

Metal Construction News

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Arco Building Systems Celebrates 30 Years of Service 1979 to 2009

Excerpts From Metal Construction News

When Arco Building Systems' current president, Allen Freeman, began work at the company, he probably did not think it would have such a positive and long-lasting effect on his life. The Norcross, Georgia company was founded in 1979 by his father, Tom Freeman.

Around the time his father was beginning the origins of Arco, Allen Freeman was practicing real estate and commercial law in Nashville, TN. Freeman left the law firm to move to Atlanta and pursue his legal career. While he was searching for another job in Atlanta, he went to work for his father's company.

Freeman soon found that he enjoyed working in the metal building construction industry. With his commercial development background, he discovered that metal building construction was a natural fit for his career path. His background seemed to be a perfect training ground for what would become a

life long career.

"I think by having been on the other side of the fence, so to speak, I am better able to identify problems and needs of contractors, owners and developers," he explained.

Now almost 30 years later, Arco has experienced substantial growth and since 1995 has been listed by Metal Construction News as one of the top ten metal builders in the United States. Although Arco's biggest concentration of customers is east of the Mississippi River, the company also serves customers on a national basis. The company has recorded an overall total of 80,000 tons of steel building shipments since 1995.

Affiliated with multiple building manufacturers, Arco has been associated with each company for between five to ten years. Arco, which employs 17 people, does 80% negotiated design/build and 20% bid work. A breakdown of its projects

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includes 55% commercial/industrial, 25% institutional, 10% self storage and 10% miscellaneous projects.



The Express Lube building located in Lawrenceville, Georgia was completed by Arco Building Systems.

Arco's Development

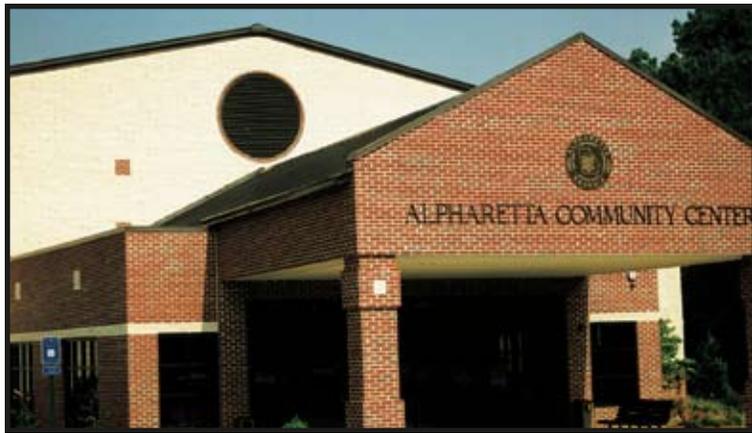
Arco began as a small storefront building on Main street in Tucker, GA, which Freeman described as being a lot like Mayberry from the old Andy Griffith Show.

"We soon realized there was a need for a source of quality metal buildings and a way to get them erected not only from contractors, but also from developers and property owners who really have no knowledge concerning metal buildings", explained Freeman.

The first year Arco recorded about \$500,000 in sales, but now it does well in excess of \$15 million in steel sales alone. It also does a large volume of metal building insulation, overhead and roll-up doors, and other metal building accessories and components.

Freeman stated that Arco sells to many smaller contractors who are involved with other types of construction. "If a smaller contractor is not experienced at coordinating the delivery of his steel, insulation and large doors, as well as scheduling his erection crew, we do this for him," he added.

The Norcross, Georgia firm also does work for large construction companies who treat Arco almost like one of their divisions that coordinates the metal building construction part of the project. In the past, Arco has



Shown here is the Alpharetta, Georgia Community Center Project, built by Arco Building Systems in conjunction with Beers Construction Company.

done numerous projects with Beers Construction Company. The first of these projects was the Alpharetta Community Center in the prestigious Atlanta suburb of Alpharetta.

"We were trying to provide the city a building with an upscale, contemporary appearance, yet use standard designs to keep the costs low. After a few weeks of discussion, we arrived at a great final design that accomplished everything we wanted," Freeman said. "We very much appreciate Beers' approach to metal building design and construction and hope that other construction companies will follow their lead."

Serving The Customer

Freeman believes that many metal building contractors don't want anything to do with a project unless they can do the whole thing and they aren't interested in just supplying the steel and erection. He explained, "We are able to offer the time and patience to our customers that will allow us and the customer to understand what is really needed in the way of metal construction for a particular project. We also offer the superior customer service required for a customer that may not be able to explain his problem clearly."

Customers who are going to be the property and building owners make up the largest segment of Arco's market. "If you are not a company that

deals primarily with end use customers, it's hard to change gears to meet their needs. You have to be able to read between the lines of what is said and written to get to what the customer really wants," Freeman noted. "We have to let the customer express their needs, then be able to provide a building at the lowest possible cost that will meet those needs. We help the customer design a structure that is not only attractive, but that does not require him to pay for things he really doesn't want or need in order to keep the costs low."

Along with catering to customers' precise needs, Arco stresses that no job is too small. "Many metal building companies are not interested in small jobs, but a small building may solve a problem just like a larger building. Besides, you never know how big that customer's next building may be," Freeman said.

Freeman reiterates that not only are small jobs important, but small details in a building, regardless of size, are just as important. He added, "We always specify ZAC fasteners, PBR roofing and reinforced insulation be used. These upgrades cost very little but add a huge amount to the attractiveness and longevity of a metal building. It's a bargain that a lot of customers wouldn't know to take advantage of.

"We have the most knowledgeable sales staff I know of. Most have over seven years of experience and over

five years with Arco. They are pros at working with customers who need the extra time and attention paid to the details that we must provide. For this sales force, working with an experienced contractor is a luxury," Freeman instructed.

The company's sales and operations are headed up by general manager Dick Betsch, who has been in the metal building industry since 1973 and has been a district manager over the course of 18 years with A&S, USA, Atlantic and Pascoe. "His knowledge and experience with all aspects of metal construction adds tremendously to Arco's ability to get a job done and done right," Freeman explained.

In addition to other steps, an order is checked three times before it is entered to insure accuracy. Four full-time customer service representatives make sure the customers' needs are met.

As far as metal building erection is concerned, Arco does not provide that service directly. Arco tries to match experienced erectors with its customers geographically.

"When you're as spread out as we are, there is no way we can economically send erectors out from a central location. We try to match our customers with erectors that are located as close to those customers as possible and even quote what the erector will charge."

He feels this system works well, "Although most jobs go smoothly, if there is a dispute, the erector and owner generally work things out. If they can't do that, then generally I get involved. All the erectors know that if a job is not completed properly, they won't be referred to any more customers," Freeman stated.

The Future Outlook

Arco has approximately 100 projects underway and foresees continued strong demand for metal building products. The company feels this is the result of a strong economy, increased applications for metal construction and architectural acceptance of pre-engineered theories.

"Whether our customer is a contractor, a developer or an end-use customer, Arco is ready and willing to help them grow into the 21st Century."

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Thunder Ridge Bar & Grill located in Maggie Valley, North Carolina. Arco Building Systems built the 9,000 square foot facility.



One of the eleven buildings which Arco completed for an office complex in Snellville, Georgia.



Arco Building Systems provided Starcadia Entertainment complex located in Macon, Georgia.

People Who Know Buy Arco

Below are a few more quality built
buildings by Arco Building Systems



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