

Tenacity Trumps the Downturn

Lisa Garney's skills, knowledge and business savvy earn contracts and recognition for LMG Construction

STORY BY JULIUS KARASH | PHOTO BY SARAH PINK



Ask Lisa Garney to share a favorite childhood memory, and she'll probably tell you about spending Sunday afternoons with her sisters at their father's construction company office.

"We'd drive the forklift," she recalls. "The construction business was a big part of my life growing up."

So it remains. Garney, daughter of developer Charles Garney, today heads up LMG Construction Services. During the summer construction season, she's on job sites at 5 a.m. and answering business emails at 11 p.m.

"You never really leave it," she says. "I love what I'm doing."

LMG Construction is a full-service contracting company. Specialties include military construction and commercial plumbing subcontracting work.

In January, LMG was among 22 companies honored by Missouri legislators as an outstanding small business. Garney says winning such awards is good for employees. "It's a way for me to say thank you to them and to teammates and other contractors I work with," she says. Garney also was recognized

by *KC Business* magazine in March as one of the area's most influential women.

Garney graduated from the University of Kansas with a bachelor's degree in business. She then studied at the London School of Economics and earned a law degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She's also a licensed master plumber.

Garney was vice president of her father's Briarcliff mixed-use development in Kansas City's Northland before going out on her own.

More than \$40 million in contracts were awarded to LMG Construction between 2007 and the end of 2011 for federal general contracting work and commercial plumbing subcontracting work. Local projects have included Starlight Theatre, the Victoria Arms Apartments in Kansas City and the FishNet Security offices at the Sprint Nextel campus.

In addition, LMG has been awarded an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract for pavement repairs at Whiteman Air Force Base near Knob Noster, Mo. That contract could attain a value of \$35 million to \$40 million over five years, Garney says.

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Successful entrepreneurs such as Lisa Garney take pride in blazing their own trails, but that doesn't mean they can do it all on their own.

Indeed, Garney says it is crucial for business owners to obtain "buy-in" from the people on their payrolls. "If you have employees buy in to a vision and to where the company is headed, you're going to get higher productivity out of your employees," she says. "I try and get them to know where the company stands at all times financially, and what our vision is for moving forward. Having them buy in to where the company has been, is and where it's going, is something that's very important."



- ▶ Lisa Garney
- ▶ Founder and president of LMG Construction Services and LMG Professional Services
- ▶ Company Profile: LMG Construction Services specializes in areas such as military construction and commercial plumbing subcontracting. LMG Professional Services' areas of expertise include regulatory and affirmative action compliance involving construction projects.

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Garney's core staff has increased from just three employees to 14 employees in the last three years, and she takes pride in the fact that her growing business is creating jobs in a down economy. "Being able to employ people and create jobs that stimulate economic growth for the Kansas City community and the nation is one of my core missions," she says.

Garney projects a possible tripling in gross revenues this year, up to a range of \$15 million to \$20 million, compared with \$6.5 million in 2011.

Despite her achievements and credentials, success has not come easily to Garney. "There are a lot of bidders these days, so you get a lot of noes. We've been fortunate to have some yeses, and very honored to be working on the projects that we're working on and whom we're working with." **KCB**

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