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## Success

### A Team Concept

*Editor's Note: This issue of **Owner/Investor News** is something of a departure from our regular format. The premise of this publication is to share new ideas with our readers on constructing comfortable buildings in the hope that they will find ways to profit from those ideas. Past topics have included the importance of comfort to a property's success, the impact a new technology like electronic controls can have on the task of keeping occupants comfortable and the values the team concept brings to the construction process.*

*Property owners are indeed profiting from such ideas. One such firm is Crocker & Company, Boca Raton, Florida. This article summarizes a recent meeting between Crocker, other members of their building team and The Trane Company. Crocker's story is presented here to illustrate how the idea of providing comfortable space can impact a firm's business, and how that idea fits within Crocker's general development strategy.*

*We'll let you judge the effectiveness of Crocker's strategy and suggest it might be advantageous for you to look for similarities to your own business. Perhaps you'll uncover some new, profitable ideas in Crocker's experiences. In particular, look for:*

- *Their thoughts on the importance of comfort.*

- *Their unique involvement in the construction process.*

- *How they stay in touch with their customers.*

- *How they adapt the new technology of DDC/VAV into their existing strategy and image.*

- *Their success!*

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## Profile

### **Crocker & Company**

Founded in 1902 in New York City and active in commercial real estate for the last 15 years in South Florida, most Crocker development has been in Broward and Palm Beach counties with the heaviest concentration of product in Boca Raton. Most projects have been low to mid-rise commercial office space, with some retail mixed use and some office/warehouse space.

While the vacancy rate in Boca Raton hovers near 30 percent, Crocker's 650,000 square feet of commercial rental space is 90 percent leased. Another 330,000 square feet is in development right now, because of the demand created by the unique locations, quality and overall success of their existing properties.

Participants from Crocker & Company in this meeting were: Aubrey D. Haines, senior vice president; Leigh E. Gove, vice president; and Greg Anderson, senior project manager.

### **Madget-Dabney Associates**

Headquartered in Texas, Madget-Dabney has current mechanical and electrical consulting work in Florida, Arizona and California as well. The principals are registered to practice in 12 states. Madget-Dabney designed the last project for Crocker & Company and is currently involved in the design of three new Crocker buildings. They are also providing continuing consultation and advisement on existing buildings and tenant improvement drawings. This Houston-based consulting engineering firm with 16 years of experience was represented by James Madget.

### **Southeast Mechanical Contractors**

Southeast has offices in Hollywood, Tampa and Orlando and has been active in the South Florida market since 1975. They're a versatile, full service contractor with plan and spec, design/build and service capabilities. Southeast has been the mechanical subcontractor of choice for several Crocker projects and now enjoys a trusted relationship with Crocker as a valuable team member. Southeast also does mechanical service on many of Crocker's properties after construction. President Bill Catron and vice president Joe Manteiga took part in this meeting.

Other parties involved in this meeting, although not directly quoted in this article, were Jack Borgschulte and Tom Tweeton of Trane in Miami, Dick Cooper and Jeff Miller of Trane in Houston along with Trane La Crosse headquarters personnel.

Why was this team assembled at The Trane Company? To review the features of a Trane Integrated Comfort™ system just purchased for the 100,000 square-foot Crocker Center II. And to discuss how to further capitalize on the success all parties have realized from working on the Crocker project team.

## **Crocker & Company Construction Team In Operation**

### **A South Florida Landlord**

"We're landlords, not developers," said Aubrey Haines in describing Crocker & Company's business philosophy. "It's a philosophy that is handed down from the president of the company, Thomas J. Crocker." Perhaps better than any other guiding principle, this attitude is the standard against which decisions about building a project are made.

Being a landlord implies that Crocker stays closer to their tenants, and closer to the needs and wants of prospective tenants, than some of their competitors in the development business. Groups within Crocker both lease and manage the properties they develop. Tenant reaction to product features, or problems in operation, are both immediate and undistorted.

Such in-house organizations aren't unusual among developers. With Crocker, though, there's a "dotted line" path of communication between the groups that appears rather unique. Comfort complaints don't stop at the property manager's desk. Any construction-related problems with the building or its mechanical-electrical-plumbing systems are also referred to Leigh Gove, vice president of tenant improvements. Most people in such a construction position would be removed from tenant contact after the space is occupied.

### **Hands On Management**

"Do they call me with problems? What, are you kidding? Of course they call!" says



Leigh. At that point, he can use his construction experience to help solve the problem and explain the occurrence to a sometimes upset tenant. According to Leigh, he often needs to take extra time to help a tenant understand that fixing a problem with the comfort system can be more complex than replacing a single piece or part, and that Crocker will apply the professional expertise necessary to fix any problems they find. Crocker's concern, and their all-out efforts in diagnosis and solution of a problem, minimizes any ill-will generated over the incident.

Crocker's mechanical contractor, Bill Catron of Southeast Mechanical, can also be part of this troubleshooting process. Part of Bill's service to Crocker is to lend his expertise when problems do arise with the mechanical comfort system.

### **New Construction — The Design Process**

Although there's obviously great value in quick and effective response to these comfort complaints, Leigh's and Bill's involvement bring notable benefits to the new construction side of Crocker & Company. Exposure to tenant complaints guide their budget and design input to James Madget, the design engineer on several projects for Crocker.

James, from his experience with Crocker, is very sensitive to their concern over the design of a comfortable, reliable system. These concerns drive his initial selection of a mechanical system type (most recently chilled water and VAV) and also help him evaluate ideas for improvements throughout the design and construction process.

James finds Crocker's involvement critical. "They look at all their options. A design improvement isn't rejected out of hand simply because of first cost if it helps Crocker avoid problems, or solve them easier when they happen."

Bill Catron concurs with James that Crocker's approach is unique. "Lots of owners talk about quality buildings, but Crocker really stands by their commitment. The mechanical systems in Crocker's buildings are first class, head and shoulders above competing buildings. The first cost increment they pay is a small one, especially when you spread it out through the financing. But that's enough to get them a substantially better comfort system and lower operating costs."

### **Team Concept Plus New Technology Pay Off**

Crocker & Company keeps involved in decisions throughout the construction process by working with trusted team members Madget-Dabney and Southeast Mechanical. They assure that continuity will be in place by giving very specific instructions to the architect they place in charge of the job.

According to Aubrey, "Our multiple architects and contractors are informed up front that we'll retain the right to select systems and subcontractors that enhance the quality of the construction effort and ultimate project. This also sends a clear message that when our engineer or contractor has an idea, we want to hear it!" In effect, both James and Bill have not just an opportunity, but a responsibility, to report ideas and concerns about the comfort system directly to Aubrey during the design process.

One system upgrade Crocker has adopted on their latest project, at both James' and Bill's recommendation, is an electronic building management system. Leigh explains their decision, "With the central monitoring system, we can do a better job in two ways. First, when we get a comfort complaint, we can immediately tell if the problem is real or imagined. And we can use the historical trending features to watch suspect areas over time."

"Secondly, we'll now be able to better diagnose a **real** problem. Is our tenant too hot because of poor airflow or because that air is too warm? Now we'll know. And if we don't, our contractor can call into the system from his office to take a look."

And, Aubrey is particularly pleased with the team's latest recommendation: DDC/VAV, subject of the last **Owner/Investor News**. He sees it as one of the best and most modern ways available to provide better service and better comfort to his tenants.

This team concept combined with the newest technology does pay off.

### **Smart Growth**

What does the future hold for Crocker & Company? Although they're growing rapidly . . . another several hundred thousand square feet are being planned for

'88 and '89 . . . Aubrey is taking steps to assure that this projected growth doesn't compromise their commitment to providing customer service.

"The timing of this first project with Trane's assistance in building management is perfect. We'll need to maximize the advantage of networking our buildings together over phone lines and maintain the same level of involvement, and to stay fresh and current with our development ideas. Also, as we grow and add assets, our property management group will have the advantage of prior experience with the standardized control systems and will not be forced to speculate about how a new building will operate or achieve operational savings. This helps us plan for a safe and service-conscious future," Aubrey concludes.

James Madget, from his years of experience in Houston, offers perhaps the most critical long-term view of Crocker & Company's comfort system strategies. He says, "There are many buildings in Houston that went up cheap, with mechanical system design based only on first cost. Those are the ones that are empty today. Some of them may never have tenants!"

"When times got tough in Houston, the buildings that kept tenants, and continued to perform economically, were the quality projects. Quality means not just finishes and locations, but quality comfort systems inside."

Quality. Customer service and responsiveness. Comfort. Staying close to your customers. These company principles have made Crocker & Company one of the leading landlords in South Florida.



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**A Publication of  
The Trane Company  
Commercial Systems Group  
La Crosse, WI 54601**

## **Crocker Center Boca Raton, Florida**

The best of all worlds comes together at Boca Raton's Crocker Center. At the center of this 28-acre site is a Marriott Hotel complemented on one side by office buildings, on the other by a retail mall . . . all adjoined by an open air plaza.

The entire project is of coordinated architectural design . . . an articulation of materials, juxtapositions of color and texture against a reflective glass background and stairstepped edges. Colors of rose, sand and teal green; synthetic stucco and glass, palms and indigenous shrubs and flowering plants are used throughout the complex bringing three distinctly different facilities together as one.

Center of the project is the 256-room ultra-modern Marriott Hotel, visible from and easily accessed by I-95. Large, tastefully decorated rooms provide guests with quiet, comfortable surroundings. A pedestrian promenade and landscaped courtyard allows guests to reach either the office building or retail area conveniently.

The 120,000 square-foot office building has a simple, efficient design with six 20,000 square-foot flexible floor plates. The facility provides tenants with such conveniences as architectural lighting, card access security system, life safety systems, sprinkler system, sophisticated lobby finishes and state-of-the-art elevators. The building offers a structured parking garage accessed by a lighted, landscaped, covered walkway.

And the 92,000 square-foot retail space completes Crocker Center, providing dining, shopping and entertainment for tenants and visitors alike. The center is anchored by five restaurants with a contemporary bar and grill at one end and an upscale McDonalds at the other. Art galleries and other late-night crowd-pleasers are scattered among the restaurants; other tenants include a childrens shop, boutiques, jewelry stores, a fine menswear shop, a bookstore, a kitchenware store and gift shops.

Crocker Center is brought together by a 20,000 square-foot central outdoor plaza, beautifully landscaped with lighted walkways for the enjoyment of tenants and guests, day or night.

And providing total indoor comfort for Crocker Center occupants in both the office building and retail mall are mechanical systems comprised of Trane centrifugal chillers, air handlers and variable air volume boxes. In the latest addition to Crocker Center, equipment in the office building is all connected to a Trane Tracer® building management panel providing an Integrated Comfort™ system. Trane is extremely proud to have assisted the environmental and comfort system design team with Crocker Center.

### **Developer**

Crocker & Company  
Boca Raton, Florida

### **Architect**

Cooper Carry & Associates  
Atlanta, Georgia

### **Engineer**

Madget-Dabney Associates  
Houston, Texas

Kelly Lundstrom Pressley  
Atlanta, Georgia

Southeast Mechanical Contractors  
Hollywood, Florida

### **Contractor**

Crocker Construction Company  
Boca Raton, Florida

Linbeck Construction Company  
Houston, Texas

### **Management**

Crocker & Company  
(office and retail)  
Boca Raton, Florida

Interstate Hotels  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

