

Minority defense contractor primed for major success

By Peter Fretty

Getting a company in a position to receive steady work from the federal government takes persistence. Fortunately, this is something Vince Fudzie, owner of Dallas-based Triune Defense Contractor, understands quite well. Growing up in the face of adversity, Fudzie learned early that success comes to those who stay the course while keeping things in perspective.

As such, Fudzie told *MBN Texas* the most rewarding part of his career has been the ability to help deserving people catch a break and get a second chance.

"For example, a few years ago we took a chance on a formerly incarcerated and homeless man who ended up being awarded Construction Worker of the Year and eventually Veteran of the Year," he said. "He is currently a foreman for the company and is now able to take care of his family. This is what real life is all about – reconciliation."

Meeting Vince

With a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Washington and an MBA from the University of Michigan, Fudzie got his start in the construction industry as a business assurance consultant with Deloitte & Touche Real Estate Construction Group. After earning his MBA, he returned to the construction arena as a consultant in the business turnaround unit of PricewaterhouseCoopers, where he developed and analyzed operational reconstruction plans, business plans and final projections for distressed commercial and residential construction firms.

In 1997, determined to incorporate the best practices of the myriad clients he had served, Fudzie started Triune. As Triune's managing member, he serves as project executive for all of the company's construction projects.

Building a reputation

Over the past 10 years, Triune has primarily served as a commercial general contractor for the federal government. The company is a first responder for the Federal Emergency Management Agency as well as the Army Corp of Engineers during domestic and international crises. Triune is one of a handful of minority-owned contractors providing energy management and fueling services to the Department of Defense and other federal agencies.

Fudzie's firm began its federal contracting experience by doing small jobs for federal agencies. The firm has since gone on to serve just about every federal agency, as well as numerous state and local government agencies. "We take pride in meeting and exceeding customer expectation with quality and

integrity," he said.

The last major disasters to which Triune responded were Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, where it was a prime contractor during Operation Blue Roof for FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers. The goal was to remove debris and repair roof damage in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita in southeast Texas. This job gave Triune the opportunity to flex its quick-response capabilities. Within 48 hours after signing the contract, Triune's operations were underway, with over 200 boots on the ground.

At the height of the recovery operations, Triune employed and managed more than 500 skilled and unskilled employees, all of whom were recruited from the local area. In a two-month period, Triune removed debris and repaired 3,000 roofs in a 10,000-square-mile area, including the Texas' Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Newton and Orange counties.

Staying the course

Triune's success has not come by chance. According to Fudzie, one of the primary keys to the company's success has been its willingness to give back to the community.

"We keep giving of our time and resources, and good things keep coming back to us, particularly in the areas of repeat business and referrals," he said.

Triune has developed a relationship-oriented approach in an industry where the customer is not always the primary focus, Fudzie explained.

"Most contractors are more concerned with net profit, early completion, and increasing profits through change orders, rather than the service provided to their customers," he said. "Through our relationship-oriented approach we have experienced a higher quality of service, better communication and more repeat business."

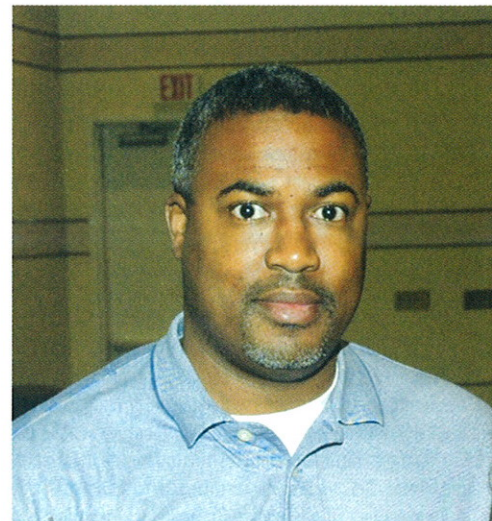
Fudzie also believes that the key to the company's success has been in attracting and retaining quality personnel, establishing proper operational procedures and developing a profitable backlog of business.

"The absolute greatest challenge in the success of any business is attracting and retaining a nucleus of high-performing people," he said. "This is even more challenging for a start-up business and even more so for a minority start-up. Every other challenge can be traced back to this one."

Prime advice

Having worked both the corporate side and as an entrepreneur, Fudzie has learned a good bit about what it means to be in business, and what is important.

"You can never compromise on the quality or integrity of your service. Always try to bring more to



Vince Fudzie

the table than you take away," he said. "And do this in spite of what your competition may be doing. Work diligently, with a purpose, and success will eventually follow."

According to Fudzie, fledgling and seasoned entrepreneurs alike have a responsibility to the business community.

"We need to make sure that as business owners we always try to do what we say, when we say, and to the best of our ability," he commented. "This makes for good business because everyone ultimately takes better care of the customer, which is good for everyone involved."

Lastly, Fudzie points to the imperative for minority contractors to seek out opportunities where they can be prime contractors rather than subcontractors.

"Being the prime contractor affords you the opportunity to employ minority subcontractors that some of the majority prime contractors may not have given a chance," he said.

As a prime example, Triune recently served as the prime for the Dallas Black Dance Theatre project – giving Triune a very public forum to showcase how a minority general contractor working with numerous minority subcontractors could complete a world-class project in record time.

"The Dallas Black Dance Theatre renovation has been an extremely high-profile project because it is a world-renowned dance company and the building being transformed from the West Moreland YMCA is of significant historical value," he said. "This project was not just a renovation, but a transformation. This project was vital for the city of Dallas, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, African-American communities, all children, and – equally important – the entire business community."