

# THE MAGAZINE FOR CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY **CONSTRUCTION LEADERS**

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## **Builders Post-Tension** CONCRETE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Started by two partners who gained experience in the concrete cable business during the 1980s, Builders Post-Tension shows that customer service has not gone out of style.

THE MAGAZINE FOR CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY  
**CONSTRUCTION LEADERS**  
*TODAY*

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# CONCRETE CUSTOMER SERVICE

## BUILDERS POST-TENSION

By Rebecca Rodriguez

When Greg Tomlinson and his partner Brian Conley started their company, Builders Post-Tension (BPT), in 2001, they had been working in the concrete cable business since the late 1980's. With their combined knowledge, experience and a staff that shared their enthusiasm and confidence, they entered the competitive arena. In the concrete cable business, all suppliers have to meet the same specifications. Tomlinson and Conley knew that the only way to beat out the competition was to excel at customer service. "That's how we differentiate ourselves," Tomlinson said. "Customer service has made our company grow."

Tomlinson stressed that customer service is key when it comes to growing a strong company. When the customer base grows, so does the profit, and that trickles down to the workers. Tomlinson knows the value of depending on a good staff and has created a

family atmosphere at BPT. He believes that treating his workers well is essential. "If we have a good year, I give a bonus," he said. "Our staff knows what they're doing, and they want to take care of the customers so they can reap some of the rewards."

Many at BPT are cross-trained for different jobs. Tomlinson encourages employees to seek higher level training and pays for their education. Much of the staff has level two certification from the Post-Tensioning Institute (PTI), a nonprofit organization for the advancement of post-tensioned, pre-stressed concrete design and construction. PTI represents businesses and professionals dedicated to expanding quality post-tensioning applications.

Builders Post Tension specializes in selling concrete reinforcement cables and mostly works with home builders and general contractors

1. The Millennium Project, The Woodlands, Texas.



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building single or multi-family structures. While housing and apartment complexes are their bread and butter, the company also supplies parking garages and post-tension elevated decks. One particularly impressive project of note is the Millennium located in the Woodlands, Texas. "It was a unique multi-family retail project within a town-center, community environment. The post-tension application worked really well, and the developer was happy," Tomlinson said.

Based in Houston, BPT also has a parallel business in Louisiana, BPT Gulf Coast, where they provide the same consideration for customer service and satisfaction. In Houston the company acts more as a material supplier and supplies to home builders and concrete contractors. The post-tension slabs are installed, the concrete is placed, and in seven to 10 days the company

returns to tension the cables and reinforce the foundation. In Louisiana, the company handles more aspects of the job and acts as a turn-key operation: supplying the materials, installing, placing the concrete, and stressing.

Builders Post-Tension employs thirty people in Houston and about twelve in the Louisiana office. The company services the entire state of Louisiana, portions of Mississippi, and all of the greater Houston area. Additionally, the company ships materials all over the country, from the east coast to Colorado. Fabricated post-tension cables are sent out to East Coast, Gulf Coast and Midwest regions regularly.

At the company's peak year in 2006, the annual revenue was \$24 million, but the recession had a significant effect on business, and in 2009 the company's revenue dropped to 10 million.



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"It was rough last year, and we knew that we had to be fiscally conservative," said Tomlinson. "We put money back into the company. We don't owe anybody anything. We have no debts, and we own everything, so we were able to survive the downturn."

2. The American Shooting Center, site preparation, West Houston, Texas.
3. An encapsulated post-tensioning job in Louisiana.
4. A Meadowlark Homes slab to be poured, Houston, Texas.
5. An apartment jobsite in Louisiana.
6. An elevated parking garage in Louisiana.
7. House packages ready for shipping, Houston, Texas.

## WESTCO SYSTEMS

Builders Post-Tension has been one of Westco's best and most valued customers since 2003. Westco has been serving Builders Post-Tension with their martial needs from PC strand to anchor bolts and tie wire. Westco enjoys working with Builders Post-Tension and Greg Tomlinson. They have found Greg and Brian to be very easy to work with and cooperate with. Builders Post-Tension is a strong, reliable and quality oriented company. After working together for more than eight years, Westco Systems and Builders Post-Tension have a lot in common, and Westco looks forward to working with Builders Post-Tension for many years to come.



"Unfortunately," Tomlinson said, "in a recession business is all about pricing." But coming out of a recession, he noted that his company is preferred due to its reputation for excellent customer service.

"We're optimistic about the long term. We've been dragging along the bottom, but we're poised to do well when the market comes back," he said. "I think by 2012 we'll be more back to normal."

The company is looking to expand geographically by possibly opening up another branch. But Tomlinson would not say where the new branch would be located. He added that BPT has three major competitors in Houston and two major competitors in Louisiana.

Tomlinson said the company is very "hands-on" and "mom and pop" in its approach. This improves the customer service the company can provide.

"It's not uncommon for me or my partner to throw supplies in a truck and bring it right out to the job," Tomlinson said.

Markets fluctuate and its good to keep a handle on the latest trends as well as what is more stable.

Recently multi-family units were "dead," but they are starting to pick up, and more apartment jobs are surfacing this year. One steady area of business that reaches across the country is supplying tennis courts.

"Tennis courts are a good application for post tension. We've shipped all over the country, and in 2009 we shipped more tennis courts than we've ever shipped before," he said.

Tomlinson explained that this was probably due to federal stimulus packages that gave states grant money, allowing school districts to order new tennis courts.

Tomlinson knows his selling region well, having been born in Louisiana and raised in Houston. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a business degree and knows the importance of keeping BPT's name visible in both Houston and Louisiana. He spends about \$15,000 on marketing and keeps it local and direct through the local builders association.

"It's a good bang for your buck because it's targeted directly at builders and contractors," he said.

BPT receives non-local advertising throughout the country by being a member of the Post-Tensioning Institute.

Ultimately, the best advertising is promoted by a satisfied customer. BPT is a company that never loses that focus and never compromises its dedication to providing only the best the industry has to offer. **CLT**

8. Boardwalk on the Waterway, The Woodlands, Texas.

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