

SIMPLE TRUTHS

Gres Paving Proves Success Doesn't Need to be Complicated

Talk with John Gres about the longtime success of his firm, Gres Paving, and two simple principles emerge:

First, customer satisfaction is the primary goal. "We try to do the job right," Gres says of himself and his employees. "Give people what they pay for, high-quality work done on time, and they'll be back." Second, be sure that your equipment and suppliers are as ready to work long, hard hours as you are.

It's a straightforward approach appreciated by customers who bring repeat business. Until the recession hit, Gres was able to keep his 30 employees and 50 pieces of heavy equipment busy with residential, highway and commercial paving projects within 10 to 15 miles of the company's offices in Trenton and Lawrenceville, N.J.

Only the difficult economy forced Gres to begin working beyond the boundaries of Mercer County,

and he's still relying on his "satisfaction first" philosophy to earn contracts. "I'm hands-on," Gres says. "I'm in the field making sure the job is done right. Dad was the same way, and I haven't forgotten that."

Gres' father, John Sr., founded the company in 1952. John Jr. began working for his dad during the summers as a teenager and joined the business full time after high school. He became a partner in the early 1990s and took full ownership five years ago when his dad moved into semi-retirement.

Machines Matter

The elder Gres introduced his son to the value of hard-working, durable equipment decades ago, when he bought his first piece of Caterpillar equipment, a 933G track loader, which the younger Gres still owns.

"It was the first machine I ever ran," he remembers. "It was a good machine; I still like it to this day. It's a little antiquated now, with seven levers and two pedals to do basically what two levers do today, but it still runs well."



Left to right: Foley equipment consultant Jon Musicant; John Gres, Jr.; John Gres, Sr.; and Foley paving specialist Walt Suk.



Gres Paving relies on Cat pavers for reliability and durability. In addition to this Cat 655D, the company owns a Cat 1055D paver and numerous pieces of Cat equipment including dozers, excavators, backhoes and loaders.

At about the same time, John Sr. bought a used Cat 112 motor grader that was 10 years old or more. "That machine wouldn't die, either. We were using that machine into the '80s," the younger Gres recalls.

The company's experience with the Cat 112 also demonstrated the worth of working with Foley, Inc., the Caterpillar dealer who sold the machine to Gres Paving. "We needed a part for that 112, but we were pretty sure they wouldn't have one for such an old machine and would have to special order or make one for us," Gres says. "But Foley had it for us the next day. We were amazed!"

The Gres family began relying on Cat equipment and Foley, Inc. for help in working efficiently as the company grew. In the 1980s, for example, before the company began focusing exclusively on paving, Gres purchased a highly versatile Cat 955 track loader. "I remember operating it when we built a 32-home subdivision. I used that 955 for grading, cutting in the roads, digging the foundations, backfilling, everything," he says.

The partnership with Foley remains strong today, though Gres keeps his eyes open to all available equipment. A couple of years ago, he bought three new pavers, and only two of them were Cats. "I was willing to try another brand, but I knew I made a mistake the first time out with it. I put hardly any hours on it before getting rid of it and moving to a Cat, where I should have been in the first place," he says.

So now Gres Paving works with Cat's 655D and

1055D asphalt pavers. The company fleet also includes three graders, a dozen rollers, three hydraulic excavators, nine backhoes, eight wheel loaders, two track loaders, six dozers and a half-dozen skid steer loaders.

“Sometimes the work we do becomes almost violent for the machines. The Cats definitely take the beating better than any other equipment.”

—John Gres, Jr., Gres Paving

Most of the machines are Caterpillar — for good reason. "Sometimes the work we do becomes almost violent for the machines. The Cats definitely take the beating better than any other equipment," Gres says. "They're very tough machines, without a doubt, and they help keep us working without down time."

Fully Supported

Gres adds, "You pay a little more at the front end for a Cat — though not as much as most people think — but you end up with a lot more on the back end with a longer working life and higher resale value. The hands stay up at an auction whenever a Cat machine is being bid on."

He also points to the support he receives from Foley, Inc., particularly the regular discussions with paving products specialist Walt Suk and equipment consultant Jon Musicant.

"When we buy a new Cat, they're out there to make sure we get it running properly right from the start," Gres says. "And if we ever have a problem with a Cat machine, they're on site quickly, and what was potentially a business catastrophe becomes just a minor problem that's handled smoothly."

That support helps Gres live up to the promise he makes when he says, "When you hire us to do a job, I consider it an honor, and I'm going to work hard to make sure that you're happy and that you get what you paid for."

COMPANY PROFILE

GRES PAVING COMPANY INC.
Trenton and Lawrenceville, N.J.
Principal: Owner John Gres, Jr.
Applications: Paving
Cat Dealer: Foley, Inc.