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CHASCO Constructors

See how this company got its start as father, sons turn summer side venture into multifaceted firm



**Chuck Glace,
President**

A Message from the Vice President



Bruce Truesdale



Dear Valued Customer:

As citizens we are being challenged to come together to defeat COVID-19; I'm confident that as a society we will meet these challenges. In response to the pandemic, WPI is taking appropriate measures to ensure the safety of its customers, employees and suppliers.

All of our branches are open and functioning, and we are utilizing technology to meet the needs of our customers. We are all in this together and believe that people helping people is a powerful concept that we must adhere to now more than ever.

Technology is a part of our everyday lives. During the past several years, its prominence in the construction, mining, quarry and other equipment-intensive industries has grown astronomically. Today's machinery is more advanced than ever with integrated GPS and telematics that provide information remotely to enable tracking and automation.

Komatsu has always been on the cutting edge. Twenty years ago, it began looking at ways to implement this technology into its construction machinery. Hours and location were the first bits of information supplied by what, in time, became KOMTRAX. Today, it and KOMTRAX Plus for mining machines, offer a wealth of data that can potentially lower your total cost of ownership. See more about the history and evolution of this innovative tool in this issue of your WPI Update magazine.

Komatsu believes in serving as a total solutions provider and that includes being a source for financing. The Komatsu & You article, featuring Komatsu Financial President Rich Fikis, gives insight on why more than 80 percent of Komatsu machines are financed through Komatsu Financial.

As always, if there's anything we can do for you, please call one of our branch locations.

Sincerely,



Bruce Truesdale
Vice President of CMD Operations

On the cutting
edge of
technology



UPDATE

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CHASCO Constructors gets its start as father, sons turn summer side venture into multifaceted firm



Chuck Glace,
President

At the beginning of the summer in 1982, Chuck Glace was preparing for college. His father, Chaz, a superintendent for a construction company, was in between projects and waiting at home for his next assignment.

"Dad said he would find us a side job that he, my brother Tony and I could do to make some money before I headed off to school," recalled Chuck. "He found a concrete project to build headwalls and inlets. As we were working on it, a second one came along, then another. By the end of the summer, we landed a big box culvert and realized that we had a viable option to start our own company."

CHASCO Constructors uses a mix of standard and *intelligent* Machine Control excavators, including PC360LC-11 models of both. "The advantages of the *intelligent* Machine Control excavators really stand out," said President Chuck Glace. "You can dig a trench and install pipe bedding without overcutting, putting too much material in or needing someone in the ditch constantly checking grade."

► VIDEO



Chaz, who retired from the business four years ago, was the namesake for the new venture called CHASCO Constructors. They focused on concrete work, and, in addition to headwalls, culverts and inlets, constructed driveways as well as curb and gutter. Now, CHASCO also does tilt-wall construction and architectural and stamped concrete.

"Early on, every time we did a job, it seemed like the dirt work was off, so Dad suggested we do that component ourselves," said Chuck. "We rough cut the site, and the utility contractor would come behind us and mess it up. That prompted us to add utilities to the mix. There are very few companies in the area that do all three, so that's an advantage."

Services fuel growth

Additional services helped CHASCO Constructors grow from a father and two sons into a firm that now has nearly 350 employees. Chuck and Tony maintain ownership, along with Chief Financial Officer and Vice President Charles King. Tony is Vice President and oversees CHASCO'S concrete division.

CHASCO Constructors currently has 18 concrete, nine underground utility and nine excavation crews that work within about an hour of Round Rock. They do site preparation for subdivisions and public roadwork for municipalities, counties and the state. Several years ago, the company called on Chaz's experience in commercial building when adding that to its list of services.

"Our preference is to provide a full site package for customers that encompasses all three divisions because we self-perform everything in those areas. While that's often the case, we do several jobs that only involve one or two," Chuck explained. "That's mainly when we sub out to some of the area's largest contractors with whom we don't compete. On the commercial buildings, we are the general contractor and take care of all the site prep, then sub out the building construction."

No matter the assignment, CHASCO Constructors takes great pride in the quality of its work, according to Chuck. He said that's



► VIDEO

Operator Jose Juan Briones places subbase materials with a Komatsu *intelligent Machine Control* D61EXi-24 dozer on a subdivision near Georgetown, Texas. "The dozer's accuracy is great, it's comfortable and easy to operate," said Briones. "I like running it."



led to a lot of repeat business and referrals, which, in turn, fueled growth. The company typically has close to 40 jobs going at a given time.

"Advertising has really never been a priority," he stated. "Our core value is to provide exceptional service. Everyone in the company believes in that. The fact that a high percentage of our projects are done for customers we have worked with on a long-term basis says a lot."

Dependable service from WPI

Similar to many of its customer relationships, CHASCO Constructors has worked with WPI for several years. It began acquiring Komatsu equipment from the Austin location approximately 25 years ago and today works with Unit Sales Representative Cameron Dunk.

"It's important to have a dealer that backs its machinery with dependable service," said Chuck. "If we are looking at an equipment package, we get with Cameron and ask him about features and benefits and to do a demonstration to determine exactly what we need. He and WPI have been great about doing that for us. After the sale, they ensure our uptime is maximized on the newer equipment through the Komatsu CARE program and by getting parts quickly when

we need them for our older units. They have always taken great care of us."

CHASCO Constructors has run several of its Komatsu excavators and loaders past 20,000 hours. "Price was the selling point early on; and we quickly realized how well-built Komatsu machines are. The quality is outstanding. We put 20 to 30 percent more hours on them compared to competitive brands," Chuck asserted.

CHASCO Constructors' current fleet includes older PC600 and PC400 excavators as well as new standard PC210LC-11 and PC360LC-11s and *intelligent Machine Control* PC360LCi-11 and PC490LCi-11 models with factory-integrated machine control. It also has *intelligent Machine Control* D51EXi-24, D61EXi-24 and D65PXi-18 dozers.

"Nearly 12 years ago, we started looking for ways to be more efficient, and we bought our first GPS grade-control aftermarket unit," said Chuck. "It worked fine, but Komatsu really upped the game with its integrated machines because it introduced the same attributes without the need for expensive masts and cables that have to be put up and taken down and can get damaged. The accuracy is spot-on and has greatly reduced the need for surveying and staking.



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Continued . . .

Equipment fits in with commitment to technology

... continued

"They fit right in with our focus on using the latest technology, such as drones to survey and software to build models of a site that

can be loaded into the machines," he added. "The advantages of the *intelligent* Machine Control excavators really stand out. You can dig a trench and install pipe bedding without overcutting, putting too much material in or needing someone in the ditch constantly checking grade."

Looking ahead

As CHASCO Constructors grew, the Glace brothers did find time to attend college. Chuck went to the University of Texas where he studied finance and accounting, and Tony earned a degree in construction science from Texas A&M.

"We believed our studies would be beneficial in building the business further, and they have been," said Chuck. "However, additional growth is probably not an option going forward. We are about the right size, and we don't want to get bigger just for the sake of it. We would rather continue to focus on ensuring we deliver projects on time and on budget." ■



WPI Unit Sales Representative Cameron Dunk (left) meets with CHASCO Constructors President Chuck Glace at CHASCO's office in Round Rock. "It's important to have a dealer that backs its machinery with dependable service," said Glace. "WPI has always taken great care of us."

A CHASCO Constructors utility crew installs storm piping and structures with a Komatsu PC490LCi-11 excavator on a jobsite in Round Rock.



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Marv Selge (with Noah & Justin) / Selge Construction, Inc. / Niles, MI

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Crowd pours into Las Vegas for CONEXPO-CON/AGG, IFPE triennial gathering

The crowd was much better than expected under the circumstances,” said David Price, Chairperson of International Fluid Power Exhibition (IFPE), which had a co-located event with CONEXPO-CON/AGG’s show at the Las Vegas Convention Center and Festival Grounds. “We were very pleased with the strong showing from the 300-plus exhibitors at IFPE 2020, and we are looking forward to the 2023 gathering.”

Even amid concerns about COVID-19, CONEXPO-CON/AGG and IFPE drew large daily attendance. The showcase featured the latest machinery and technology for the construction, mining, scrap handling, waste, forestry and other industries. Registrations for the show totaled more than 130,000.

“CONEXPO is a great way to see what’s new,” said Seth Wisney with McGuirk Sand-Gravel of Mt. Pleasant, Mich. “It’s very impressive.”

Despite the last day being cancelled, the event reached some key metrics according to organizers, including overall contractor and producer attendance growth of 14 percent. Attendees purchased a record-breaking 75,622 tickets for educational sessions, a 46 percent increase from three years ago.

“We refer to this as the ‘heavy metal’ show, but it’s much more than that,” stated Mary Erholtz, CONEXPO-CON/AGG Show Chairperson. “It has giant machines, incredible exhibits, fantastic education and huge expectations. Organizers have a legacy of building and innovating on previous shows, and the 2020 gathering extended that record of success.”

Technology at the forefront

CONEXPO-CON/AGG highlighted technology in today’s and tomorrow’s construction industry with the Tech Experience. This exhibit emphasized the effects of artificial intelligence, autonomous equipment, big data, sustainability, smart cities and modern mobility.

“I’m amazed at what some of the minds at the Tech Experience think up,” said Helen Horner, Director of Education Programs at the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM), the organization that co-owns and operates CONEXPO-CON/AGG. “What we’re seeing in bringing all of these ideas to one place is how some connect to form new ideas. Hopefully, those germinate after the show to give us even more amazing technology to explore at the next CONEXPO-CON/AGG.”

Tech talk topics included Driving Decisions with Artificial Intelligence; Smart Cities; 3D Printing Buildings – Current Possibilities and Future Implications; Wireless Energy Transfer; and Prevention and Protection of Traumatic Brain Injuries.

“New ideas and connections are the core of what we want people to experience at CONEXPO-CON/AGG,” said Show Director Dana Wuesthoff. “The big iron and big deals are definitely fun, but the technology, information and education are what secure the future of the industry and the continuing viability of the businesses that attend and exhibit here.”

Attendees gathered information about equipment and technology from Komatsu personnel who answered questions and provided details about new machines, *intelligent* Machine Control 2.0, Smart Construction, MyKomatsu and much more.





► VIDEO

A large contingent of people checked out the Komatsu booth during the co-located CONEXPO-CON/AGG and IFPE show in Las Vegas.

“Creating Connections”

Komatsu, with its exhibit theme of “Creating Connections” was among those making a strong showing with both equipment and technology. The company debuted machines for multiple industries, including the D71PXi-24, its newest and largest hydrostatic transmission dozer. It features Komatsu’s *intelligent* Machine Control (iMC) 2.0, which also was introduced in Las Vegas.

Komatsu showcased its upcoming suite of 11 Smart Construction solutions that will roll out over the next year. By tapping into the Internet of Things, customers will soon be able to control construction planning, management, scheduling and costs, and optimize processes remotely and in near real time.

The D155CX-8 pipelayer, designed in conjunction with pipeline companies, made its global premiere in Komatsu’s 40,000-square-foot exhibit space. Previously previewed machines that were formally introduced at the event included the PC130-11 excavator and the WA475-10 and WA800-8 wheel loaders.

“CONEXPO provides a unique opportunity for contractors to see not only where the



Alec Stafford of Spawglass Civil Construction, Inc. visits the Komatsu booth at CONEXPO-CON/AGG.



Charlie Westerman of Austin Engineering Co., Inc. attends CONEXPO-CON/AGG in Las Vegas.

equipment industry is today, but also where it’s headed; and we believe Komatsu is leading the way,” said Rich Smith, Vice President, Product and Services Division. “We wanted attendees to see Komatsu’s commitment to advanced products backed by innovative solutions that can potentially reduce overall ownership and operating costs significantly. The feedback we received shows we achieved our objective.” ■



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Quarry Days guests from mining and aggregate industries demonstrate larger equipment at Arizona Proving Grounds

Komatsu recently hosted Quarry Days at its Arizona Proving Grounds in Sahuarita, Ariz. More than 140 customer and dealer attendees representing 25 different companies across mining and aggregate industries attended a session during the two-week event.

"Quarry Days is a unique opportunity to bring our customers into an actual mining site where they can operate equipment, and we can demonstrate it in an application that is representative of their working environment," explained Komatsu Senior Product Manager Joe Sollitt.

"We bring in a lot of larger gear and encourage customers to engage with our product experts, equipment trainers and staff to learn about the machines," he added. "The group sizes are limited each day so that guests and employees have more time to engage in meaningful conversation."

Showcasing new machines

The event highlighted the recently introduced Komatsu HD785-8 haul truck and previewed the WA475-10 wheel loader. The HD785-8 has a rated payload of 101.6 tons and offers operators a bird's-eye view with KomVision (see related article on page 15). The WA475-10 wheel loader has an all new hydromechanical transmission to increase efficiency.

"We're really excited to preview the WA475-10 because it's a major technological step that increases productivity and reduces fuel consumption," noted Sollitt. "The HD785-8 also includes a wide range of technological upgrades and is a perfect match with the WA900-8 wheel loader."

Additional Komatsu equipment spotlighted during Quarry Days were WA600-8 and WA900-8 wheel loaders, PC2000-11 excavator, D375A-8 dozer, GD655-7 grader and a HD605-8 haul truck. Other partner brand equipment included a P&H 44XT blasthole drill, P&H L-1350 wheel loader, a Montabert hammer as well as crushing and conveying equipment. ■



Joe Sollitt,
Komatsu Senior
Product Manager



Discover more at
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Tim Nice, WPI (left)
and **Robert Smart,**
Martin Marietta
check out equipment
at Quarry Days.

► VIDEO



A Komatsu WA900-8 wheel loader drops dirt into the bed of a Komatsu HD785-8 haul truck at Komatsu's Arizona Proving Grounds during Quarry Days. "The HD785-8 includes a wide range of technological upgrades and is a perfect match with the WA900-8 wheel loader," noted Komatsu Senior Product Manager Joe Sollitt.

intelligent Machine Control dozers help reduce pad construction time, 'perfect for reclamation'



Art Gutteresen,
Owner



Luke Leonard,
GPS Technician



Joey Timco,
Construction
Superintendent

PRanch owner Art Gutteresen turned a blizzard into a business. "Nobody could get to work, and there were oilfield companies installing wells on the property. I leased a motor grader to move the snow and open the roads for them. I think I moved the same snow every day for three months," he recalled.

Gutteresen saw an opportunity to provide additional resources to the oil and gas companies working the 32,000 acres that comprise Gutteresen Ranch, and that was the catalyst for Gusher Oilfield Services. It now offers drill pad, road and tank battery construction; grading; heavy hauling; and reclamation services, among others.

Proven results

To streamline operations, Gusher Oilfield Services GPS Technician Luke Leonard builds topographic maps using a data collector and rover. Then, he makes a design file that can be plugged into the company's Komatsu *intelligent* Machine Control D65PXi-24 and D39PXi-24 dozers and used for pad construction and reclamation.

"Our operators let the machines do the work; they're simple and have led to greater efficiency," shared Leonard. "We love the integrated system, which eliminates wasted

time or additional expenses that come with the masts and cables of traditional aftermarket GPS."

"The D65PXi pushes and carries a sizeable load; and with the six-way blade, operators can do all the mass dirt moving, slope cutting and finish work for pads with one machine," added Construction Superintendent Joey Timco. "Previously, depending on pad size and the amount of material to move, construction could take five to 10 days. Now, with the D65i, we've cut that time in half. The smaller D39PXi is perfect for reclamation, because it involves working in some tight areas that are close to well heads."

Gusher Oilfield Services mounted a permanent solar-powered GPS base station with Virtual Reference Station control in the middle of the ranch at a height of 27 feet. A Technical Solutions Expert with the local Komatsu distributorship assisted with setup and calibration.

"He was instrumental in ensuring everything functioned properly," said Leonard.

"Additionally, he trained our operators on the ins and outs of the system. His expertise ensured that we were up and running quickly to maximize production and efficiency." ■

A Gusher Oilfield Services operator builds a well pad with a Komatsu *intelligent* Machine Control D65PXi-24 dozer. "Our operators let the machines do the work; they're simple and have led to greater efficiency," said Gusher Oilfield Services GPS Technician Luke Leonard. "We love the integrated system, which eliminates wasted time or additional expenses that come with the masts and cables of traditional aftermarket GPS."

▶ VIDEO



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Hunter and Clint Shackelford
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Highly maneuverable rigid-frame truck delivers more hauling cycles for increased production

Mining, quarry and aggregate operations want to move large quantities of material as quickly as possible. Trucks with a tight turning radius, that are highly maneuverable when spotting to be loaded and positioning to dump, can provide an advantage in achieving those goals.

With a turning radius of 33 feet, 2 inches, Komatsu's new 1,140 net horsepower HD785-8 rigid-frame, off-highway truck helps users reach their objectives while delivering a payload capacity of 101.6 tons. The truck has a 7-speed, fully automatic transmission with two selectable reverse speeds. The Komatsu Advanced Transmission with Optimum Modulation Control System ensures smooth clutch engagement for a more comfortable ride and reduced material spillage.

Get more done in less time

"Thanks to its Tier 4 engine, the HD785-8 has the highest in-class horsepower in North America for the best travel performance on grade," said Robert Hussey, Komatsu Product Marketing Manager. "Additionally, it delivers

fast acceleration out of the pit when loaded and short return times to the loading area for more hauling cycles and increased production per hour."

The Komatsu Traction Control System is standard and automatically applies pressure to independent brake assemblies for optimum traction in various ground conditions, without the need for differential lock-up, so steering performance is not compromised.

"The wet multiple disc brakes on all four wheels provide excellent downhill brake retarding performance," said Hussey. "The Automatic Retard Speed Control maintains a selected downhill travel speed, rather than engine RPM, so operators can keep their focus on the haul road." ■



Robert Hussey,
Komatsu Product
Marketing Manager



Discover more

Quick Specs on Komatsu's HD785-8 Off-Highway Truck

Model	Net Horsepower	Payload Capacity	Industries
HD785-8	1,140 hp	101.6 ton	Aggregate, Quarry, Mining

Komatsu's new HD785-8 rigid-frame, off-highway truck has a turning radius of 33 feet, 2 inches, making it highly maneuverable. "It delivers fast acceleration out of the pit when loaded and short return times to the loading area for more hauling cycles and increased production per hour," said Robert Hussey, Komatsu Product Marketing Manager.



After 20 years, telematics system continues to help owners use equipment data for more cost-effective practices



▶ VIDEO
Steve Day,
former Komatsu
Director of Service,
now retired



Chris Wasik,
Komatsu Director of
Parts Marketing

Knowing where your machines are located and the number of hours on them are critical pieces of information when maintaining a fleet. Those capabilities were the original features of Komatsu's remote monitoring KOMTRAX telematics system, which celebrates its 20th birthday in 2020.

"After all of these years, those are still two important functions, although KOMTRAX has considerably more capabilities now," said Steve Day, who served as Komatsu's Director of Service in 2000, and was instrumental in the adoption and implementation of KOMTRAX. He recently retired from Tractor & Equipment Company where he was Executive Vice President/General Manager-Product Support. "It evolved into a tool for monitoring equipment health, idle time, fuel consumption and much more. The information can be used to address changes that lead to better practices, which reduce owning and operating costs."

Depending on the machine, today's KOMTRAX can deliver information on cautions, abnormality codes, actual working hours versus idle time, hydraulic relief hours, load frequency and digging hours, among other critical data. The latest version, KOMTRAX 5.0, is standard on

Tier 4 construction machinery and includes Komatsu Diesel Particulate Filter soot count, active regeneration time, operator identification and diesel exhaust fluid level.

"Early on, we recognized how valuable the data could be to customers, our distributors and to Komatsu as a manufacturer, and each has played a significant role in its evolution," emphasized Komatsu Director of Parts Marketing Chris Wasik, who also worked on the initiative that eventually led to KOMTRAX. "There was some discussion in the initial stages about what to charge for the service. However, we quickly saw such great potential benefit that we decided to provide it complimentary, and we still do."

Beneficial to all

Wasik said that Komatsu now monitors hundreds of thousands of machines equipped with the technology to analyze trends and assess data, which may determine manufacturing levels and inventory. Distributors keep track of equipment in their territories to determine when to perform service intervals, what parts to stock and to remotely diagnose error codes and more.

"The customer benefit is better support," said Wasik. "For instance, when a machine has a fault code, KOMTRAX sends an alert. Before driving to a customer's site to check the machine, the technician can pull the parts that may be needed and take them along. In the past, the technician may have needed to assess the machine, determine the required parts, then go back to the shop and get them. KOMTRAX reduces downtime, and because it shows where a machine is located, the tech can drive right to it, which saves time and travel expense."

Customers can keep an eye on their machines through a secure website via desktop and laptop computers, tablets or with a smartphone using the KOMTRAX app. McManus Construction, LLC Fleet Manager James Bedgood utilizes the service to research error codes as well as to track idle time and hours.

Equipment users can track a machine's hours, idle time, usage, operation modes and much more with KOMTRAX. "The increases in productivity and efficiency we get across the board with Komatsu are fantastic," said Dorado Construction Group Fleet Manager/Equipment Manager Clay Butler. "I see it every day when I look up the machines through KOMTRAX on my desktop computer or tablet."





KOMTRAX, Komatsu's remote monitoring telematics system, turns 20 this year and has evolved from a box that offered basic information on location and hours to an integrated system that provides comprehensive data on machine health, usage and more.

"If I'm out of the shop, I check it through the app on my phone," said Bedgood. "It's a great tool that allows us to be even more proactive regarding service."

Dorado Construction Group Fleet Manager/ Equipment Manager Clay Butler consistently uses KOMTRAX to track how his company's Komatsu equipment is running.

"The increases in productivity and efficiency we get across the board with Komatsu are fantastic," said Butler. "I see it every day when I look up the machines through KOMTRAX on my desktop computer or tablet. If a code pops up, it alerts us so that we can address it quickly."

Rizwan Mirza, Komatsu Manager, KOMTRAX – Technical Support & Production Quality, Products & Services Division said that this kind of end-user adoption has always been one of Komatsu's goals.

"We want customers to utilize it to its fullest and reap the benefits of what's available," added Mirza. "Whether it's basic hours and location or more advanced data, such as idle versus production time, economy mode versus power mode functionalities, unnecessary travel or something else, it's

beneficial to their operations. Komatsu and our distributors can consult with customers to use the information in a way that maximizes production and efficiency."

Total solutions tool

KOMTRAX has exceeded the initial development team's expectations. "Telematics were being used in the trucking industry, and someone had the foresight to see its applications for construction equipment," Day recalled. "We started with a box and put it on one excavator to do some field testing and see what we could do with the information."

"It was introduced on four machines, and the benefits were so great that we expanded it," added Wasik. "KOMTRAX was so well-received, that we manufactured retrofit packages for older models. Some customers put it on their competitive brands and other types of equipment to track them as well."

Mirza said predictive analysis could be the next step in the evolution of KOMTRAX. "A machine may tell the customer that it's nearly time to replace a component, for instance. We are working to marry it with our MyKomatsu website and other business aspects as part of our total solutions package." ■



Rizwan Mirza,
Komatsu Manager,
KOMTRAX –
Technical Support &
Product Quality,
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Brian (left) and Thomas Cronin / Prosperity Construction / Jackson, MS

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President Rich Fikis says Komatsu Financial customizes solutions to fit needs of individual businesses

QUESTION: More than 80 percent of Komatsu construction equipment is acquired using Komatsu Financial. What makes it such an attractive lending source?

ANSWER: During the past several years, we have made a concerted effort to be closer to customers and better understand their specific needs. It helps us know what they are looking for in a monthly payment; whether they do maintenance in-house or need long-term maintenance plans built into their payment or lease structure; what their machine applications are; and more. Those items are important in making sure we focus on their success, rather than simply providing blanket financing at a certain rate during a given time frame.

As an example, in some parts of the country winter can be especially rough for contractors. They may not work for an extended time. We can build payment skips into their financing that allow them to finalize purchasing or leasing decisions, maintain good cash flow and start making payments again in the spring when projects are up and running and their receivables are better.

I believe another reason is our strong relationship to Komatsu's distributor network. Komatsu Financial provides training and works closely with sales personnel at the distributorships to ensure they are every bit as qualified to talk about Komatsu Financial products as we are. We are in lockstep with one another.

QUESTION: How long does it take to receive a financing decision?

ANSWER: The average time is about four business hours after the distributor submits the application to us. That's our goal; however, the vast majority are quicker. That's due, in part, to having numerous repeat customers and automatic approval capabilities.

QUESTION: How much of your business comes from repeat customers?

ANSWER: More than 70 percent, which is an excellent number for our industry. A lot

of that is a result of our willingness to work with customers and being flexible; they really appreciate it.

QUESTION: Do you finance more than equipment?

ANSWER: Yes, we also finance Komatsu Genuine Parts and service handled by our distributor network. We pre-approve a specific amount to help make the decision to have maintenance and repairs done. Our standard

Continued...



Rich Fikis,
President, Komatsu Financial

This is one of a series of articles based on interviews with key people at Komatsu discussing the company's commitment to its customers in the construction and mining industries – and their visions for the future.

Rich Fikis started with Komatsu Financial in 1997. At the time, he and his colleagues worked in a building that was separate from Komatsu America. "That's no longer the case; today we are a much bigger part of the picture," said Fikis. "We are closer than ever to our distributors and customers, which allows us to better understand their perspectives on financing and how we can build plans and programs tailored to their needs."

Fikis began his career in the operations area and spent four years in collections before moving into credit and then to a regional manager position. He also worked in financial planning and analysis for Komatsu America before becoming President of Komatsu Financial.

"I really enjoy going out to our distributors and sitting down with customers, listening to what their needs are and finding solutions to help," said Fikis.

He and his wife, Tami, have three sons who are active in sports, and the couple enjoys attending their athletic events.

Working to better utilize technology

... continued

term is 15 months of equal payments, which allows for a major repair without hampering monthly cash flow; however, we can develop customized payment plans as well.

QUESTION: What does the future hold for Komatsu Financial?

ANSWER: We are looking at some enhancements to tailor lease programs specifically to Komatsu Care Certified used machinery. We can look at KOMTRAX and check distributor records to verify that all of the services were done as scheduled, so when those machines go out, we and the customer are confident in their condition and value.

We continue to better utilize technology, and right now we are getting ready to launch a more dealer-friendly portal that will allow them to quickly submit an application and receive lease quote information. The enhancement of our KomatsuFinancial.com website continues as well and will offer customers the option to make payments, view their information, pull up invoices and more.

QUESTION: What is your outlook for 2020?

ANSWER: Everything we see shows that the general fundamentals of the economy are strong. Low unemployment is a positive, as are the manufacturing indexes of late. We still think there's some opportunity in the housing market. All indicators point to another strong market in 2020. ■

Repeat customers account for more than 70 percent of Komatsu Financial's business. "That's an excellent number for our industry," stated President Rich Fikis. "A lot of that is a result of our willingness to work with customers and being flexible; they really appreciate it."

President Rich Fikis says Komatsu Financial does more than provide blanket rates for certain periods of time. "During the past several years, we have made a concerted effort to be closer to the customers and better understand their specific needs," said Fikis. "That's why more than 80 percent of Komatsu construction equipment acquisitions are financed through Komatsu Financial."



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Dawn Mallard / D.Grimm, Inc. / Conroe, TX

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Recruitment event for high school and college students emphasizes careers and technology



Craig Yager,
Komatsu Training
Manager

High school and college students learned about technician careers when Komatsu hosted its annual Komatsu Recruitment Day at the Cartersville Customer Center in Georgia last fall. The day is part of a larger initiative to generate interest in heavy-equipment careers.

"Finding qualified technicians is an issue facing the industry," explained Komatsu Training Manager Craig Yager. "We worked with some local distributors to develop this event to help attract more people to our industry and provide information on what career opportunities are available."

This year's Recruitment Day brought in more than 100 attendees and four Komatsu distributors. General diesel program students from nearby Chattahoochee Technical College met and interviewed with distributor recruiting representatives and also had the opportunity to operate equipment. The high school students could talk with distributors, take part in machine walk-arounds and participate in an equipment-themed game show.

"Both groups had a unique experience here," said Yager. "For the college students, it was geared more toward a career path and getting them in front of potential employers because they are further along in their education. An instructor shared that students start talking

about attending this experience months in advance.

"The goal for high schoolers was to raise their interest in this field and build excitement for it," he added. "They aren't old enough to operate the equipment, so we focus on making it both fun and informational with some interactive activities."

'Eye-opening' experience

Yager says that events like this have taken on a greater role in an effort to ensure a qualified workforce for the heavy-equipment industry in the future.

"Being able to educate both the students and guidance counselors about the opportunities in our industry is very important," noted Yager. "There are so many more options available than a four-year degree. Plus, for some of these programs, the distributors or Komatsu will pay for the schooling. That's another big selling point we try to emphasize.

"These events also help us change the perception of this kind of work – we are a high-tech industry," he continued.

"It's more than grease and dirt; it's very technology-driven. When students see what is really going on, it opens their eyes to all of the possibilities." ■

More than 100 college and high school students participated in Komatsu Recruitment Day at the Cartersville Customer Center in Georgia.

"When students see what is really going on, it opens their eyes to all of the possibilities," said Komatsu Training Manager Craig Yager.



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Construction firms hold COVID-19 safety stand-downs

Hundreds of construction businesses across the country stopped work to hold safety stand-downs to focus on ways to protect workers and the public from COVID-19. Organized by the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), the events were designed to ensure that companies and employees are taking measures outlined by public health officials to protect both workers on active construction sites and the public.

"Construction firms across the country understand that the public is counting on them to protect workers and nearby communities from the spread of the coronavirus," said Stephen E. Sandherr, AGC's Chief Executive Officer.

Association officials noted that construction has been allowed to continue in most parts of the country because Department of Homeland

Security guidance has identified the industry as essential. At the same time, state and local government officials appreciate that the industry has a long history of complying with complex and ever-changing safety procedures. The stand-downs highlighted the importance of consistently following new COVID-19 safety procedures and practices. The organization has also shared safety suggestions and tool kits for members and organized a webinar focusing on ways to protect workers and the public.

"There is no margin for error when it comes to protecting workers and the public from the spread of COVID-19," Sandherr said. "Construction contractors understand that the only way to work amid the current pandemic is to work safely, and that is precisely what these stand-downs are helping to guarantee." ■



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Aileen Collins encourages both women and men to pursue service technician careers

When people ask Aileen Collins why she didn't become a doctor or a nurse, her answer is, "I sort of did. The patients are just bigger and not human. They come to us, and we take care of them. Like people, sometimes the issues are big. Other times, it's a checkup and some maintenance."

In 2018, Collins became the first woman to graduate from a Komatsu Advanced Career Training (ACT) program when she earned an Associate of Applied Science in Diesel and Heavy Equipment, Komatsu ATC Technology degree at Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OSUIT). The two-year curriculum at the school in Okmulgee, Okla., combines classroom and hands-on courses on campus, with real-world work in the shops of sponsoring Komatsu distributors.

Collins' patients represent a cross-section of heavy equipment, including dozers, excavators, wheel loaders and more. As a service technician for a Komatsu

distributorship, she can diagnose and fix what ails them.

'Very rewarding'

"I wanted a career that would never get boring," stated Collins. "This definitely hits the mark. No two days are ever the same, and there are always opportunities to learn something new."

While in high school Collins knew she wanted to pursue a career working on machinery. In 2014, she graduated with a degree in diesel and heavy equipment from a technical college, then went to work for her dad's plumbing business. After a few years, she decided to further her education.

"I didn't realize I was the first female until a couple months before graduation," said Collins. "I hope that more women consider becoming technicians. In fact, I encourage anyone – male or female – to pursue this as a career. It is very rewarding." ■

"I wanted a career that would never get boring. This definitely hits the mark."



Service technician Aileen Collins was the first woman to graduate from a Komatsu Advanced Career Training program. Now, she tells others about the benefits and opportunities afforded to service technicians. "I encourage anyone – male or female – to pursue this as a career. It is very rewarding," said Collins.

Can you spot what is different?

There are 10 differences between these two pictures. Test your power of observation, then scan the QR code to check your answers.



Scan to reveal
answers



Keep visual records of your jobsites for progress, legal purposes

The first thing most contractors think about when it comes to records is retrieving copies of important documents such as contracts, invoices and pay applications. They don't often consider photographing their work. They should do so, and no less than once weekly, not only of the sites where they are working but also of those areas that may impact their work or schedule.

Case in point – a stucco contractor received a delay claim from the general contractor asserting that he hadn't completed his work on time. Fortunately, the contractor had his construction records in the form of pictures, which showed post-tension cables sticking out of the building. With those in hand, he explained to the general contractor that he was prevented from putting swing stages down the building, something essential for him to apply the stucco. A handful of photos saved him from contending with a legal headache and an expensive delay claim.

Extra steps worth the effort

Photos weigh heavily in a court of law as well. Judges and juries don't necessarily understand construction. Having photographs that depict the situation make it much easier to prove a position. Simply taking photos for construction records is not enough; contractors also need to:

- **Include a description** noting when and where each picture was taken. Having thousands of pictures from a job, which are downloaded from Dropbox with no way to tell when or where they were taken, is no help. Photos need to show a visual history of the job to be useful. Identify all pictures with a date and time stamp as well as a note indicating where they were taken.
- **Save and back up all photos.** Anyone assigned to take photos on the job can easily use a cell phone to take the pictures. However, those visuals are useless if the person's phone is lost or damaged. Save all pictures in a central location and back up everything, regularly.

Contractors should also videotape their work – especially on large jobs, although still applicable to smaller projects – by walking the site and narrating where they are and what they are looking at and then adding the video to their construction records. If needed, they should go back and take screenshots of the video and indicate the time, date and location based on the narration.

It's said that "seeing is believing." When it comes to defending or prosecuting a construction case, nothing could be more true. ■



**Alex Barthet,
Attorney**

Attorney Alex Barthet (alex@barthet.com) serves as litigation counsel to many contractors and material suppliers. Board certified in construction law by the Florida Bar Association, he has been selected by his peers for inclusion in the Best Lawyers in America and the Florida Super Lawyers within the specialty of construction law.

Editor's note: This article originally appeared at TheLienZone.com.



Documenting jobsites with photographs and videos is a great way to track progress and keep visual records for potential claims, says attorney Alex Barthet.

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The advertisement features a large map of Texas in the center, with the WPI logo (a stylized 'W' and 'P') and the text 'A PEARCE INDUSTRIES COMPANY' overlaid. Surrounding the map are images of various construction equipment: a yellow Komatsu bulldozer, a yellow Komatsu excavator, a green excavator, a yellow wheel loader, a yellow skid steer loader, and a yellow backhoe loader. The background is a textured, light brown surface.

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