



Engineering companies merging to offer expanded services

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The last ten years or so have seen a number of blockbuster mergers in the business world, from Mobil merging with Exxon, to Countrywide Financial joining Bank of America, and even YouTube joining Google. This trend has crossed all industry lines, including the engineering and architecture world. Small and medium-sized firms are increasingly merging with much larger companies to provide broader and more comprehensive services while maintaining the local relationships, experience, and reputations the smaller firms cultivated.

Last April, for instance, New York City-based Vollmer Associates, a full-service engineering and design firm, joined Stantec, a then 7,000-person engineering, planning, and architecture firm with nearly 100 offices throughout the U.S. and Canada. A fairly large firm itself, Vollmer encompassed 650 people throughout 24 offices in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. But by joining Stantec, the partners at Vollmer knew their company could broaden its geographic reach and offer an even wider array of disciplines and capabilities to their clients.

Local Connections

Founded in Alberta, Canada in 1954, Stantec has grown quickly in the last ten years as part of a dedicated effort to become one of the world's top 10 design firms. Much of the company's recent focus has been on the East Coast, where they have acquired nine firms in the last ten months. In just the last four years, Stantec has added 50 offices on the East Coast, growing from 300 employees to nearly 2,200 from Maine to Florida. Today, the company has over 125 offices and more than 8,500 employees throughout the United States and Canada.

The New York metropolitan area, in particular, was a significant area of interest for Stantec since both the local housing and commercial development markets remain relatively strong. With their specific knowledge of New York City zoning and development regulations, for instance, Stantec's metropolitan-area staff are at work helping developers take advantage of the city's "subway bonus," which allows developers to increase the size of their building by up to 20% if they include subway improvements. In such a lucrative commercial market, that extra 20% can potentially reap big rewards.

Similarly, Stantec's New York City staff are now working on a sizeable streetscape renovation of Jackson Avenue through Queens, a major residential and retail corridor. With potential development sites at both ends and the new Citigroup building nearby, a spruced up Jackson Avenue can serve as a vibrant commercial corridor from Queens into Manhattan and significantly energize the area's economy.

One Team, Infinite Solutions

Joining Stantec also provides some security for New York-area staff, who can potentially work on projects elsewhere in the company if New York's market slows. Since joining Stantec, in fact, N.Y. staff have worked on several projects for the New England and Vancouver offices, and survey staff

recently traveled to Nevada to work on a levee break near Reno. Conversely, the N.Y. offices have been taking advantage of the added skills of their colleagues, especially tapping into the substantial building engineering group on the East Coast. Stantec's metro-area and upstate offices in Albany and Rochester work together frequently as well.

With the ever-advancing specialties in building types, land development issues, politics, and funding, assembling large multi-disciplinary projects can only be enhanced with a team of diverse expertise and local experts, all from one company. Stantec's New York offices are now even better equipped to provide that integrated expertise and help find creative, sustainable solutions for their local clients throughout the region.

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