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# BEING THE BEST AND SHOWING IT

*The Penhall Company was established in 1957 by Leroy Penhall, a masonry contractor in Anaheim, California. Armed with a gas-powered saw and a dream, he quickly established a name for himself and his company. Concrete services company Penhall Company Incorporated had, by the mid-1970s, extended its reach beyond Anaheim into California's Southland.*

**Written by Anne Lindert-Wentzell**

**S**eparating the wheat from the chaff. A simple adage, but one that carries so much weight in terms of its implications – a separation of people or things of high quality or ability from those that are not.

The same could be said of companies. They are not all created equal. The ones that survive through a competitive advantage did not do so through sheer luck. And it does not happen overnight. It takes diligence of thought, motivation and a belief that being number two just isn't an option.

So it is that successful companies commit themselves to securing the exceptional management skills and mentorship that will generate a name synonymous with quality, customer service and trust. The Penhall name has done just that for sixty years.

Today, Penhall Company ([www.penhall.com](http://www.penhall.com)) has forty-two branches – and growing – across the United States. Its over 14,000 customers are served by a staff of over 1,300 professionals, making the company the nation's largest provider of concrete cutting, breaking, excavation, highway grinding and grooving services, and concrete scanning.

Penhall is a true American success story born of the vision of one man. The company's achievement stems from adhering to the ideals from its earliest beginnings to today.

"Penhall has built a great reputation in the industry," affirms Jeff Long, president and chief executive officer. "It was built on, and continues to exist as, a direct reflection of our collective commitment and performance toward the basic principles that made the company great."



These values are rock solid and entail employee safety, exceptional service solutions for customers and using the industry's leading production equipment. All this is done "while growing shareholder value and contributing to the communities we operate in," says Jeff.

With its in-depth expertise in a number of sectors, there is no limit to the company's capabilities. Penhall offers a full spectrum of services including concrete cutting, coring, scanning, grooving, grinding, breaking, removal and demolition to civil, government, residential, public and private institutions across commercial, industrial and utility sectors.

Its skilled tradesmen can also perform wire cutting, GPR scanning and utility locating, and highway and runway grooving and grinding. Rehabilitation and the demolition of bridges are also within their realm of proficiency as are structural demolition and soft demolition.

The use of technological innovation such as ground penetrating radar (GPR) allows for concrete scanning prior to cutting or coring to locate the presence of structural reinforcements such as rebar, post tension and pre stress cables, and pipes, conduits and other potential hazards below the surface ([www.penhall.com/concrete-scanning-gpr/](http://www.penhall.com/concrete-scanning-gpr/)).

"Diversity and reach are the cornerstones of both our new and repeat business across the nation," confirms Jeff. He notes that Penhall is currently engaged with engineering groups for a pilot program to help determine concrete deterioration using GPR on bridge decks and large concrete slabs. The ►►



► company is also testing the use of digital radiography using both film and x-ray. “We’re doing inertial profiling now as well,” he adds. This measures road surface smoothness via specialized equipment.

“We have a very fortunate position, because we have the best customer list in the industry. It allows us to expand our service offerings. By extending new services to that customer base in bundles, we’re able to create a lot of value for our customers that competitors just can’t match.”

In addition, Penhall has extended itself geographically by following customers and applying its reputation from one branch and extending it to new markets. “We’ve gone from a mostly West Coast-centric operation to one that now goes from Hawaii to Toronto,” comments Jeff. “We add two or three branches a year.”

The company is consistently innovating, and the wellspring of ingenuity runs deep within the company and its employ-

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ees. This innovation is often in partnership with vendors and manufacturers to, “tune production equipment to specific job requirements or achieving higher rates of production.”

The company recently invested in its equipment, doubling its high-cycle equipment and quintupling its scanning radars. It has added three inertial profilers to its fleet, and “we’ve put fleet-managed GPS on all our vehicles and are using it to promote safe driving practices.”

Penhall employs specialized technologies such as Salesforce, a cloud-based customer relationship management software; BID2WIN (B2W) software for construction cost estimation and bidding; and BidClerk commercial construction leads and project information management software that provides construction data in both the United States and Canada.

This investment represents, “our continuous pursuit of technology that allows us to be more productive, to better serve our customers and provide them contemporaneous solutions to the problems they’re confronting on the job site,” continues Jeff. “It all comes from the ingenuity that’s been an intrinsic part of Penhall from the start.”

Penhall is ambitious when it comes to expansion and aims to expand its abilities as well as geographic reach. The company ▶



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► acknowledges an interest in surface and tensile strength repair on concrete. This is, “today being largely done through fiber applications,” Jeff notes. “That’s a new area that we’re interested in expanding into.”

It also plans to extend into project management. In today’s industry, general contractors are experiencing dramatically deeper backlogs of projects, and as a result, project management on the demolition side is faltering. “So we’re investing a lot in developing project management, control and supervision that allows us to fill the void that’s starting to open on the demolition side of the [general contracting] world.”

Seismic retrofit is another opportunity in which the company may step into an engineering, case management or customer acquisition role. Seismic retrofitting modifies new or existing buildings to make them less vulnerable to damage due to earthquakes. This is to fulfill “the requirements that are coming down from the regulatory side in the area of seismic retrofit.”

Penhall is an active participant in all core industry associations such as the Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association (CSDA) and the International Grooving and Grinding Association (IGGA). With the CSDA and IGAA, “we’re actually the largest contributor and the largest participating company,” says Jeff. “We provide leadership in several industry groups.”

He notes that the company is a large customer for Hilti, Husqvarna, ICS, GSSI, and Diamond Products, to name just a few and that much of its training and development at the operator and supervisory level comes from these vendors.



## IN A GREAT POSITION TO BENEFIT

In 2015, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) was signed in to law. The Act will provide funding – \$305 billion – over the course of 2016-2020, for critical surface transportation projects to meet the need for improved highway systems.

It was welcome news for Penhall as, “Penhall is really very well positioned to benefit from it. We have the largest fleet of groovers and grinders in North America,” affirms Jeff, “literally four or five times more than the closest competitor.”

Penhall’s enthusiasm for the FAST Act is evidenced by, “making sure our entire fleet is refurbished over the next few months. We’re already seeing a number of large projects being let and we’ve won several of them that go through 2018. It’s evident in both highway work as well as airport projects.”

In terms of company safety, Penhall has, "shifted all our emphasis to the leading indicators in order to prevent accidents rather than the lagging indicators," says Jeff. Its focus is on preventing accidents now and always. He believes that to have a commitment to zero accidents on a job site, "you have to first truly believe that all accidents are preventable. Safety is a core value for everyone. I think it's something that we're really known for as a company."

"Everything we do is going to be focused on operating safely." He notes that when an accident does happen, it is usually at day's end when one's focus is on wrapping up and getting home. So at Penhall, "we do a lot of retraining around slowing down, thinking it through, not rushing just to get done early – being safe every minute of the day."

"We've introduced a number of people in the quality and controls arena." The company has a closed looped system to ensure that cost estimates are measured accurately and that they can be converted into project plans to "execute the plan better than the estimate."

Penhall has also invested in introducing lean principles as a core value in its equipment design and project planning. These principles, "are leading to a lot of gains in terms of our project productivity."

Jeff relates that the guiding principles that have made Penhall Company the success story that it is, will continue to be first and foremost as it ventures into the future.

Its mandate is to, "continuously improve and increase value to our customers, create more opportunities for our employees and returns to our shareholders. The most important words are to continuously improve. I think if you really focus on that, the rest is fruit that flows from it. We are going to learn through national account management how to act locally but leverage our national scale as well." ■

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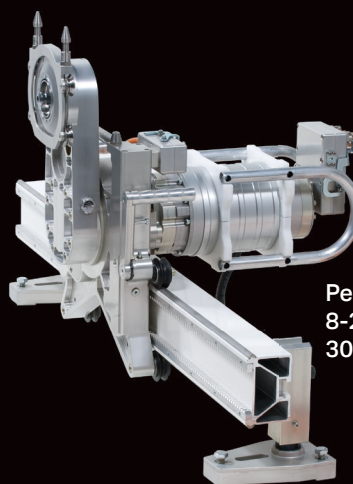
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