



Success Story

Yes, on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Drace Construction... A Thriving Small Business

Drace Construction Corp., a 2008 graduate of The Innovation Center small business incubator in Harrison County, Mississippi, recently received a \$7.5 million contract for the 25th Naval Construction Regiment (NCR) headquarters building at the Gulfport Naval Construction Battalion Command location. The project, which is Drace's largest to date, includes design, site development and construction services for the new headquarters building. The building will eventually house the 25th NCR.

Drace Construction Corp. is a great example of how local resources in South Mississippi directly support emerging business needs and operations. The history of Drace Construction Corp. begins in The Innovation Center, the local business incubator formerly known as the Gulf Coast Business Technology Center. The Innovation Center provided significant support to the company's development, especially in terms of "affordable space for a startup company." The reasonable rates helped reduce initial operating costs, allowing Drace Construction Corp. to invest more in equipment and staff. Drace also had the benefit of being in close proximity to the Small Business Administration and Business Development Center, both located within the incubator.

Also housed in The Innovation Center is the South Mississippi Contract Procurement Center (SMCPC), which helped Drace – a certified 8(a) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise – obtain federal, state, local government and commercial contracts. SMCPC's vision statement illustrates the organization's purpose: To be the premier provider of quality procurement technical assistance delivered by customer focused, highly motivated professionals using innovated technology and sound business practices. These services support and promote key industries on the Gulf Coast to ensure the local economy continues to prosper, especially in light of a national recession. Drace Construction Corp., which is a U.S. Green Building Council Member, has continually expanded into the "green building" market sector and throughout the Southeast despite the tough economic times.

John Drace, president of Drace Construction, explains other strategies to help small companies develop a competitive advantage in any economic circumstance, "The Federal Government is, for the most part, steady in times of economic turmoil and least affected by the recession." He continues, "Building up your resume, teaming up with larger contractors and larger firms, and utilizing the multitude of SBA programs allow a small business to build its capacity for larger projects." While the 25th NCR Headquarters is the largest project that Drace has been awarded to date, John Drace feels confident that their past performance and commitment to quality more than prove their abilities.

Finally, John Drace recommends that business operators find a niche to fill in government contracts. He says, "Different government agencies have different small business goals, so the need for new companies constantly expands to keep up with those goals." Community resources like the South Mississippi Procurement Center facilitate relationships between entities contracting government bids and local businesses to fully utilize the Gulf Coast's resources and talent. And as the market continues to expand for government contracts, Harrison County continually expands its resources to better serve local businesses and workers.



www.mscoast.org • hcdc@mscoast.org
12292 intraplex Parkway • Gulfport, MS 39503
Phone: 228-896-5020 • Fax: 228-896-6020