

# INDIANAPOLIS BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## | SMALL BIZ PROFILE |

Stoepfelwerth & Associates

### 'Staking' their claim on growth

*Local engineering firm finds  
abundant opportunities*



IBJ Photo/Robin Jerstad

*Dave Stoepfelwerth says Indianapolis is blessed with too few good engineering companies for the available work.*

By Della Pacheco • [dpacheco@ibj.com](mailto:dpacheco@ibj.com)

While most 8-year-old boys were playing with toy trucks, Dave Stoepfelwerth was riding in big ones helping land surveyors at his father's civil engineering firm.

Stoepfelwerth, now 51 and CEO of Stoepfelwerth & Associates, grew up learning the business.

In fact, Stoepfelwerth had done enough surveying during grade school and high school that at age 16 he became a crew chief working under his father, Dick, who started the north-side company in 1962. He joined the company full time after graduating from Purdue University in 1976 with a degree in civil engineering.

But don't think it was easy being the owner's son.

"I was given all of the unpleasant survey tasks," Stoepfelwerth said. "My job was to map all of the sanitary sewers."

In those days, that meant actually climbing down into the combined storm and sanitary sewers, something that isn't done today.

He and partner Curt Huff, who is COO, took over management of the company in November 1987.

These days, Stoepfelwerth & Associates specializes in consulting engineering and

land surveying, about two-thirds of it for apartment, condominium and single-family subdivision developments.

Revenue reached \$8.4 million in 2004, and company leaders expect to see that grow 10 percent this year.

One longtime client is local developer Tom Grant, president of Thomas A. Grant Inc.

"I chose Stoepfelwerth to be my engineering firm 20 years ago and have used them ever since," he said. "They've grown, but I've grown with them. I get superb service, competitive pricing and, after 20 years, they've turned out to be excellent friends as well."

The company has several large clients, including home builders Centex Homes and Beazer Homes.

Paul Rioux, president of north-side development firm Platinum Properties LLC, says the company's integrity is what has kept him as a client for 15 years.

"In our business, a lot of things have to be done quickly and you may not always have

time to sign contracts and review documents," he said. "So it's a personal relationship where I know what they say goes and they feel the same about us."

Stoepfelwerth has found that assembling teams of engineers and surveyors knowledgeable about specific clients' need has contributed to the firm's progress. But finding the right people also is a big challenge.

"We want to build a network of additional engineers and technicians that share our vision for client service," he said, so that issue is addressed upfront—during the interview process.

Now, the company and its 78 employees have outgrown their current office on Allisonville Road. The firm will move to a new building at 7965 E. 106th St. in late spring.

With more than double the physical space and room to expand, the company will have capacity for up to 120 employees and as many as 25 outside survey crews, as business—and the economy—dictates.

To what does Stoepfelwerth attribute the company's success? The high ethical standards he and Huff expect of all employees.

"No one under my direction is allowed to say anything but the truth," he said. "Mistakes are sometimes made, and when they're discovered on any of our jobs, my partner and I like to be proactive and approach the client before they even know

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**Founded:** 1962

**Founder:** Dick Stoepfelwerth

**Owners:** Dave Stoepfelwerth and Curt Huff

**Service:** civil engineering and land surveying

**Employees:** 78

**Revenue (2004):** \$8.4 million

**One-year goal:** Grow revenue 10 percent and make a successful move to a new office without affecting client service.

**Industry outlook:** The Indianapolis area has too much work for the number of consultants in the area and has weathered recessions well.

there's a problem. We absolutely stand behind everything we do."

And he's optimistic about future possibilities for companies like Stoepfelwerth & Associates.

"I'm amazed at the large developments going on around Indianapolis that used to be considered out in the country when I was growing up," Stoepfelwerth said. "I'm totally convinced there will be enough vacant land to keep developers and consultants busy for many generations."•