

Jay Steel provides backbone for warehouses

Christopher Lemery / Reporter

Jay Steel of Amherst, New Hampshire, is a relatively recent entrant into the New England structural steel industry, but they have already done work on several large warehouses.

The company was founded in June 2000 by John Siemienowicz and has annual revenue of roughly \$20 million. From its inception, the firm has sought to draw on Siemienowicz's extensive steel manufacturing experience gained during his 20-year career in the industry.

"I've been involved in every discipline of structural steel, from high rises in New York City on down," Siemienowicz said.

The vast network of industry contacts Siemienowicz has acquired allowed him to use a unique business model when



A Jay Steel project in progress. *Courtesy of Jay Steel.*

setting up Jay Steel. Unlike many other structural steel firms, Jay Steel doesn't own any steel manufacturing facilities, choosing instead to subcontract both the steel fabrication and installation work for their projects.

This approach has allowed the company to thrive while having only 10 employees, explains Allise de Smet, Jay's Vice President.

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"We don't have to deal as much with industry fluctuations," de Smet said. "[The company's structure] allows us to be more responsive to our customers. We're not geographically limited by the jobs we choose to do and we're not bound by a mortgage [on a large manufacturing facility]."

Recently, Jay Steel brought its expertise to several warehouses for Preferred Freezer Services, a company based in New Jersey. Their facility in Westfield, Massachusetts, which is currently under construction, has presented a challenge for Siemienowicz and his team. Since the roof for the facility is 50 feet high, it would have been dangerous to erect the steel in the traditional method. They needed to find a more efficient way of doing the job.

"What we're doing is erecting the steel joists in bays on the ground," Siemienowicz said. "It allows us to start earlier. We've been able to stack the bays like plates in your cupboard. It's much faster, limits risk, and gives the general

contractor a lot of flexibility."

Jay Steel also has a long-running relationship with Campanelli Companies, the general contractor on the

Westfield facility.

"Campanelli started with an order our first year," Siemienowicz said. "They're a top-shelf company. They take care of their subcontractors

very well."

While warehouses now account for just 30 percent of the firm's workload, Siemienowicz still views them as integral to the company's

future. In fact, Siemienowicz is downright bullish about the warehouse industry's future.

"I expect 2006 to be a big year for warehouses," Siemienowicz said.



Jay Steel's unique contracting method allows it to operate with a small staff. Seated left to right: Betti Russell, Jodi Sanborn, Judie Porter and Allise de Smet. Standing left to right: Mike Taylor, Charles Stearns, Rick Chauncey, Ron Guyette and John Siemienowicz.

Courtesy of Jay Steel