

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Today, Cathy Grasmick runs a construction company—but she says her work is informed by her previous career in the dental sector

AS THE OWNER AND OPERATING MANAGER of Colorado-based Mass Service & Supply, LLC, Cathy Grasmick has participated in plenty of on-the-job training sessions. Yet perhaps nothing prepared her more for leading a construction company than her first career as a dental hygienist. “The dentist chair can be very stressful, and you can experience a similar type of stress in the midst of a construction project,” she says. “[Success is] about instilling a feeling of confidence [in] your patient or your customer.”



THINK BIG Under Grasmick's leadership, Mass Service & Supply handles contracts worth more than \$8 million.

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Grasmick and her husband started the company fifteen years ago. “We were living in Pueblo, Colorado and were in the vicinity of a number of federal institutions that offered many opportunities for a construction company,” she says. “Being accepted into the 8(a) program, a business development program for minority-owned businesses, definitely opened doors for us.”

The firm started small—in its first year, gross revenue was less than \$20,000. These humble beginnings allowed the company to

Grasmick says the basic skills she developed in the dental field have been of continued use. Construction customers, much like dental patients, often feel helpless in the midst of a

project. “It’s up to our team to impart an organized, thoughtful solution to alleviate the stress of the process,” she says.

Grasmick and her team offer a range of construction and project management services, and the woman-owned company specializes in construction for the federal government. Grasmick has sidestepped the overall slowdown in the industry by focusing on the small-business and government-contracting sectors.

Under Grasmick’s leadership, the company, which got its start performing small-task orders, now handles design-build contracts over \$8 million. She takes personal responsibility for the success of every project, and she’s active in estimating, operations, and project management.

“The key to our success is to ensure that we continue to offer the quality service and excellent end product that is the hallmark of our company,” explains Grasmick, a member of the Latino Chamber of Commerce and National Association for Professional & Executive Women. “I have always had faith in our small business community, this company, and the talented employees we bring to the table.”



SUPPORT THE TROOPS Grasmick and her team built the Soldier Family Assistance Center in Fort Carson, CO.

personalize every project. “The value that Mass offered the federal government was to build each project as if it were our only project,” she says. “We treat our customers, employees, and subcontractors like gold.”

Today, the firm focuses on work in Colorado and its neighboring states, and is currently working on and pursuing projects in the \$5-\$15 million range. The company is particularly excited about the recently completed Soldier Family Assistance Center (SFAC), an \$8.1 million, 14,500-square-foot project located in Fort Carson, Colorado. The facil-

ity serves as a community center for the Warrior in Transition program, which provides a home away from home for soldiers and their families, and aims to help soldiers transition back into the community. This project is scheduled to achieve a LEED Gold Certification.

When she reflects on her success, Grasmick hopes more women will feel the thrill of business ownership. “I have experienced a rewarding career as a woman in construction,” she says. “No matter what, women entrepreneurs should hold tight to their vision.” —TRICIA DESPRES

WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

According to a recent study by Catalyst.org, Grasmick is a rare breed: not many females work in the construction industry, and virtually none have reached the CEO position.

