The Raymond Group

by Tim Stiller, Vice President – Area Manager, Raymond-Northern California, Inc.

Tim Stiller has served on the WACA board of directors for the past two years. Currently, he serves as secretary/treasurer for our board. He has worked over 25 years in the wall and ceiling industry, starting his career with Raymond-Northern California, Inc. in 1987. Tim is responsible for overseeing operations and business relationships with clients throughout the Northern California region. We're pleased to have Tim as a board director to help guide our association with his extensive experience and valuable expertise.

— Wall And Ceiling Alliance

History

The Raymond Group is a family-owned corporation that began in Southern California in 1936 as a union residential plastering company. In the 1940s and '50s, we employed over 2,000 craftsmen during much of this time, plastering thousands of residential track homes during the post-World War II era. In the late 1960s, as more residential construction went nonunion, The Raymond Group formed an interior drywall division and began moving toward more union-based commercial construction.

Our Bay Area division came about almost 20 years later, when in 1985, Raymond bought out JL Whittaker, a Bay Area acoustical ceilings and access-flooring subcontractor, expanding operations into Northern California. The first big project awarded to the newly formed Bay Area branch was San Jose's Fairmont Hotel in 1986. The Bay Area division operated as JL Whittaker for the first few years, transitioned to the Raymond name in the early 1990s and is now Raymond-Northern California, Inc. Raymond-Northern California, Inc. continued expanding to other markets, adding operations in Las Vegas, San Diego, and, recently, Seattle.

Present Operation

Raymond's line of primary services includes light-gauge framing, drywall, tape and finish, lath and plaster, EIFS, spray-applied fireproofing, acoustical ceilings, exterior rain-screen systems, and a few other specialty items. In Northern California, we have an office staff of 25 with a field crew approaching 300. The location of our work is primarily San Francisco, South Bay and East Bay. When the right opportunities present themselves, we'll also do work in Sacramento, North Bay and other parts of the valley. A couple of examples include the Ritz Carlton Hotel, built halfway up the mountain at Northstar ski resort near Truckee, and the Jackson Rancheria casino located in California's gold country near Jackson.

The types of projects we're interested in include high-rise residential, campus user facilities, office buildings, hotels, gaming facilities, retail, tenant improvements, labs and institutional facilities. A number of our projects have won recognition in the industry by earning WACA's Construction Excellence Awards (CEA). The Brewery, Winery & Food Pilot Facility at the University of California at Davis took awards for exterior and interior work in 2011, and the NEMA property at 10th and Market in San Francisco received a CEA for Residential Interior in 2014.

Current projects include the exterior scope of Facebook's new facility in Menlo Park. We have two high-rise residential towers in development in San Francisco: 399 Fremont and Trinity Phase III. We're also working on two office developments in the South Bay, Main Street Cupertino and Santa Clara Square. In addition, we're working on the Macy's store renovation and expansion in Walnut Creek's Broadway Plaza.

Market Challenges

As everyone in the industry is aware, there's a growing abundance of construction activity right now. The Bay Area economy is one of the strongest in the country, and at this point in time, a diminishing labor pool is becoming an increasingly bigger challenge as the Bay Area market continues to improve. We all strive to perform outstanding work while trying to beat the clock and meet deadlines. However, our ability to perform the work efficiently is becoming increasingly difficult, as expectations heighten and schedule durations get tighter and tighter. Effective organization, coordination, and preparation by all sub trades and general contractors are more critical today than ever before

to achieve any level of success in construction. This stipulation comes at a time when many experienced field leaders are retiring; replacing all that experience does not happen overnight. Experience and skill is accumulated over time — right now, the challenge is replacing good labor with limited time. As construction is picking up, we're racing not only to meet scheduling demands but also to grow our experienced labor pool. Given the current landscape, fulfilling this challenge will require significant effort.

Raymond Advantage

Raymond has been in business a long time, and over the years, we're fortunate to have developed and maintained an excellent reputation along the way. Our lengthy history and background speaks to the strength of the company. I think our ability to perform multiple scopes of work, both interior and exterior, and the fact that we self-perform most of what we do set us apart from much of the competition. We also have years of experience in design-assist and design-build methods of project delivery, and our in-house BIM capability helps streamline the extensive coordination effort required in that environment.

The size of our company and the diverse experience we bring to the table distinguishes Raymond. Our experience has grown into a strong resource that helps us overcome the challenges we encounter every day. At the same time, we recognize the long list of resilient and capable contractors we contend with, and complacency is never an option.

Raymond-Northern California's proven ability and reputation is reassuring to clients. This is especially true on challenging projects, where they need a construction team they can trust and feel confident in. I'm proud of Raymond's history as a company and our desire to constantly develop and improve operations in order to meet the demands of an ever-evolving industry.

WACA

I'm very proud to be serving on the WACA board alongside leaders of many of our industry's most respected companies. WACA as an organization is just now taking shape and ready to realize its full potential. With Frank's leadership and excellent staff, I'm really excited to see what the future brings in terms of how WACA continues developing effective ways of supporting our members and industry.