

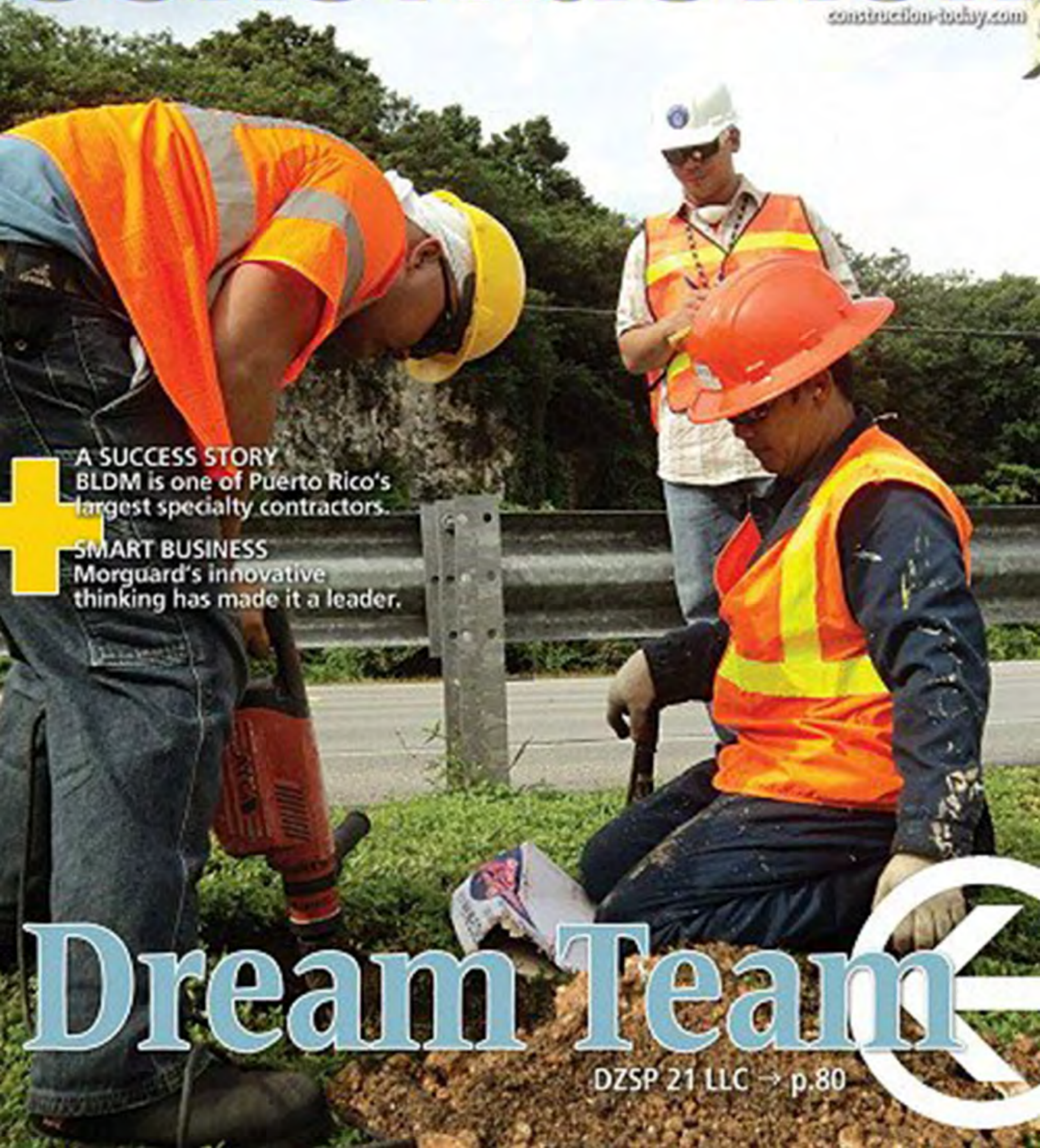
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Family Pride

CARDOZA PLUMBING IS CARRYING FORTH A LEGACY OF FAMILY BUSINESS. **BY GENEVIEVE DIESING**

New York City-based Cardoza Plumbing Corp. is one of the largest plumbing companies in New York for three reasons. It brings an unparalleled level of customer service, quality work and in-house expertise to every job it takes on. Work is coming steadily to the family owned firm, despite the construction industry's generally dismal outlook.

In such a down market, Cardoza Plumbing has been fortunate enough to land enough large projects to stay busy, owner Ray Cardoza says, although his company's know-how may have more to do with it.

"I feel my company's expertise helps us continue to get more work and still remain viable in this weak economy," he explains. Cardoza employs some of the most highly-skilled and

dedicated people in the industry, he says, resulting in quality projects. Achieving this level of expertise hasn't happened by accident. Cardoza's father, Gene Cardoza, founded Cardoza Corp. 22 years ago, and has been active in the industry for more than 40 years.

He also showed Cardoza the ropes of the business. Cardoza worked his way up from plumbing apprentice to foreman, to eventually following in his father's footsteps and starting his own company with his sister. Cardoza says that his father's insight and guidance has steered him forward, and Cardoza always keeps this in the forefront of his mind.

"I owe my entire career to my father," Cardoza declares. "Without my father, I'd never be who I am today."

Cardoza Plumbing

www.cardozaplumbing.com

- *HQ: Jamaica, New York*
- *Employees: Approximately 75*
- *Annual sales: \$10 million to \$15 million*
- *Services: Plumbing*

"Without my father, I'd never be who I am today."

-Ray Cardoza, owner



Cardoza Plumbing employs a highly-skilled workforce.



Cardoza Plumbing's plumbers typically stay with the company for long periods of time.

Proactive Approach

Because he has learned the business from the inside out, Cardoza sees opportunities where others see obstacles. His can-do attitude has influenced the company's culture, becoming a part of how Cardoza Plumbing does business.

As a result, the company is always up for a challenge. "We have very experienced management field staff, which assist us in completing the tough jobs," he says. "I've worked in every facet of this industry and know what we are capable of. I try to lead by example, by working hard and being fair."

Cardoza prides himself on the company's ability to tackle the harder projects and execute them quickly and smoothly, such as a job on which it is working with Turner Construction. Cardoza Plumbing is retrofitting two buildings that date back to the 1900s. The Smith and Flexner buildings at Rockefeller University in New York City are complicated and delicate assignments, Cardoza notes, but that's not slowing Cardoza Plumbing down. The retrofitting of today's



plumbing systems into an existing building can be quite a task, Cardoza notes.

"Our emphasis on the design end and the preplanning of the job saves us a lot of time," Cardoza notes. Construction blueprints usually

require some level of revision, and Cardoza Plumbing has the in-house expertise necessary to do just that, he explains.

"We're lucky enough to have an in-house engineer and a state-of-the-art CAD department

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to take the contract drawings and rework them to maximum efficiency on the install side, which ensures our customers the entire project will run with more productivity," Cardoza says.

Proud Projects

Other projects Cardoza is proud of include the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, work at the Rockefeller University, as well as several projects with New York University Medical Center, Columbia University and Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City. "Those are our three big accounts," Cardoza notes.

Cardoza Plumbing serves five boroughs of New York City and is certified by:

- The city of New York
- New York City School Construction Authority
- The Dormitory Authority
- The Empire State of New York

"We provide plumbing installation and renovation for all commercial buildings and institutions," the company notes. In addition to commercial and institutional plumbing and renovation, Cardoza Plumbing also handles plumbing installation and remodeling work for the residential market.

Ethical Emphasis

Cardoza Plumbing's commitment to its customers has helped the company maintain long-term relationships, Cardoza notes. Even when the building boom put plumbers in high demand, Cardoza Plumbing did not overcharge its customers.

"I like to be fair and honest," Cardoza stresses. "When the industry was very busy several years ago, our prices stayed consistent. We didn't overcharge our customers, even when the market standards sometimes warranted it."

The company is also proud of being a minority-owned business, Cardoza notes.

It says it is committed to fostering a positive work environment for the benefit of employees and ultimately, clients.

"We will provide all of our employees with a healthy and wholesome atmosphere, where each person can perform his [or] her clearly assigned duties," Cardoza Plumbing declares.

"We want to make the employees' association with us a satisfying experience by encouraging those who are loyal and capable team workers [and] by providing ample opportunity for promotion and advancement."

Cardoza's plumbers receive training from the local trade union school.

"They receive a five-year apprenticeship, then they become journeymen, then they are



» Cardoza Plumbing works in a variety of industries throughout New York City and maintains a steady stream of work, despite a down market. The company works in a variety of industries throughout New York City.



'When the industry was busy several years ago, our prices stayed consistent.'

really a full-fledged plumber," Cardoza explains. "Then we do our own in-house training."

The company further educates plumbers on hospital and institutional work, specifically, and about specialty piping and specialty systems.

"We'll bring in manufacturers and our technicians to demonstrate new systems and/or products, which can be labor saving," Cardoza explains. "So, our plumbers can become proficient on a particular system, so we can install it more productively." This productivity can result in a fulfilling work environment, Cardoza explains.

Cardoza Plumbing maintains a staff of 40 to 50 core plumbers, and enjoys low turnover, Cardoza notes. "Most employees have been in business for 11 years now, and many have transitioned from my dad's company to ours," he adds. "Some have been with our family business close to 20 years."

New Technology

Cardoza's employees stick around because they are treated well, Cardoza notes, and also because his company offers a stimulating career. "I feel it's better quality work - working within a hospital," he says. "It is more challenging. It's not basic, everyday plumbing."

For instance, this kind of work presents the opportunity to use differ-

ent piping systems, Cardoza points out, such as a new system from piping system manufacturer George Fischer for reverse osmosis filtration.

"It's a great new system," he explains. "Not only is it less expensive, the productivity in installing it is astronomical in savings. We are constantly bringing in state-of-the-art systems to improve our productivity, while still not taking way from the owners product - or budget."

Future Focus

Ray Cardoza and his sister Marie Cardoza-Pontillo are part owners of the company, which has annual revenues between \$10 million and \$15 million, Cardoza notes. The duo founded the company in 1999 and specializes in hospital, institutional, commercial and residential plumbing work. Both Cardoza and Pontillo worked at Cardoza Corp. before starting the company. Today, Cardoza Plumbing employs approximately 75 people.

"We are a service organization," the company explains. "Our primary goal is to satisfy our customers by providing professional plumbing services and high-quality products. "We recognize that our builders, contractors and individual customers are the only reasons for our existence," it continues. "We believe, as an organization, that servicing them courteously, while conducting our operation in an ethical and legal manner, is the responsibility of all our employees." ♦

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