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Terry Clark helps run Clark Pest Control with his brother, Joe, and father, Charlie. Clark made the design of their executive offices building with green technology — such as solar panels on the roof of the business — to care for the environment and cut costs. (Brian Feulner/News-Sentinel)

Eco-friendly Clark

Lodi pest control takes care of environment, employees

By Marc Lutz
 News-Sentinel Staff Writer
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 Comments (No comments posted.)

Not many people are aware that Clark Pest Control is a local company. And many believe its a national corporation. The fact is that it was started 50 years ago by Charlie Clark right here in Lodi.

Since that time, the company has expanded and become a household name (think: "Clark, We Need You"), and is the largest family owned pest control business in the United States today. Recently the company built new headquarters on Guild Avenue with employee comfort, efficiency and environmental consciousness in mind.

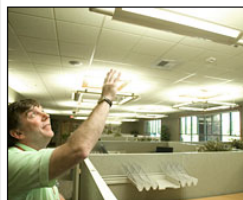
It took three years to plan the 55,000-square-foot building at a cost of \$12 million. Terry Clark, Charlie's son, who runs the business with his brother Joe, oversaw every step of construction, which took a mere 350 days to complete. They moved in on November 11 of last year.

Most would probably expect an industrial, clinical feel at a pest control company. But it's elegance, warmth and comfort that greet the visitors and employees as they enter the Clark building. One would think that no expense was spared. However, cost-effectiveness and eco-friendly design are found throughout.

"The hardest part was building an office that everyone wanted," Terry Clark said. "There's lots of warm natural light. It makes people want to work here." To that end, almost every department of Clark Pest Control has sky lights, allowing for a reduction in energy consumption. Even Charlie Clark still comes to work, though he's semi-retired — "He only comes to work six days a week," Terry Clark joked.

When it comes to employee comfort (beyond the obvious elegance), there is a break room that mimics an upscale bistro. Cushioned booths and modern appliances bring to mind an eatery found somewhere like L.A. or Seattle.

If outdoor dining is more to an employee's liking, there's a courtyard complete with a barbecue grill and massive Koi pond. Even the pond is environmentally friendly, with overflow draining to the sewage system rather than the river.



Terry Clark points out some of the skylights that let in sunshine throughout the Clark Pest Control executive office building on Wednesday in Lodi. (Brian Feulner/News-Sentinel)

All of Clark's divisions, pest control, termite monitoring and lawn care were brought together to control company costs and maintain customer fees.

One of the only true extravagances in the offices is the \$2 million video conferencing system that allows training and company meetings (between Clark's 21 branch offices) in one location. However, even that is cost-efficient since it saves on travel and lodging expenses.

And when it comes to travel, all of Clark Pest Control's company vehicles are fitted with a GPS system that allows the main office to monitor travel times, distances, fuel use and idling. Since implementing the system, Terry Clark says, they've saved 70 percent on fuel costs. And tires are inflated using nitrogen rather than air, as it won't defuse through the rubber the way oxygen does. That helps to save fuel and reduce emissions and wear on the tires.

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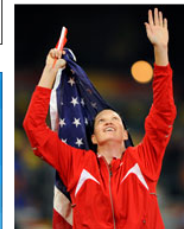
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To save on printing expenditures, the company has installed an entire print shop with the ability to create everything from a standard business card all the way up to a five-foot-by-150-foot banner.

Atop the entire operation sits a 166 kilowatt-hour solar panel system, producing enough electricity to power 40 homes, Terry Clark said. The electricity is fed into the Lodi Electric Utility grid sold back at wholesale prices.



Clark Pest Control in Lodi has a large kitchen in the breakroom for employees, as well as several luxurious meeting rooms, offices and sitting areas. (Brian Feulner/News-Sentinel)

All of the effort goes back to Clark's status as a QualityPro Green company. QualityPro Green is a sub-section of the national QualityPro organization that, according to Clark's Technical Director Darren Van Steenwyk, requires members to meet three qualifications.

"They look at a company's environmental stewardship, customer interaction and employee hiring and maintenance," Van Steenwyk said. He went on to say that QualityPro looks at how a company is run and how pesticides are selected and bought.

Clark uses all food-grade pesticides, meaning the ingredients naturally repel pests. Herbs such as wintergreen mint and rosemary will drive away certain bugs, so those are found in some of the pesticides used. Whereas it used to take many years for traditional pesticides to break down, today's technologically

advanced repellents break down in four to five years, Terry Clark said.

Termite monitoring is done so that spraying for the nuisance is only done when absolutely necessary.

Terry Clark cited that the World Health Organization has put forth three criteria for longer, healthier lives in humans: better medicine, better sanitation and better pest control. He said that at Clark, they are environmentalist, because they know how their practices affect their surroundings and clients. So they have to take care of both.

"We've made an investment in botanical business," Van Steenwyk said. "It's very much a part of Clark's environmental stewardship."

Contact Business Editor Marc Lutz at marcl@lodinews.com.

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