

Jim West, Turner Construction

What is a typical day like for you?

Much of my day is spent walking through the building, looking at our progress and making sure everything is on schedule. I spend a lot of time in meetings, keeping in close communication with the building owner and our staff.

Who do you work with on a regular basis?

I work with my owners, the architect, the subcontractors and our internal Turner staff on this project.

How long is your build out time, and how do you make sure it is on time?

Eighteen months is our build-out time for this job, with a December 2010 completion date. To keep us on schedule, we're using Lean Scheduling. Lean is a process that breaks a project schedule down into smaller manageable pieces and parts. Builders

Jim West is currently the project manager for **Turner Construction** on the **Harrah's Hotel and Casino** in Cherokee, N.C. The 459,000-square-foot, 21-story high rise hotel expansion features high end suites and in-suites (high-end with living rooms). The first two floors are high-end fit outs, while the project features a drive through porte cochere for drop off and large fountain in front. It will connect with an existing hotel. As project manager, West is responsible for day-to-day management of the entire project, keeping the job flowing smoothly, communicating with the owner and making sure everything is delivered on time, on budget and with the highest quality work.



are excellent planners by nature, but this system makes us even better, allowing us to plan down to the smallest level of detail.

This is a new process in the construction industry. Our contractors fill out weekly work plans, where they not only schedule their manpower, but the work they're going to be doing that week. They make commitments on what they're going to achieve. We review that and make sure they're doing what they should be doing.

Lean scheduling also defines constraints that might keep us from getting our work done, so that we can remove them. The system enables us to set up milestones and we can work with our contractors in detail to make sure we reach those on schedule.

What are the major challenges you deal with on a regular basis?

One of the most important things, and something that's one of our top priorities, is making sure everyone's following proper Turner procedures, which are designed to keep our employees and contractors safe, and ensure that our work is of the highest quality. A project like this has many subcontractors, so it's vital that we manage all of them safely.

How has your business changed with the economy?

The biggest change we've seen is something that many construction companies of Turner's size have seen: work is much harder to get than several years ago. Another change is that managing our subcontractors is a bit more challenging. We are finding that subcontractors are willing to take work cheaper, but of course a cheaper price isn't necessarily the best value for our client.

Some subcontractors are not as stable as they were three years ago. We have to make sure they're financially stable and that they have enough money to finish the job. Even good subcontractors can go out of business these days.

What is your favorite part of the job?

I really love the people I get to work with. The construction business draws all kinds of different personalities, and they're really great, hard working people. At the end of the day, we're all part of this building and we've got a product that's going to be there for a long time.

What do you consider a successful project?

Success is a project that's delivered on schedule and under budget. Success is a good, high quality project where we've delivered the building the owner expects. Of course, we want to see a happy owner who likes seeing you walk into their office because you've done a good job for them.

What are a couple of your green initiatives?

We are the top LEED builder in the country, with many green initiatives in progress at any given time. We recently received a Gold designation for a project for AECOM, a 60,000 square-foot build out in Midtown Atlanta. LEED elements included recycling construction waste, use of materials with recycled content, an indoor air quality plan, and use of low-emitting materials such as adhesives, paints, wood and furnishings.

What are your future construction plans?

We are in progress on the new Cobb County Courthouse in Marietta, Ga., the G. Wayne Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Tucker High School in Atlanta, and the Duvall County Courthouse in Jacksonville, Fla. **CCR**