

SUMMER 2017

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ESI IS A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED DESIGN-BUILD FIRM
SPECIALIZING IN FOOD FACILITY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION



BEN E. KEITH BUILDS STATE-OF-THE-ART ENERGY EFFICIENT DISTRIBUTION CENTER

In May 2015, Ben E. Keith Foods, Fort Worth, Texas, purchased more than 80 acres of land in Selma, Texas, for a proposed new distribution center.

Fast-forward to April of this year, and that same "vision" is starting to come to fruition, as ESI Group USA

begins construction of Ben E. Keith's 563,000-square-foot warehouse and office space.

"We at Ben E. Keith believe you get what you pay for, and by utilizing tilt exterior walls, all concrete surface parking and a higher grade of construction materials that stand the

test of time, that approach has proven very successful," says Roy Markham, vice president of operations and transportation for Ben E. Keith. "By buying and using top quality materials and construction techniques, we realize a higher frontend cost, but will eventually have less maintenance expense in operating our distribution centers. We take great pride in our facilities, and believe that helps create first-class operations for our customers, sales representatives and associates."

Ben E. Keith is said to be the nation's eighth largest broadline food-service distributor, supplying casual

dining restaurants, hotels, schools, healthcare facilities and country clubs.

This is just one of the many reasons why Ben E. Keith chose ESI Group, Hartland, Wis., to construct its state-of-the-art food and beverage distribution center.

"We started out just using ESI as a design company, and they were very competent," adds Markham. "Then we evaluated them as a general contractor for our new Selma project. After several extensive meetings, we felt a trust and a partnership with ESI. A distribution center is a huge investment for us, and we always strive for the best product at the greatest value. We look to ESI and their construction experience to advise us in the latest construction products and processes."

The LEED-certified building, scheduled to be completed by fall 2018, will include an automatic slotting and retrieval system, a modern test kitchen and a training center, among other cutting-edge technologies.

"We believe a LEED-certified building is an important business process. It's the right thing to do, not only for sustainability and the environment, but [also] our customers and associates genuinely care that we are being good corporate citizens," says Markham.

Building a LEED-certified building also makes economic sense, according to Markham.

"Such is the case for LED lighting," he adds. "This singular project helps the bottom line by not only using less energy, [but also] providing a brighter work environment for our employees and energy savings for the foreseeable future." ●

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RECRUITING EMPLOYEES FOR A DESIGN-BUILD INDUSTRY

Recruiting, hiring and retaining employees in this day and age can be quite cumbersome. It used to be that when people needed a job, they looked in the newspaper and mailed out paper resumes.

Today's job search world however is of a different animal—one that involves online searches and job fairs. For job seekers, it's about showcasing skills and work ethic. For businesses, it's about displaying company perks. And, for the design-build industry in particular, finding good people—the right people—is becoming more challenging than ever.

"Our challenge comes from the situation that our company is quite specialized in the food industry, and can be viewed as less glamorous than other industries when it relates to architectural design," says Donald Olsen, vice president design and operations for ESI Group, Hartland, Wis. "However, because an employee is such an investment, it is important that we find the right candidate. We have been doing more temporary-to-permanent hiring than hiring outright. This allows us to try the person out and see how they fit in with the rest of the group."

In order to recruit, ESI Group remains in contact with local colleges

and universities for listings of new graduates, attends job fairs at various universities and works with recruiting companies.

"On the engineering side of the company, we generally do not hire someone for a specific project, however if we need short-term help, we work through a temp services agency," says Olsen. "From a skill standpoint, we are looking for people that can work with 3-D computer programs such as Revit. 3-D design and modeling have become very important in the industry."

On the construction side of the company, ESI Group seeks out someone who can plan, coordinate, budget and supervise construction projects from early development to completion.

"The challenge has been finding quality personnel that are willing to travel," says Mike Schwartz, vice president of operations for ESI Constructors. "We currently work with four different recruiting services to meet our staffing requirements. We have also had some success with hiring college graduates, but the travel and development timeline limit these opportunities."

Overall, ever-changing technologies and food industry guidelines pose an additional challenge when looking to fill positions. ●