

SAUERWEIN CONSTRUCTION



WHERE QUALITY LEADS THE WAY

by Gina Diorio

Above: Dining area with drywall. Soffits showing the curved linear HVAC diffusers and soffit lighting.

QUALITY CONSTRUCTION, ATTENTION to detail, and hands-on leadership are what customers can expect to find when they go to Sauerwein Construction. This family-owned and operated general contractor, located in Wichita, Kansas, has been specializing in commercial construction for over 30 years and has completed projects ranging from educational and religious facilities to retail and industrial space.

Founded by Michel Sauerwein as a sole proprietorship in 1976, S & S Construction, as it was then called,

soon began to attract offers for larger jobs. Michel's son, Frank, who had been working for another contractor in the area, left his position that same year to help his father's growing business, and in 1977, the company incorporated as Sauerwein Construction. Thirty years later, Sauerwein Construction remains a family business, with Frank as President of the company, his wife, Bev, the Office Manager, and his brother, Rudi, who joined the business in 1979, the company's Vice President.

Today, Sauerwein Construction has between 20 and 30 employees and completes between 30 and 40 jobs per year, with job size varying from \$30,000–\$40,000 for smaller remodeling jobs up to \$4–5 million for larger jobs. Like size, job type also varies, with Frank Sauerwein noting that projects tend to run in cycles.

The company's philosophy more than its construction type, however, separates it from the competition. "The main thing [that separates us] is our commitment to quality construction and our attention to detail," Sauerwein notes. "We are very committed to sticking with quality construction, whatever the cost is."

In addition, the company is willing to take on challenging jobs. "We try to look for some specialty jobs and not the run-of-the-mill jobs," Sauerwein says. "We try to take on jobs that the other guys wouldn't want to do. That's a little niche—we're not afraid to take on some jobs that others might not [take on]."

One such job was Piztros Restaurant in Wichita, which Sauerwein Construction completed in 2006. A very labor-intensive project, this was

a unique construction full of various shapes and features, including rounded ceilings, LED lighting, and water-jet-cut tiling. In fact, Frank Sauerwein doubts there was one square corner in the entire restaurant.

In 2006, the company also completed another significant project: the expansion of the Cargill Learning Center at the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita. This multifaceted project was unique not only in the variety of building styles utilized to complete it—including stained colored concrete for the courtyard, structural steel framing with limestone and veneer, and cast-in-place, colored, sandblasted concrete for the walls—but also in the sustainable features integrated in the structure. For example, the carpet is made from recyclable materials, the Terrazzo floor contains recyclable glass, and the large windows lining the upper walls are specifically designed to minimize solar effect.

The Learning Center was one of the first projects in Wichita to incorporate green building techniques, and for its work, Sauerwein Construction received the Award of Excellence presented by the Associated General Contractors of Kansas for the most

Below: Radius silestone pizza bar area with radius plexiglass shield. Main restaurant bar in the background.

SAUERWEIN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: Wichita, KS

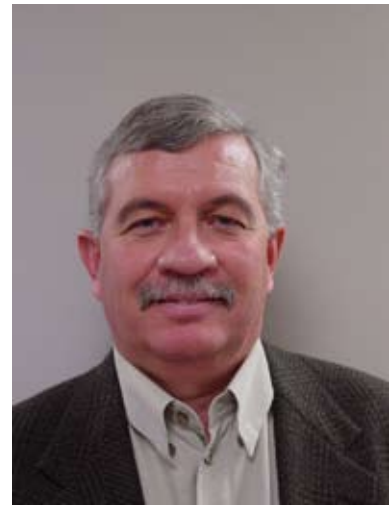
AREA OF SPECIALTY:
Commercial Construction

ANNUAL REVENUE:
Approximately 11 million in 2007

**REVENUE GROWTH IN
RECENT YEARS:**
Up from \$8–9 million approximately
4–5 years ago. Slow pace yearly;
had one year at over \$12 million

EMPLOYEES: Between 20 and 30





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outstanding project in the state.

Like all companies, Sauerwein Construction has experienced its share of challenges over the years, the chief of which has been finding good quality people. Yet, when found, they tend to stay, as evidenced by the company's employee retention rate. "We've had a pretty strong group of people that have stuck with us," Sauerwein says, noting that one superintendent has been with the company throughout its entire 30-year existence. "We treat them well. They know what we expect of them, and they know what to expect of us. In addition, we're a little more hands on in management, a little more involved in helping manage when they need help."

Despite "growing pains," however, the quality and consistency of Sauerwein Construction's work has kept business strong over the years. In fiscal year

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A MESSAGE FROM COMFORT SYSTEMS

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2007, the company did close to \$11 million in business, up from approximately \$8–9 million five years ago. This is in keeping with Frank Sauerwein's goal of steady growth. And since the company does very little advertising, it is also a testimony to the reputation Sauerwein Construction has built. Most of the company's business comes from referrals, and a significant amount is from repeat clientele.

Sauerwein's goals for the future include continuing the company's growth, possibly taking on larger projects, and diversifying more into project development. One thing is certain, however: Sauerwein Construction will keep serving its customers with the same family tradition of excellence begun over 30 years ago. ABQ

SAUERWEIN
CONSTRUCTION

Opposite, left: Front entrance to the new Cargill Learning Center of colored cast-in place concrete walls along with limestone veneer. The reflective glass over the atrium is indicative of the energy saving features incorporated in this building. Opposite, right: Frank Sauerwein joined the family business in 1976 and took over as president 10 years later. He holds a BS degree in Construction Science from the College of Engineering at Kansas State University. Below: The interior of the Cargill Learning Center.

