



SNOW BUSINESS

By Amy Materson



Hitachi powers Brix and Stix Construction's dominance in the Concord, New Hampshire, winter maintenance market

While many dream of turning an avocation into a career, few can say they've made it a reality. Not so for Dick Benson of Brix and Stix Construction in Concord, New Hampshire, who, when facing a crossroads, chose to turn an activity he enjoyed into a lifelong career.

In the late 1970s, Benson was an industrial engineering manager and had held positions with Northern Telecom, BAE Systems and the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, among others. He'd been traveling quite a bit, and his employer decided to send him on an overseas project. He thought about it but decided a multiyear project away from home just wasn't what he wanted to do. Benson declined the project, and his company bought out his employment contract. Buyout in hand, he headed for Aruba, where he decided to change course entirely.

From pastime to profession

"I'd built a house on the side, and I thought to myself, 'I think I can do some small contracting,'" Benson says. Forty years later, Brix and Stix Construction handles between \$5 million and \$7 million in jobs annually, and takes on a range of projects including residential and light commercial building, renovation and remodeling, and porch and deck construction.

He's built a loyal following of satisfied customers in the central New Hampshire area, and over the past four decades, has become a principal figure in the industry. He has mentored employees who have gone on to start their own businesses, and has stepped up to serve as president of the local homebuilders association. He's most happy when giving back to the community, though, devoting time and treasure to a wide range of nonprofit organizations, including the local Boys & Girls Club of America, and Hammers for Veterans, a group that provides renovations and holds fundraisers for service members, or their spouses and families.

Dependability on demand

Although Benson and Brix and Stix's dozen employees enjoy a strong reputation as a reliable, quality small contractor, they're at their best when the temperature dips below freezing. Benson's team is a go-to in an area of the country when quickly and efficiently reducing the effects of snow and ice is critical.



After 40 years in the business, Dick Benson of Brix and Stix Construction in Concord, New Hampshire, has snow and ice management down to a science.

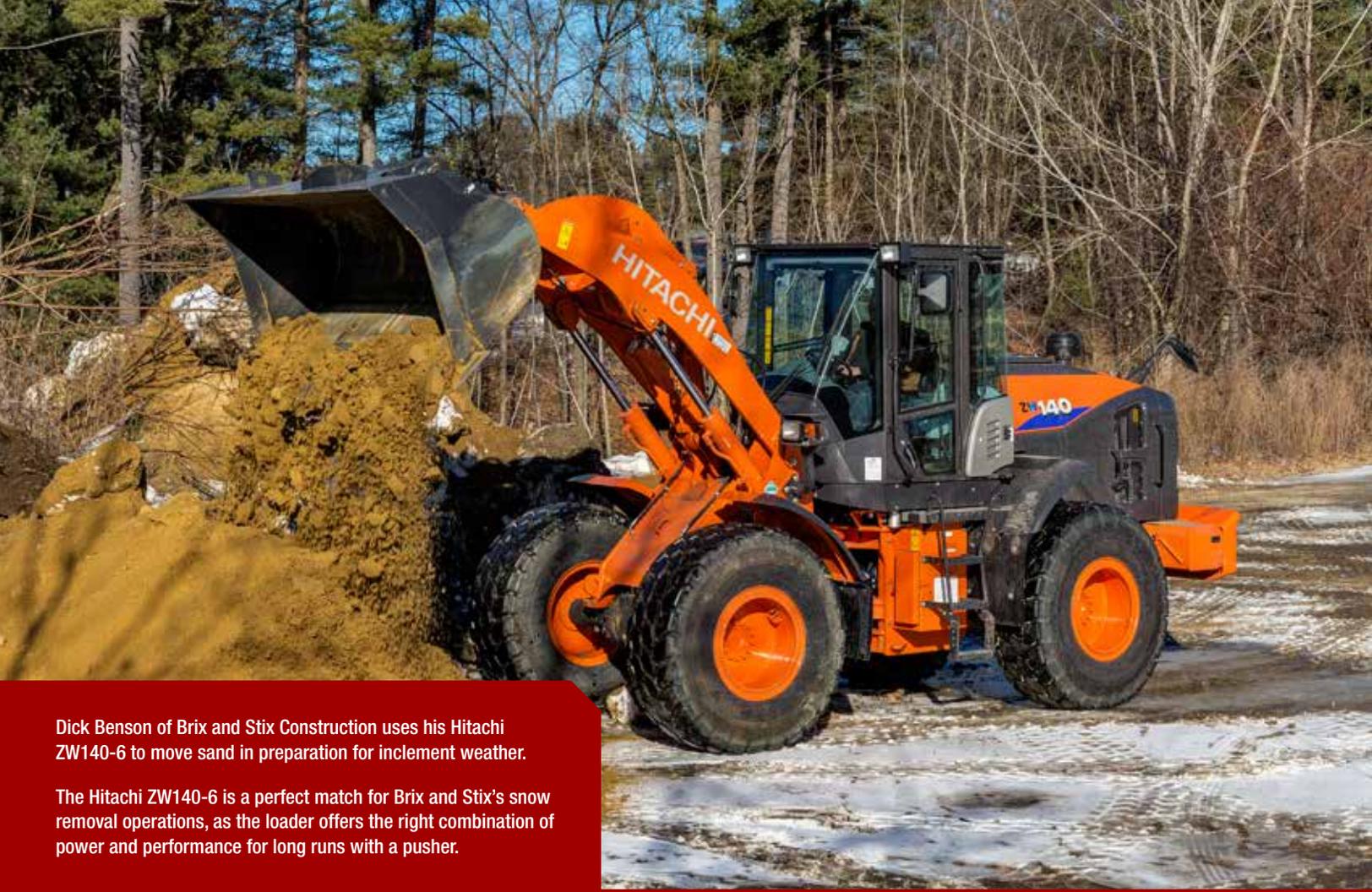


For Benson, the most important part of the dealer relationship is reliable support. Jeff Morse, left, the general manager of Chappell Tractor in Concord, has been there for Brix and Stix for nearly a quarter century.

Benson says that Brix and Stix can complete their entire snow removal route with just two wheel loaders and a backhoe. "It's extremely efficient," he says. "Of course, some loaders are better than others. I look at dependability in a machine."

Benson says he's impressed with the level of operator comfort with the Hitachi ZW140-6. "You can go 27, 28 mph, and it doesn't bounce at all," he says. "The ride control is just great."

In fact, easy maneuverability is a key feature of the loader, delivered via a hydrostatic control system. Two work modes are offered, allowing the operator a smooth transition between speeds and overall smooth operation.



Dick Benson of Brix and Stix Construction uses his Hitachi ZW140-6 to move sand in preparation for inclement weather.

The Hitachi ZW140-6 is a perfect match for Brix and Stix's snow removal operations, as the loader offers the right combination of power and performance for long runs with a pusher.

The wheel loader's traction control system helps eliminate tire slippage, crucial for Benson's snowy, slippery jobs. As it prevents wear and fuel waste, lowers running costs, and is effective for light applications, the ZW140-6 is a perfect match for Brix and Stix.

Superior support

Since he's using his machines in such harsh applications, Benson says support is extremely important to him. Even if his equipment is in perfect working condition, he wants to know help is always just a phone call away. That's where Chappell Tractor steps in. Benson has known General Manager Jeff Morse for more than two decades and has purchased approximately 20 loaders from the dealership.

"One of the most important things to me is knowing that I can call Jeff at two o'clock in the morning, and he'll answer," Benson says. "If we did have a breakdown, I know that we could grab another loader in the middle of the night."

That flexibility has helped Benson in the decision-making process overall; however, he says he rarely worries and takes everything in stride. "I've learned over the years to just go ahead and take care of something that isn't working for you," he says.

A support feature he's found useful is remote monitoring. "I've never given it much thought, but it's wonderful," Benson says. "You just get an alert, and you know what you need to take care of."

Morse says the reliability and power of the Hitachi are especially beneficial to Benson's applications. "The power is obviously the biggest benefit. The machine can tackle those long runs with its pusher and really get the job done."

Morse says that there's hardly anyone in the area who doesn't know Benson and his lengthy history, impeccable work ethic, and sterling reputation. "He's extremely well known around the surrounding area for snow removal and ice management," he says. "Of course, he's been at it for 40 years." ■