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n November

PEOPLE

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is the implementation of new lights on the runs. Helping Granite Peak honor its commitment to sustainable slopes is the National Ski Area Association that awarded a \$7,000 grant of 10 Snow Bright light fixtures.

The low-energy lights are also low-glare so they create less light pollution and actually allow night skiers to enjoy more of a star-filled sky. Up to 500 lights are in the process of being switched over.

New option for multi-mountain experience

Skinner views the facility upgrades as one way to remain viable in an increasingly competitive arena, while focusing on exciting means to maximize season-pass sales.

In keeping pace with the pack, Granite Peak recently joined MAX Pass, a multi alpine experience pass that allows access to 44 mountains across North America including Minnesota's Lutsen Mountains, which Skinner co-owns, Steamboat in Colorado and Big Sky in Montana.

"Ski hill ownership and management is an evolutionary process," Skinner said. "Because we operate in a constantly changing and highly competitive industry, we must grow through innovation and ingenuity to stay ahead of our rivals. That's the rationale for our current improvements and those that will follow."

to youths. The awards, which were awarded through Church Mutual's foundation called CM CARES, were received in February and most recently in mid-May. The Tom Landry Award is bestowed through The Tom Landry Associates Program, FCA's major donor program named in honor of Coach Tom Landry to commemorate his legacy in sports and Christianity, and as a leader to FCA. The program recognizes and distinguishes organizations that support FCA.

Work anniversaries

Karen Schanock, director of programs and events for the Portage County Business Council, celebrated her 20th anniversary with the organization on June 9.

Wausau School District teachers, staff, and administrators celebrating 25 years of service to the area's students and schools are George Adams, Barbara Berry, Kim Christensen, Tami Cummings, Pamela Daigle, Stephanie deJong, Kelly Derrick, Paul Dimka, Renee Heinrich, Mark Heiting, Wendell Jaeger, Michael Johnson, Michele Kettner, Travis Knopf, Dan Merkel, Andrew Meyer, Jodi Mistlebauer, Katherine Mueller, Kathleen Naef, Bryan Niemeyer, Kelly Rohr, Julie Sprague, Betsy Stangel, Lynette Weis and Karen Zuidema.



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Growth Strategies



Dave Stieber installs glass into a curtainwall using a crane with a manipulator cup at Wausau Window and Wall Systems. Looking on is Jim Waldron, company president. Photo by Peter Vance of The Studio

Bold goal to double sales comes true

Wausau Window president says company ahead of schedule on five-year plan

By Jim Servi
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When Jim Waldron, President of Wausau Window and Wall Systems, took over his current role in April 2013 he set a bold goal. "We're going to double our sales in five years," Waldron declared to his new company. "Right now, we're well ahead of that aggressive schedule."

Wausau Window and Wall Systems, or Wausau as they are known in the industry, has long been an industry leader in crafting

curtainwall, "but we really weren't tooting our own horn," Waldron said.

That was one of the first things he noticed upon his arrival. To counter that, they invested heavily in their sales staff. New hires were given the tools and incentives to be the leading edge of the new bold goal.

With a strong background in sales and 10 years as a sales engineer managing accounts around the world, Waldron knew this was vital. He passed along his secrets, but knew that success would ultimately come from a strong leader to guide this new sales staff.

Systems vice president of sales and marketing, was the answer. With an immense amount of experience and an MBA from Harvard Business School, "she took what I started and put it on steroids," Waldron said.

Now that sales were picking up as the first part of his new strategy, the next thing Waldron addressed was having the building and capacity to make it all happen.

Even though Waldron admits it took "two years to completely wrap my head around Wausau Windows strategy," there were items

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Lori Schock, Wausau Window and Wall

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Wausau/Expansion began in 2014

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that needed to be immediately addressed. Through astute foresight, Wausau opened a location in Stratford a decade ago. The idea was to employ a labor pool outside of the Wausau area due to continuous growth. However, that location was quickly reaching capacity. "The City of Wausau really came through with the building location," Waldron said with obvious gratitude as he discussed the expansion that began in 2014.

"With the location and incentives to move additional business to Wausau, we brought in over 100 jobs," he said.

That played into another one of Waldron's fortes. Acquisitions. His career spans three companies, nine moves, 12 different positions, and 31 years. After his initial focus as a sales engineer, leading people that worked directly for him, he was asked to "lead people who don't work for you."

During that phase of his career, he helped executives with strategy and mergers/acquisitions. The new building helped with acquisitions including a company they acquired in Denver, which had a strong brand name, loyalty, consistent revenues, and a backlog of orders.

It was this purchase that set the stage for their 2014 expansion. Subsequent acquisitions and yearly growth rates hovering around 30 percent the last four years has ensured that the "building more than paid for itself."

With sales rolling in and new capacity to cover the growth, Waldron turned his attention inward to the employees.

Trust was the key component that he tried to build. "I met with all the employees in a town-hall type meeting. No agenda, just stripes off conversation," Waldron said. "I'd explain our strategy and goals. While they didn't always agree, they were glad we were on a path."

He clearly learned some important lessons and began sharing full financials on a quarterly basis with all employees. Empowering them with their success, he also rewarded them for their hard work.

"We make projects that are engineered to order and have to figure out how to make architect's plans work," he said.

"Sometimes, others can't accomplish that and new customers come to Wausau Window to make it happen in a hurry," Waldron said, citing a delayed project by another company for Manhattan condos that sold at \$15 million apiece. "When that happens, I have to ask our employees to work harder to meet customer expectations."

Wausau Windows and Wall Systems

ended up making the project happen on the expedited timeline. Employees are rewarded for their efforts with significant year-end bonuses. Sales, strategy, and building trust with the team were the initial building blocks that led to accomplishing the bold goal of doubling sales that Waldron laid out less than five years ago. But it doesn't end there. Waldron is already looking to the future.

Talent management continues to be important for Wausau and is an ongoing focus. It is beginning to feel the struggles of a tight labor market in Marathon County.

"About a third of our salaried personnel, we bring into the Wausau community for outside the area," Waldron said. "Our sales staff operates remotely and we have a few engineers that we hired in Minneapolis so we have options."

They are almost always hiring for production employees to sustain their growth. They stay on top of trends, both in the area and in their industry. Plus, like many companies they are always sensitive to the current US and worldwide economic situation.

"This year's goal is 15 percent. I don't want employees to get burnt out," Waldron said, showing adjustments in his strategy moving forward. "Right now, we're looking strong through 2020-2021, but always have to remain vigilant."

Church Mutual partners with Mutual of Wausau

Church Mutual Insurance Company has partnered with Mutual of Wausau Insurance Corp. to provide homeowners' insurance coverages to Wisconsin consumers. Under the new partnership, Mutual of Wausau will be the homeowners' insurance carrier and Church Mutual, through its CM Solutions Insurance Agency, will provide day-to-day service as the agent.

Church Mutual is a specialty commercial insurance provider whose areas of expertise include houses of worship, schools, religious camps and senior living centers.

"Church Mutual's focus and expertise as a commercial carrier does not provide the right resources to continue servicing our homeowners' insurance customers as their carrier and we plan to exit the business," said Kevin Root, Church Mutual's chief operating officer. "We looked for an opportunity that would allow CM Solutions to remain the local insurance agent for these loyal customers."

Church Mutual notified its customers in the first weeks of June about the partnership and transition. Denise Humphrey, a CM Solutions account specialist and a life-long resident of Merrill will continue as the primary CM Solutions insurance agent. She has been helping Church Mutual homeowners' policyholders for the last nine years and has more than 20 years of personal insurance expertise.

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