



The Orchids Paper Products Paper Mill will cover roughly 50 acres when completed. <<

From Scratch

M3 HAS LEVERAGED ITS COMPREHENSIVE EXPERTISE INTO A PROMISING FUTURE. BY CHRIS KELSCH

M3 Construction CEO Michael Steimle said "yes" to a challenge and founded a company in the process.

As the general contractor for Orchids Paper Products' new Barnwell, S.C., facility, Steimle brought a wealth of experience in designing and building paper mills. "I actually started off in the paper industry as an engineer in a paper mill," Steimle says. "We can design it, we can build it and we can operate its equipment. Few other contractors can sit on all sides of the project table the way we can."

Because of that experience, Orchids Paper had no problem in trusting him with Steimle's first major project in 2015. "From the beginning, Orchids showed a get-it-done mentality and no-nonsense attitude in building teamwork," Steimle says.

Stellar Beginning

Over the past few years, Steimle has formed a strong relationship with Orchids Paper on the design side. When Orchids' CEO asked him if he could build the project as well, Steimle had one response. "I said, 'Absolutely,'" he recalls, even though he knew he had to 1) obtain a contractor's license and 2) start a contracting company from scratch in the process.

"I always gravitated toward construction; it is what I am truly passionate about. I was always determined to work for myself as well," Steimle notes. "The opportunity this project presented was just the catalyst I needed to make the jump and leave everything else behind."

Steimle says M3 puts the customer first. "We don't just say that lightly," he explains. "In our experience most owner-contractor

relationships seemed to be adversarial and we aim to change that. Putting the owner first, spending money as if it were our very own, trying to de-scope and value-engineer costs down are what we do best and it serves our customers as well. Again, I don't

*M3 Construction Inc. -
Orchids Paper Products
Paper Mill*

www.m3gc.com

• Headquarters: Barnwell, SC.

• Employees on site at peak: 275

"We only hire the self-directed types who believe in honesty, integrity and refusal to fail."

- Michael Steimle, CEO



M3 is dedicated to partnering with its customers, as well as its subcontractors and vendors.

think you will find another contractor that fights as hard for their customer as we do.”

The entire project will be completed in two phases. The first phase was a 300,000-square-foot tissue converting building, for which M3 was the construction manager. “We suspected the first phase was a bit of a trial,” he says. “Our goal was to make the decision to use anyone else for the second phase seem like a really bad idea.” Once he passed that test, it was on to the second phase, which was the 100,000-square-foot recycled pulp and paper mill itself, with Steimle this time serving as general contractor.

Once completed, the entire project will take up roughly 50 acres and should bring about 134 new permanent jobs to Barnwell. Orchids produces bulk tissue paper from recycled and virgin fibers and converts it into a full product line of consumer tissue products. Once it is fully operational this spring, the facility should allow Orchids to greatly improve its service to a growing customer base in the Southeast.

Belief in Partnerships

Steimle’s strong belief in partnerships extends beyond his primary customer. “I don’t want to just set up partnerships with my customers,” he explains. “I want to set them up with my vendors. If we can’t trust our subcontractors as much as the owner trusts us then the whole system will fail. All it takes is one guy acting selfishly to spoil it for everyone.”

That approach has served him very well on the paper mill project, which was not without significant challenges, namely weather.

“In fall of 2015, we had record rainfall; in fact, we even had a rare 100-year rainfall event.” Steimle remembers. And things didn’t get any easier the following year. In fall 2016 a tropical storm was followed by Hurricane Matthew, adding more difficulties. “We really pushed hard to get the building dried-in as soon as possible,” Steimle recalls. “We learned how bad wet conditions can be and applied that learning wisely in Phase II.”

Unfortunate conditions such as those also put a huge focus on safety. Again, Steimle relies on partnerships to keep everyone safe: “We always have a weekly site safety audit, and each subcontractor is not only required to attend but they must lead the audit and the subsequent safety meeting, going over their own procedures and how it relates to the safety of everyone involved. No one wants to

TR BUSSEY CONSTRUCTION

dba Country Way

706-722-0927



**QUALITY &
SERVICE**

**COMMERCIAL
AND INDUSTRIAL**

723 LANEY WALKER BLVD. EXT., AUGUSTA, GA 30901



Industrial | M3 CONSTRUCTION INC. – ORCHIDS PAPER PRODUCTS PAPER MILL



have their peers have to weigh in on what their own company needs to improve upon so they all self-manage as a result.”

Off and Running

So far Orchids Paper is very pleased. A project such as the Barnwell plant involves a lot of complex coordination. Equipment purchases are made early due to long lead times, engineering kicks off early because of

the complexity and effort required. Everything has to be timed just right or problems will fall like dominoes. And despite all of the weather difficulties, Steimle was able to save significant time and materials with the construction of the basement.

“Instead of using typical excavation techniques and double-sided formed concrete walls, we drove sheet pile instead and used single-sided forms where needed,” he says.

“However, for most of the basement we just let the sheet pile become the basement wall. We accelerated the schedule a significant amount and that acceleration paid for the higher cost associated with piling and anchors. After doing it once, we have some new ideas that will accelerate the schedule even more on the next project.”

For Steimle, the near completion of this project has allowed him to launch his own



Johnson, Laschober & Associates, P.C. renders professional design services for institutional, industrial and healthcare complexes throughout the Southeast. The firm provides:

- Architecture
- Interior Design
- Civil Engineering
- Structural Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Fire Protection Engineering
- Landscape Architecture



1296 Broad Street 701 East Bay Street, Suite 411
 Augusta, Georgia 30901 Charleston, SC 29403
www.theJLAgroup.com



Let us help you create your next facility.



M3 takes pride in growing while constructing a state-of-the-art industrial facility.



company, M3 Construction. And already, its future prospects look very bright. "The tissue industry is a pretty tight-knit industry, so once word of this project gets out, I imagine there will be some interest in other projects as well," Steimle states.

For now, though, he is content to devote as many resources as possible to his primary customer. "We're very committed to Orchids

Paper," Steimle says. "We've been approached about other work but we've committed to grow at the same pace as Orchids in order to consistently provide the level of service we know works best for both of us."

Strong Foundation

This healthy partnership has allowed M3 to expand from just two employees when the Orchids project began to 20 presently. Again, Steimle's strong belief in partnerships comes into play.

"I want to form partnerships with the people I employ," Steimle explains. "For me, that's really the most satisfying part – building a company while building a state-of-the-art industrial facility. Building more than a place for our employees to work ... building a culture based on tenacity."

Though the company is still in its infancy, Steimle has been very pleased so far. "We've been very fortunate with who we have been able to hire," he says. "So far I have been able to live up to what I have promised every new-hire, which is my refusal to write an employee handbook full of inane rules and things that should come naturally and without explanation.

"My policy is to have as few policies as possible," Steimle declares. So far his vision is turning out well, including his approach to community involvement. Steimle is a former board member of the local chapter for Habitat For Humanity, and in his present position can donate excess materials from various projects to the group.

Given his ability to execute his vision so far, the future of M3 Construction looks promising. ♦