builder conceptualizes the project with a client; prepares designs, drawings and specifications; and then constructs the facility, all under a single-source responsibility contract. This is why the company's motto is, "If you can imagine it — we can design and build it."

"It's truly a one-stop shop, and that helps us maintain our business," says Craig Mathison, president of Felderman Design-Build. "We're one of the few firms in the area that has its own in-house design team, which can be critical when it comes to saving time. If one of our clients has a change that needs to be made on a project, we can take it down the hallway and get an answer immediately instead of waiting weeks for confirmation."

In addition, build-to-suit leasebacks are offered to complete the total turnkey process.

Other firms in the business don't offer in-house capabilities. This means when a company decides to build, it has to hire separate firms for each phase. And this can result in higher costs and lost time when changes are made to plans and have to be taken to different locations and different firms for approval.

The design-build approach can benefit both the customer and the design firm. For the customer, it means faster completion of a project, better adherence to the initial intent of a design and more flexibility with cost and design options. For the firm, it means a direct path of communication between design and construction.

Founder Russ Felderman estimates that completing a building project through a design-build firm can save a client about eight to ten percent of the total cost of a project up front. But that doesn't take into account the issue of time.

"Time is money, and the faster a client can get into a building, the faster they can turn a profit," Felderman says.

Felderman Design-Build constructs primarily industrial, warehouse, commercial, retail, medical/dental and

automotive facilities. Some of its most well-know customers include Verizon, Waterfield Mortgage, Biaggi's, Evans Toyota-Isuzu-Suzuki, Peg Perego, Buffalo Wild Wings, Fort Wayne Dental Group and Jefferson Medical Park. The firm's diverse project portfolio is a testament to not only its professional abilities, but also its ability to survive in a challenging economy. With a variety of projects and locations, many outside of Indiana, Felderman has managed to weather the construction downturn.

Survival is something the firm knows well. In 1975 Russ Felderman began his business and was its sole employee. He started a project by making sales calls and then drew up building plans once he found an individual or company interested in expanding. He proposed his version of the project and, if it was accepted, acted as jobsite superintendent. A part-time secretary helped him manage office duties, and an engineer was added after a few months.

Today Felderman has a bit more help. Mathison, the company's president, is also Felderman's son-in-law, and Ryan Harris, who is in charge of business development, is Mathison's brother-in-law and Felderman's stepson. While Felderman is still an integral part of the business, he plans to eventually turn over his duties to

Harris and Mathison. Because the three work closely, both in and out of the office, the transition will likely be seamless.

"It allows us to maintain the family-owned foundation of the business, making sure we put our customers first," Harris says. "Russ has established long-term relationships with his customers, and we want to build on those."

Indeed he has. Felderman Design-Build is currently working on its fortieth project for Steinger Development, has completed eight restaurants for Buffalo Wild Wings, and counts 78 percent of its business as either repeat or referral customers, a testament to its client's satisfaction.

Current projects include a 660,000-square-foot warehouse and distribution facility in Kansas for Rubbermaid; an 18,000-square-foot medical office building in Marion, Indiana; a 12,000-square-foot facility in Fort Wayne for the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne; a new 55,000-square-foot Stoops Freightliner facility in New Haven; and multiple buildings at Maysville Pointe and Chapel Ridge.

Given its past success, it's safe to say the firm's growth will likely continue.

"We keep our customers satisfied and do what we say we are going to," Felderman says. **BP**



(L-R): Jill Miller, Greg DeWeese, Justin Hosler, Jeff Maines, Ruth Snelling and Mike Cress  
(Not pictured): Mike Chidister

## Felderman Design-Build

*Building Lasting Relationships... Since 1975*

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**Years in Business:** 33

**Number of Employees:** 30

**Services:**

In-house design and general construction services for the commercial and industrial markets