

# COMMERCIAL<sup>®</sup>

**JOURNAL** DESIGN THAT INSPIRES, INSIGHT THAT INFORMS

## KING OF GREEN

MAGIC TOUCH CLEANING MAKES  
TIDY WORK OF SUSTAINABLE,  
GLOBAL-MINDED BUSINESS

**DOLLARS AND SENSE**  
IS GOING GREEN SUSTAINABLE?

POSTY CARDS' LEED LEGACY  
**GOING FOR PLATINUM**





# POSTY CARDS GREETES PLATINUM CHALLENGES

words KATE LEIBSLE photography AARON DOUGHERTY

## KEY PLAYERS ▼

### Architect:

McHenry Shaffer Mitchell Architects

### M.E.P. Engineer:

PKMR Engineers

### Structural Engineer:

KH Engineering

### Civil Engineer:

SK Design Group

### Landscape Architect:

Patti Banks Associates

### Contractor:

Turner Special Projects

Stepping through the front doors of Posty Cards, a visitor could be forgiven for not realizing that millions of greeting cards are printed here.

The building, at 1600 Olive St. in Kansas City, doesn't look or, more importantly, smell like a printing plant.

That is by design, says Erick Jessee, the third-generation leader of the company. It's also a part of the company's drive to achieve LEED Platinum status in its new headquarters.

"Our goal is for a visitor to know that there's something different about this place," he says. "It is one thing to talk about green buildings. It is a completely different experience to actually see one. We hope that other small business owners see that they can do this too."

Walking through the building, visitors will notice lots of natural light, clean floors, an organized manufacturing area and plenty of places for creativity and productivity.

The \$6.4 million expansion broke ground in November 2009, not exactly the time most companies were thinking of embarking on large construction projects, but Jessee didn't feel he had a choice.

"We were out of room for equipment or additional employees, and the right opportunities came together," he says.

Jessee also was following family tradition; that is, saying "yes" to a big project then figuring out a way to make it happen. After all, it's how his grandfather founded the company.

In 1948, Jessee's grandfather, Carl "Posty" Postlethwaite saw a need for greeting cards that businesses could send to mark customers' and vendors' special occasions. Hallmark



had already carved a niche for itself in the consumer greeting card industry, but there weren't any options for businesses.

So armed with just a good idea and his artistic ability, Postlethwaite set out to build his company. Today, Posty Cards has 38 full-time employees and more than 50 during peak production.

When planning for the new building began, Jessee says it would have been easy to do a standard construction project, but he knew he had a rare opportunity. "Typically small businesses have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to expand or build a new building," he says. "If we'd built conventional[ly], we'd have been stuck with it for at least 25 years. It seemed wiser to plan for the future and build green instead."

Posty Cards first made sustainability a company focus about six years ago, so it only made sense to carry that concept over to the building process.

"We wanted to do it because it was right for our company, our employees,

our customers and the community," he says. "And we realized that a green building would allow us to walk the talk more completely."

Jessee's first objective was achieving LEED Gold certification. Soon, however, he realized that LEED Platinum wouldn't require much more effort or money.

Today, the company is awaiting notice of whether it will be certified Platinum by the U.S. Green Building Council.

And sustainability efforts abound: Still fully in use, much of the old building was retrofitted to adapt into the sustainability theme, and its renovations fit seamlessly with the new construction.

Doubling the size of the physical plant (from 22,000 to more than 45,000 square feet) means everyone has more room, but it also has the potential to isolate employees. But with construction centered around an open-air courtyard, someone can stand at a window in the manufacturing area and see others at work in offices or at lunch.







The windows also serve a practical purpose in lowering electrical usage for the entire plant. Many of the electric lights are equipped with motion or sound detectors so they turn off when rooms are not in use.

Even on the manufacturing/printing floor, the building design brings in as much natural light as possible.

“In our manufacturing area, artificial lights can be on full, half or on a bright day we can just use the natural light coming through our sky lights and windows,” Jessee says.

The manufacturing/printing area also features large fans to keep the air moving and help contribute to better air quality.

Running a manufacturing company requires a lot of energy. While the windows help with electrical needs, solar photovoltaic panels are the workhorses for the plant, providing about 11 percent of the company’s

electrical needs. After doubling the footprint of the company, Jessee only expects about a five percent increase in energy use.

Other sustainable features include an 8,300-gallon water tank that collects rainwater and irrigates the courtyard and building’s toilets; native plants in the courtyard; solar-heated water; high-efficiency HVAC; and environmentally friendly, recycled or recycled-content materials like low-VOC paints, cradle-to-grave carpet and FSC-certified plywood.

Posty Cards had two great partners in the project: McHenry Shaffer Mitchell Architects was the architect of record and Turner Construction, the contractor.

“There’s tremendous momentum,” Jessee says. “Many architects and contractors are wanting to get experience working on LEED buildings.”

The year-and-a-half building project has been more than satisfying, he says, even while creating challenges for Posty Cards employees who had to work around construction equipment and a disruption of their normal routine.

“My hat is off to our employees,” says Jessee. “They have had a tremendously good attitude.”

An open house is planned for later in the spring, and Jessee looks forward to showing off Posty Card’s new home.

He knows his father, who is still involved in the business, is very supportive of the sustainability effort, but what would his grandfather think of his new, 21st century, green company?

“I think he would be proud,” Jessee says, “and extremely excited about what we’ve accomplished.” **CJ**



1: Now the company’s multi-purpose room, this space was renovated from what was once Posty Cards’ administrative offices. The area was gutted and clerestory windows were added along the east wall to bring in natural light.

2: The glass between the spaces marks the end of the old building and the new addition.

3: This corridor links the new shop area to the existing building. On the left, new administrative areas boast views through the corridor to the exterior courtyard.

4: A break area along the storefront windows runs adjacent to the exterior courtyard.