Pace Plumbing
Andru Coren and Harold Block
“We don’t have a tangible product. What we do is not magical. Our product is our integrity, responsiveness and ability to solve problems. We complete a project on schedule and within budget,” says Harold Block, Chief Executive Officer and founder of Pace Plumbing Corp. While this formula may not be exciting, it has proven successful. Since its inception in 1968, the company has grown and prospered. In the last 10 years, Block and his partner Andru Coren, President, have quadrupled Pace’s volume to $40 million dollars.

One of the main reasons for Pace’s increased volume is the effort they’ve put into the service and maintenance work. “We try to be a little bit more attentive, a little bit more accessible, and a little bit more responsive than the competition.” “Our company’s attitude is to find a way to say ‘yes we can’, instead of ‘no we can not’, says Block. This attitude has served them well in the building management community. “We understand that when a building engineer calls in the middle of the night, he needs help now, not tomorrow morning,” says Block. “We’ve focused on building owners and managers for service oriented work. We feel that our willingness, range of expertise and ability to service the owner/management sector sets us apart from the small service only plumber.”

Proof of the company’s dedication to providing this level of service can be seen in the list of their projects, some of which include: the Statue of Liberty, The Central Park Zoo, Madison Square Garden, Radio City Music Hall, Chelsea Piers, and the Russian Tea Room. All of those projects were high profile, demanding projects requiring the most efficient professional team. “We think that played a significant role in Pace being awarded these projects,” noted Block.

“Our specialty is plumbing,” notes Coren. “That means every aspect of the trade. There are companies that claim expertise in service, restaurants, or high rise construction. Our feeling is that to restrict your level of competence in any one area is a mistake. Pace is a company that can complete a core and shell high rise for the developer, outfit a hotel for the tenant, plumb the restaurant and health club for the subtenant and service the whole package,” says Coren. “We feel this ability is unique.”

Pace’s dedication to servicing their clients is evident at 6:00 AM when they open their doors, while their competition starts work between 7:30 and 8:00. In addition, Block and Coren avail every client their personal access on a 24/7 basis. “We turn the world upside down for people. All these little things add up,” states Block.

More than just providing good service, however, Pace’s ability to grow as much as it has can also be attributed to their devotion to innovation. Explains Block, “We like to go after the unusual jobs that not everyone is willing to undertake.” Chelsea Piers was just such a job. Initially told that their bid was two high, Pace offered a redesign. “Looking at the job, we saw the design as planned required a lot of work being done using boats as platforms. After convincing the owners that with a redesign we could elicit large savings we were awarded the job. We wound up completing the job without boats which created a very successful job for Pace and a savings for the owners of over a half million dollars.”

Two more unusual jobs recently completed by Pace were The W Hotel and Ian Schrager’s latest hotel, The Hudson. Both projects were complete gut renovations of over 700 rooms, restaurants and core systems. Ironically both hotels remained open throughout the construction,
Right up our alley,” states Coren. “This is just the type of situation that we thrive on. Both projects were completed within budget and on time.” As a testament to Pace’s quality and commitment, both projects utilize Pace as their ongoing service provider.

From a business perspective Block credits Coren who happens to be his son-in-law, for making it possible for the company to operate more innovatively internally. “As business grew, we needed a more tech driven approach. Andru has tried to provide that approach and in doing so has taken the business to another level.”

The way our industry is structured, we are on the bottom of an inverted pyramid,” notes Coren. “We have to deal with everyone from the Building Department to the Department of Environmental Protection, architects, engineers and most importantly with the general contractors, building managers, and developers. If any of the steps along the way have difficulty, we are looked to for a resolution to the problem.”

Block and Coren share the marketing responsibilities. Together they developed a marketing program in the 90's that enabled Pace to claim a large share of New York City's toilet rebate program, including the replacement of over 18,000 toilets in Co-op City. The marketing included mailings, local newspaper ad campaigns and most importantly, personal seminars given by Block and Coren to co-op and condo boards throughout the city. "Harold and I were at every board meeting we could attend for over 6 months. Every third night would find us at a board meeting making a presentation. The personal touch made a difference,” says Coren.

While Coren's ascension has given Block the ability to personally take it down a notch, Coren credits Block for being the kind of person that has the ability to teach and release the reins of a business started over 30 years ago. Block states, “I know that when I throw the ball in the air Andru will be there to catch it and run with it. “It helps that he always throws touchdowns,” says Coren.

Coren and Block see a lot more on the horizon, “We would like to enhance our service division and add to an already strong client list. We would like to continue with a slow steady growth, with a goal of doubling our volume again within five years,” says Coren. “The growth and success we've experienced has been due to dedication, teamwork, diligence, and luck,” concludes Block. “We plan to keep up the Pace!”

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For nearly 35 years, under the same ownership, Pace Plumbing Corp. has provided commercial building owners and managers with all phases of construction, service, and maintenance. Our product is plumbing and fire sprinklers. Our service is integrity, responsiveness, and problem solving.

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