



B2 Contracting owner Brandon Harp (left) has a strong dealer relationship with Cowin Equipment's Adam Mikell.

Breakout Force Sells

B2 Contracting carves out niche in competitive Atlanta market

Brandon Harp, like many second-generation construction contractors, considers himself born into the business. Harp started out working for his father, and after his father retired, he worked for a cousin as a project manager.

In 2013, while the economy was in recovery from the 2009 downturn, Harp decided it was time to start his own firm. He launched B2 Contracting Inc., which specializes in comprehensive sitework, demolition and underground utilities.

"I started out basically alone," Harp says. "After my first commercial job, I hired three people." Harp hasn't looked back; his company now has 33 employees and is still growing.

Upward trends

The Atlanta market has been good to B2 Contracting and to

Harp. In the company's first year in business, he generated \$600,000. From there, the trajectory was straight up. Last year, he says he brought in 10 times that amount and is on track to generate between \$7 million and \$8 million for 2019.

"We've been pleased with our substantial growth," he says. "The economy has also grown, and the company is trending upward with the economy."

B2 Contracting operates within a profitable niche by working with large general contractors primarily on jobs inside Atlanta's perimeter urban market. Though it's a higher-profile setting, the jobs deliver higher contract values, and the company can complete the jobs with smaller numbers of equipment pieces.

In addition, the company works on projects ranging from downtown high rises to hotels at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

Productivity gains

With the type of projects and client relationships B2 Contracting manages on a day-to-day basis, a commitment to efficiency, quality and customer service is interwoven into daily operations. As a result, attention to detail in every respect is important. That's why, when it comes to equipment, Harp says he's more concerned about quality and the customer service before and after the sale rather than dollar signs.

It makes the dealer connection crucial for him, and it's why he's developed such a close relationship with his dealer rep, Adam Mikell of Cowin Equipment.

"I'm more of a service-oriented owner versus a price-oriented owner," Harp says. "I don't really shop price. I'm also not the easiest person to please, and we've got a good working relationship. We understand each other." Focusing on providing B2 with equipment that prevents costly downtime has been their guiding principle. Mikell says he speaks to Harp every day, checking on how things are going, and making sure expectations are met. When Harp wanted to rent a wheel loader over the winter, Mikell knew just what to recommend, pointing Harp toward the Hitachi ZW180-6 wheel loader.

"It was the right machine for him," Mikell says. "He needs breakout force combined with a low operating cost. The ZW180 averages about 3.8 gallons per hour, so it was the perfect size machine for him. It has the breakout force he needs to lift trench boxes and provides materials support for the pipe crews and loading trucks."

Five years of working together has given Harp plenty of opportunity to build trust in Mikell, so Harp took his recommendation and rented the machine. Five months later, he was ready to give it back — but only because he wanted to buy one of his own. One of the biggest selling points was that in all the time they'd had the machine, they hadn't experienced even one day of downtime.

After a positive experience, Harp says he decided to purchase one. "My guys loved it — they were really bragging on it."

Harp said he expected to find both fuel efficiency and productivity from the ZW180-6, but was shocked at the breakout force the machine provides for its size. "That's what surprised me about the 180," he says. "I didn't

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The Hitachi ZW180-6 offers breakout force with a low operating cost.

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Power and reliability weren't the only things that sold Harp on the ZW180-6. Additional features like telematics are critical in his business, making it possible for him to monitor fuel consumption and locate the equipment with ease. As a small contractor without a dedicated equipment manager, having a GPS tracker makes his day easier when times are hectic.

For Mikell, the match between contractor and machine couldn't have been better. "The ZW180-6 provided Harp with consistent, excellent performance with minimal downtime," he says.

Honoring commitments

For a contractor like Harp who has been in the business all his life, consistent on-demand performance is key to protecting his reputation as a dependable and trusted partner, and having solid partners such as Adam Mikell and Cowin Equipment helps him adhere to his core values. The principles have served him well and helped him earn repeat business.

Though at present he's able to cherry-pick his clients, Harp is interested in working on municipal projects and developing a new market for B2 Contracting. Even with an eye toward diversification, his focus will remain on keeping the customer satisfied — much like Hitachi.

"I founded my company on integrity, and we are big on follow through," he said. "If I make a commitment, I'm going to honor it, and not give you any excuses." ■

Watch the video to learn more
about the Hitachi ZW180.

