

Partnering Works

An Interview with Jim Pappas, Vice President and District Manager of Hensel Phelps, Northern California

Hensel Phelps Construction Company has just celebrated their sixth anniversary as a member of IPI. They won a Sapphire John L. Martin Partnered Project of the Year Award this year for their Mule Creek Infill Complex project. We talked with Jim Pappas (our new Vice President of the Board) about his thoughts on the importance of Partnering in the construction industry and how it helped the Mule Creek Project, in particular.



Q: Why is Partnering Important to the Construction Industry?

A: I've had the opportunity to work in 11 states and I've seen the vast differences between projects that partner and those that don't. On those projects that don't partner, I spend a tremendous amount of time trying to resolve issues. My time spent in Partnering sessions is well worth it. I'd much rather be doing that than always having to intervene.

Partnering is all about aligning expectations. You can look at a drawing and see it one way and I may see it another way. To align expectations takes communication by asking "What are your concerns? What are your goals?" You will get different answers (and expectations) from different people. Partnering is a good way to align the different expectations and goals. It works for every delivery model. Some say it

won't work on hard bid. In fact, you need Partnering more with hard bid because of how the contract is written.

One element of Partnering, the scorecards/Partnering surveys, is the barometer for how things are going. In the Mule Creek Project, for instance, the surveys prepared us for our monthly Partnering session. The CDCR Director would attend and we would walk the job and talk about the issues with Neal Flesner (IPI Master Level Facilitator, Ventura Consulting). The project finished early and on budget—it was truly a collaborative effort. There was a sister project that was half the size who wasn't Partnering. That project was behind schedule and had claims. It just goes to show what a team can do with a common vision. There is a lot of give and take. You sit down and you work it out. The Mule Creek project included 23-25 months of collaborative design, \$375B worth of work, and a late change that added a building. We still got it done on time and within budget.

The most moving moment came in the closeout partnering session when the circle of Executives shared their parting thoughts. Mike Courtney (then Project Director with Vanir) said, "I remember your words – Hensel Phelps would raise the bar on our expectations. You did raise the bar and exceeded our expectations." That comment meant a lot to me.



Deborah Hysen (Director, Facility Planning, Construction and Management, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation) said, "The only bad thing

Photos: (above) Mule Creek Infill Complex project, Ione, CA; (left) members of the Mule Creek project team at IPI's Collaboration 2017 Conference.

about this project...is we don't have another project to tackle together with this same team."

A first for many of the people working on the project was that we were a partnership where people were engaged both at work and after work. There were lunches to bring the community out. Leadership would bring their families to these events. It was not just a successful job but a successful relationship. This level of Partnering and partnership can be replicated.

Everyone walked away from this project with a feeling of pride for a job well done

Q: How Can IPI Help?

A: *I became involved with IPI because I believe the need for collaboration in our industry is great. It is a testament to the strength of IPI (as a pioneer in the industry) to create a process of accreditation and give it a definition—a structure. I look back 20 years when Partnering was a day's worth of touchy-feely stuff. Now it has progressed to be a more pragmatic approach to avoiding and solving problems.*

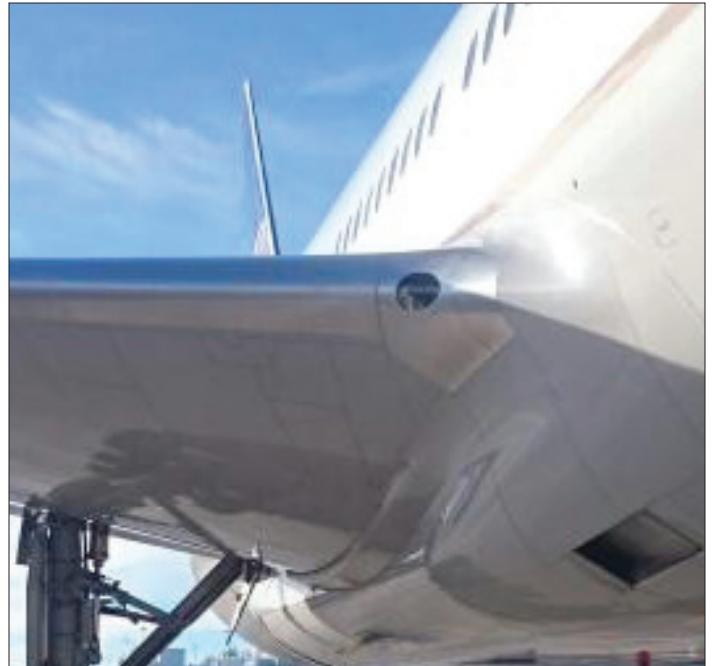
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We have great advocates like Scott Bills (Operation Manager, Hensel Phelps) out there implementing Partnering day by day. That is so important. I believe that

kind of support needs to come from the top. Force the issue. Believe in it. There's nothing worse than a team that wants to partner but the leader is resisting. The mindset should be to resolve the issue, and for people to walk away happy. It must come from the top or you will have conflict in the organization.

*The challenge that the Board of Directors has is working on our regular day jobs as well as supporting IPI to the degree that is needed. We are at a crossroads. We've had a change in leadership. Now we are trying to harness our progress and take it to the next level. We need to reach beyond the west coast—which we are going to do. We need to be the go-to place for facilitator accreditation or advice for owners. We have the interactive sessions at our annual conference and awards ceremony—that is the benchmark. **We have to sustain the momentum.***

We have made some great strides. We are ready to grow to the next level and make a difference in the industry.



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