

Behind the Top 100: Sticking to specialty sets M/E Engineering apart

(April 22, 2006) — Allen G. Casey, 56, is president of Rochester-based M/E Engineering. Casey founded the company with Ron Mead, Joe Straub and Bill Liberto in 1991. It is now No. 71 on the Top 100 list of fastest-growing private companies in Rochester.

M/E Engineering provides consulting services for building HVAC, plumbing, fire protection, electrical and energy management systems.

M/E now has offices in Buffalo, Syracuse and Albany, employing 137 people statewide. Most of the firm's recent growth has been in Syracuse and Albany, but there are open positions at all offices and plans to hire more than 10 people this year. Casey talks below about his company's growth and future possibilities:

What has been your biggest challenge as the company has expanded?

Initially, our biggest challenge was financing our growth, but we have developed a great working relationship with M&T Bank to meet those needs. Our biggest challenges now are keeping up with ever-increasing costs of doing business while maintaining our profitability, and our ongoing search for quality personnel.

What is your growth strategy?

We need to continue to grow so our employees have the opportunities that they deserve. We plan to increase our presence in New York, especially as we make more inroads in the central and eastern parts of the state. We will also continue to pursue opportunities in the Northeast and the South, but they would need to be the right fit for us.

How do you set yourself apart from the competition?

We stick to our specialty — mechanical and electrical engineering — and we continue to mentor and grow our staff's capabilities. While many other firms offer mechanical and electrical engineering as part of a "bundled" service, we feel that the depth of our staff and our experience puts us well above the competition.

Who are some of your major clients?

For most projects, we are part of a design team and are usually subconsultants to architectural firms. Locally, we do a lot of work with companies such as the University of Rochester and its medical center, the Rochester Institute of Technology, Monroe Community College, Cornell University, Wegmans Food Markets Inc. and Monroe County.

What do you like about doing business in Rochester?

Rochester is home. I grew up in the city and continue to live in the city. We are comfortable here, and it has been a great place to live. We know the people and the market here, and we are excited about the new administration in the city of Rochester. Our people in Buffalo have similar feelings about their hometown, and we are rapidly making inroads in Syracuse and Albany. We have looked at opportunities in New York City, Boston, Washington, D.C., among others, but those large metropolitan environments don't fit our style of doing business.

What piece of technology can you not do without?

We continue our reliance on our computer-aided design systems. We are doing more and more utilizing "building information modeling" and incorporating a 3-D design process. We have expanded our computer-aided engineering services to include computational fluid dynamics modeling — this allows us to model air flows, temperature gradients, among others, and incorporate this information into our design solutions.

What do you look for in new employees?

We look for people with strong technical and time management skills. But one thing we really look for are individuals with good communication and people skills.

— Joy Davia



Allen G. Casey, president of M/E Engineering, says the company's growth strategy includes a plan to increase its presence in New York state. "We need to continue to grow so our employees have the opportunities that they deserve," Casey says.