



FORMER CAR DEALERSHIP in Pasadena, Ca., became Ganahl Lumber's latest location, with the full-service assistance of CT Darnell, which handled everything from building redesign to power bin systems, millwork mezzanine, cantilever and pallet racks, and T-sheds. (Photo by C.T. Darnell)

More than racks

Should you choose a full-service provider?

TIMEISMONEY . So, when it's time to update, expand or replace your current lumber shed or warehouse, is it better to use one company for design and construction, and another for racks and related equipment? Or deal with a full-service provider who can provide everything needed?

To get some answers, we spoke with two full service providers: CT Darnell, Alpharetta, Ga., and Timberline Rack, Granger, In. Not surprisingly, both offer compelling

evidence for going the full-service route.

"There are many benefits to working with a full service provider," says Travis Darnell, owner and president of CT Darnell. "The design phase goes faster, and it can often overlap with the production lead time, cutting weeks off a project. Value engineering is more likely to reduce costs since design and fabrication are coordinated by one company that knows how to efficiently integrate these two

functions."

Perhaps most importantly, he says, "the project will run smoother, with fewer mistakes, since you're not trying to coordinate multiple vendors. To sum up: you save time and money, have fewer mistakes, and end up with a better design."

Sean Denison, owner and president of Timberline Racks, agrees: "First, I think the most important thing customers receive is piece of mind. We like to consider ourselves a partner

with our customers. As such, listening to their wants and understanding their needs is vital. Knowing their product mix and the way their operations runs enables us to guide them towards equipment that will best serve their needs in the short and long term.

“Secondly, they can trust that the equipment they are getting is designed and rated for the correct loading and usage. When buying “product only” from a rack supplier, that due diligence may not exist. There is also at times the temptation to save a few bucks and buy used equipment. While this is not always a bad decision, it can be difficult to know what loads the racking was initially designed for, and if any modifications have been made that could alter its capacity.

“Lastly, time. For many businesses, the last eight years have seen many cutbacks in the number of employees. Now that things are beginning to turn around, many businesses are trying to do more with fewer people. By leaving the scheduling, shipping and installation to us, our customers can focus on what they do best.”

But what about the cost savings of selecting a full-service provider, since the customer is not soliciting bids on services and materials at every step of the project?

“I think it can be too easy to get caught up on costs alone,” advises Denison. “While it’s obviously important, I believe it’s equally important to see what you gain from having someone handle an entire project for you. As I said earlier, it frees the customer up to do the work they need to do, and it gives them the knowledge that their project is continuing to move forward at the same time.

“Being able to provide engineering, permitting, and competent installations is also invaluable to our customers and can help fast track projects and reduce costs.”

Darnell says that savings of 10-15% are easily feasible when going the full-service route. “And that’s not putting a value on the time the customer would have to spend sourcing and coordinating multiple vendors,” he adds. “Savings can be even greater when value engineering is taken into account.”

Once you’ve decided to partner with a full-service firm, what should you look for? As with any other busi-

ness partnership, experience is key.

“Look for a company that knows the LBM industry and has the references to back it up,” advises Darnell. “We’ve been working in the LBM industry for almost 30 years, for customers big and small, throughout North America and the Caribbean.”

Denison agrees that finding a supplier that deals specifically in the LBM industry is most important. “Full service suppliers have an insight that many basic rack suppliers and even rack manufacturers simply don’t have,” he says. “That insight can prove to be very valuable. From start to finish, we have our customers covered: design services, engineering, permitting, manufacturing and installation. This is what we do, and all that we do. We know how to best maximize usable space, and do it in a way that will have the biggest impact for our customer’s bottom line.”

Finally, we asked how important is it that the provider be physically located near the customer?

“We are located in the Midwest, and have effectively serviced cus-

tomers from Vancouver to the Caribbean,” says Denison. “I don’t believe that we have to be located close by in order to be of service to a customer. The fact is, there are not that many full service providers that focus primarily on the LBM industry, and we can’t be near every customer.

“Like any other decision a business has to make, the customer has to be comfortable with their supplier. I would encourage end users to ask for references, and to see designs and completion photos of previous work. By far, our best advertising is our previous customers.”

Darnell agrees that being close to the customer isn’t really important: “With today’s communication and transportation systems, you can work and manage projects anywhere, as long as you have the state licenses required and the right management systems. We are licensed throughout North America, so we can handle work in any jurisdiction. And we have the management systems and supervisory team in place to run remote projects.”



BIG C LUMBER'S truss plant in Dowagiac, Mi., gained two, 200-ft.-long sheds that are used to store materials, courtesy of Timberline Rack, Granger, In. The new sheds also make picking of materials more efficient during the manufacturing process. (Photo by Timberline Rack)