

Building Dreams

RDH says it works to realize its clients' goals with each project.



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Randall D. Huggins says RDH & Associates Inc. specializes in giving its clients a combination of services. "We can bring the architectural and interior [design] together in one cohesive package," the principal explains.

Based in Addison, Texas, the company provides architectural and interior design services for hotel and casino properties. Huggins says the company strives to fulfill its clients' desires on their projects, instead of leaving its own stylistic stamp.

"What we want to do is achieve the clients' goals and what their dreams are in the project," he states, explaining that this technique prevents RDH from being marked with a particular style. "We don't want to get labeled that we're traditional, modern [or classic]."

Growing Strong

A registered architect and interior designer, Huggins founded the company in September 2000 and formed its name from his initials. In his 20-year career, he has completed hotel and casino projects in locations ranging from the United States to Africa.

In 2000, Huggins hired its other principal, Stacy Elliston, who has 12 years' experience in hospitality interiors. "After working together for several years on many successful projects, we thought it was a perfect fit," he says.

Today, RDH operates with a staff of 16 people. In 2005, the company was named one of the fastest-growing interior design companies in the country by *Interior Design* magazine. In addition, Elliston was rated one of the Best of the Best designers by *D Home Magazine* in 2006 and 2007.

Absorbing Headaches

Huggins says RDH remains successful by listening to its clients, watching budgets, remaining honest and adhering to deadlines. "We really put a lot of effort into every project so the owner doesn't have a lot of headaches," he says. "We absorb the headaches before they get to him."

RDH also allows its clients to have "enormous input" during the design process, Huggins says, making a point of really listening to determine what a customer wants. RDH will "go away and design it," he says. "We communicate with the client through all phases of the design, to make sure we are achieving their goals."

RDH will meet with its clients again and "work with them in the final tweaking of the design," Huggins explains. "They know, architecturally, what they're getting, so there's really no surprises on their part when they build the project."

Huggins says RDH usually requires two meetings with clients to get approval of a completed design. Sometimes, though, it takes only one. He explains the company listens "very well to what the client wants and is looking for."

Huggins and Elliston are involved with every project. "We make sure that every project is [guided by us and] going down the road in the right direction," he states. "We meet regularly with our clients and project teams and make time to review everything. We are in constant communication with our staff."

Huggins says RDH has been built on repeat business. Eighty-five percent of the company's work is from repeat clients; some are large corporations, others are specialized developers and some are individual entrepreneurs, he says.

RDH & Associates Inc.
www.rdhassociates.net
2006 sales: \$2.7 million
Headquarters: Addison, Texas
Employees: 16
Services: Architecture and interior design
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Company Profile

RDH also maintains strong relationships with project contractors. "We work to be very much a team member with them," Huggins states. "[We] try not to create adversarial roles with them."

RDH tries to fulfill the contractors' needs on-site. "Contractors really appreciate that, 'cause we get in and get dirty with them," Huggins says. "We'll get out with them and work with them in the field to get it right."

Resort Restoration

RDH recently helped restore the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino, an MGM MIRAGE property in Biloxi, Miss., damaged by Hurricane Katrina. "Stacy and I were involved with the original design of the hotel," Huggins remembers.

After the 2005 hurricane, MGM MIRAGE approached RDH with the project, which had a schedule of only eight months. According to Huggins, the resort planned to reopen on the anniversary of the damages.

Despite the difficult schedule, RDH persevered. "It took everybody in the company," Huggins remembers. "We enjoyed watching what it did to the economy and the region."

Careful Growth

Huggins says RDH plans for continued but careful growth and may open branch offices in the United States and abroad. "We're watching it and making sure we're not growing too rapidly," he says, adding that RDH prefers to add only a few new clients each year, with the rest of its work comprised of repeat business.

"One good client can bring you 20 jobs in a year," Huggins says. "We are honest with our clients on whether we can accomplish their projects on their schedule. [Clients] particularly appreciate the fact we're honest with them. There's a lot of people that would take it on and get in trouble down the road."



Looking After Employees

Since there tends to be a lag in training of potential professional staff during the downside of RDH's business cycle, finding the right new employees in a strong economy is a challenge for any architectural/design firm. Huggins says that RDH looks after its current staff to promote longevity. "We have [had] benefits for the employees throughout the years," he says.

In addition to bonus programs, the company gives its employees the opportunity to attend local hockey, basketball and baseball games and holds numerous company events, including visits to a local horse race track. "[We] try to make it a very family oriented company," Huggins says.

When hiring, Huggins says RDH not only looks for applicants with technical knowledge, but also personality. "We look for twinkles in the eyes," he says.

"The company was really built on my personality and Stacy's personality, and our honesty," he explains. "[The applicant's personality] needs to match with us and what our clients have."

Of his current staff, Huggins praises Marketing Director Tracey Bush, Senior Interior Designer Leslie Eiland and Project Manager Mike Glaser. "They really take on a lot of the roles and [help] Stacy and I run the company," Huggins says. ■

