

Architecture, Design and Engineering Services for Technical Projects



Paul Jenkins - CEO

About Bancroft Architects + Engineers

Founded in 2000, Bancroft A+E is a Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) with volumes of successful experience in providing architecture, design, and engineering services for highly-technical projects on four continents.

<http://www.bancroft-ae.com/firm/why-bancroft/#sthash.SuryaCjC.dpuf>

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Jenkins, your site indicates that Bancroft Architects + Engineers is designing tomorrow today. How so? What is your concept and philosophy?

Mr. Jenkins: The underlying concept for us is understanding not simply the needs of our clients and their immediate intentions for the facilities we design for them. We provide for them the flexibility to anticipate their needs for those facilities in the years to come. It is one thing for somebody to say they have a state of the art building, but you know how quickly the world turns. In two or three years, that can be an antiquated building if you have not anticipated the changes that are going to take place in their industry.

CEOCFO: Given how quickly the world turns, how can you plan for the fact that there may be a technology coming out a year from now that could be a disruptor? How do you plan for what you know is likely to happen and also accommodate what you do not know?

Mr. Jenkins: It is not enough anymore to be a good engineer or to be a good architect in a vacuum. What we try to do is to begin with being good listeners. When we meet with our clients, we sit down and talk with them and we ask a little bit about the history of the client to try to get a better understanding of the facility we are either renovating for them or designing. We ask questions, and we try to push them to develop ideas for themselves that we can then help to integrate into the design. The other thing that I think is essential is keeping up with the broader technology field. To do that, our staff reads exhaustively, attends industry conferences around the globe, and is at the center of best-practices discussions in a variety of industries. It is not enough to simply be accomplished architects of medical facilities. We have to be architects of technology facilities because there is no new medical facility that will not include the latest integration of diverse technologies.

CEOCFO: What might be one or two things that you and your group might look at in the mix that perhaps others would not think are important?

Mr. Jenkins: One of my business partners, Bill Hartzell, is an industrial engineer. He stresses the importance of our looking at how a space works. I think that in our industry, we are typically very largely concentrated on how things look. If it is a beautiful space that does not work ergonomically, it's a failed design. In the instance of a medical space or another scientific space, if you cannot get the material that is going to be worked on--whether that is the patient or raw material of a chemical plant--if you cannot physically transport them between A and B, the space does not work no matter how pretty it is. What Bill does is he sits down with our clients and asks simple but fundamental questions: where they keep their trash, for example, and biohazard waste. People think of these as strange questions to ask, but the reason we go into such depth is that when the space is finished, if we have not integrated everything ergonomically it's like leaving a tumor on a clean patient. Another of our strengths is our ability to integrate these broad spectra of diverse technologies and industries into every project we do.

The group that works on our aviation projects does not work in a Tupperware container. They sit right alongside the group that is doing biolab projects and they work alongside the group that is doing medical projects. When someone says they have had an "aha" moment on their transportation project, someone sitting two desks down from them will hear about it and might be able to apply that creative solution into, say, an emergency room vehicle drop off. I think that free flow of information among the disciplines has been essential to our success.

The diversity of our portfolio ends up building on itself, creating an environment that fosters creativity among the disciplines.

CEOCFO: *Did you realize that day one or did you learn that concept as you went along?*

Mr. Jenkins: We have had to learn it as we have gone along. In the earliest days, we were going to be a group of engineers that did primarily alternative energy designs, mechanical and electrical design. We recognized that what we needed were like-minded architects working alongside, so we started integrating the two disciplines. At first there was some in-house pushback: what would an architect know about engineering? Some of the architects had their own reservations: what could an engineer possibly contribute to the architects' design process? We have come to find out that there are crossovers throughout, so it did not make any sense ultimately to put one group in one room and the other group in another room. That's more the norm throughout the industry, keeping the architects and engineers separate—in some cases even segregating the engineers by discipline. Many of our designers cut their teeth in that kind of firm. We've achieved full integration in our design studios. There is no architecture section and no engineering section and there is no construction section. The disciplines design together with a full awareness of the constructability of the designs.

“Our design team begins and ends each project with the study of using less to achieve the benchmarks: less of the client's money, less material, less energy, less impact on the local environment.” - Paul Jenkins

CEOCFO: *One thing I noticed on your site is a core principle - all good engineering is, by definition, sustainable. Could you explain that?*

Mr. Jenkins: We live in a world where we are becoming increasingly aware of the finite nature of resources. Our design team begins and ends each project with the study of using less to achieve the benchmarks: less of the client's money, less material, less energy, less impact on the local environment. We consider the context—is it a stand-alone facility or it is part of a broader campus? We integrate the design into the surroundings, and ensure the design impacts the environment minimally. Other firms design facilities that become the environment. By contrast, we strive to understand the surroundings and ensure we make the least possible impact on what we now understand are non-renewable resources.

We design every project in what is essentially a holistic approach: designing ways to provide for the productivity, comfort and safety of those who live and work in our facilities while diminishing the carbon footprint, the energy consumption, the light spillage, the use of non-native materials, and the myriad other considerations that impact the environment.

One of our engineers, a Marine Corps Veteran, wrote the white paper with the plan for a “*Zero Carbon Footprint Marine Corps for the year 2025.*” He had learned what it takes to get raw materials to the battlefield. Now, you can laugh and criticize and roll your eyes until you realize that there is a fundamentally high cost involved in getting even simple things--water and fuel--to battlefields all over the world. That awareness helps us better understand that we have to think not only about what is available to us today, but what will be available to us in 10 years, 20 years and 30 years. That kind of front-end thinking helps us design facilities that are sustainable both in terms of capacity, but also for its ability to be a good corporate steward of the environment.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about your geographic reach today?*

Mr. Jenkins: We are headquartered in the Chicago market. We started with our first design studio in downtown Chicago, and then as we've grown we've opened a design studio in suburban Chicago near O'Hare Airport in Elk Grove Village. We have regional design studios in Philadelphia, in Arlington, Virginia, New Orleans, Louisiana and in San Jose, California.

CEOCFO: *Why are you in those locations?*

Mr. Jenkins: Those studio locations derived by our pursuit of a national footprint, allowing us to segment the country. When you do work for the federal government, they still look for a local presence. Though so much of our work is done via the Internet with the exchange of design documents routinely done electronically, there still is this desire to have someone you can meet with face-to-face. Having field offices in those parts of the country gives us a pretty broad geographic reach. Our designers will get 200 or 300 miles radius from clients throughout the country. It also gives us a basis for operating when we are doing projects in the South where we have an office from which we can operate, and likewise in the East and the West.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us a little bit about your international projects? Is that an area of focus or is it more opportunistic?*

Mr. Jenkins: We have done some wonderful international work that we are incredibly proud of. One example is the design work we did for the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, who needed a complex new mobile medical facility, one that travels around the world with him. We earned that design contract, it our work ultimately landed on the cover of *R&D*

Magazine. A firm here built the finished portable facility, and the exacting client was pleased (to say the least) with the result.

In terms of providing best practices to clients, I think it is essential that we have a hand in markets all over the world to constantly discover what works best elsewhere. We are always flattered when we are called upon to be a part of international trade missions. We have done them for consecutive years in Japan and India, and we are going back to an international trade mission in South America this year to again be a part of the United States medical delegation. It is a vital and essential market for us on a variety of levels. That said, we do concentrate more heavily on the domestic market than we do the international market because I think the leading edge in medical and scientific design is still here in the United States.

CEO/COO: *Tell us a little bit about giving back. I know you have a focus with veterans. Why are these activities important for the firm and for you as well?*

Mr. Jenkins: We try to set a corporate environment that says there is a broader purpose in life. It is one thing to be great at what you do, and I want people working for Bancroft who are great at what they do. However, I want them to be great people as well, not simply great professionals. I think an essential piece of that puzzle is our being an integral part of the community.

In order to be a sustainable society, we have to be willing to contribute our best efforts to one another. Whenever we are in a position to do something for local charities, we try to go out of our way to do it. We have quite a few pro bono clients. For example, we do design work for VFWs, and as you are probably aware, many of their facilities are rapidly becoming aged. That has kept us quite busy. We also do pro bono work at the academic level. With some of these things, I can provide my young designers a chance to explore the limits of their own creativity. The pro bono designs don't have to adhere to the tight framework of specific contracts.

At a personal level, I come from a military family, and one of the primary reasons I started the firm was to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with the highest possible quality design for their facilities. Returning Veterans deserve the highest possible care. Selfishly, those are facilities that I use and my family uses. I think Bancroft's most important clients are the ones we are giving back to.

CEO/COO: *How do you spend your time as CEO?*

Mr. Jenkins: With a staff of 30, I am lucky to have two business partners, Bill Hartzell and Bill Bailey. They help me run the firm and are a great sounding board for my decisions. Bill Hartzell is Bancroft's President for Production, so he heads up the design teams and keeps the projects on schedule. Bill Bailey is the managing partner and he sees to the day-to-day administrative needs of the company. For me, I get to spend a great deal of time interacting with clients, pursuing new work, trying to motivate the employees, giving overall direction to the company and helping to determine which projects we will take on. With a firm of 30, we are big enough to take on a lot of projects, but we have to be strategic in what we pursue. I am able to sort of triage our opportunities and seek out the ones that provide opportunities to grow the firm intelligently while sustaining the firm financially.

One of the things I love about what I do is the diversity of the work. One day I will spend in the office all day in team meetings with the project managers and the designers, and the next day I might be interviewing for a project in some far corner of the country, and on the way home I will stop in and visit a client where we have a project ongoing. There is no set routine, and for now, I not sure I could go back to a set routine.

BIO: Paul Jenkins President and Chief Executive Officer

Paul is a disabled Veteran who left the Navy after 14 years in diverse, forward-deployed roles to return to Chicago to accept an executive position in City government. Upon leaving public service, he moved into private enterprise, serving in executive leadership roles in varied industries ranging from aerospace to consumer goods. He is the former Vice Chairman of the International Port Authority and is currently serving on a number of charitable boards and foundations. Paul's degrees are from the United States Naval Academy and the University of Chicago. He is an active member of the Veteran community, primarily as an advocate for Veteran employment.



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