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Terry Clark stands amidst the solar panels that top the new Clark Pest Control building in Lodi. The system was designed and installed by Aram Solar - © Rich Turner

Clark Pest Control installs $1.7 million solar system

New high-tech building retains classic charm

By William West

Clark Pest Control, renowned for their funny and kitschy TV ads, ("Clark, we need you!"), may soon be known for an astonishingly beautiful and functional new headquarters building. Atop the building is a $1.7 million solar system that is designed to supply up to 70 percent of its electricity.

"It is a sort of 21st century Craftsman style," said Sue Raymond, who was the interior designer for the project. The architect was Bill Johnston and the builder was TMW.

The building is in an

industrial area east of Lodi, but is the antithesis of the typical big box warehouse. To borrow Ms. Raymond's apt analogy, picture a Craftsman bungalow from the 1930's, streamline its more protuberant elements, then feed it steroids until it puffs up to 53,000 square feet, and yet still maintains a kind of homey charm.

Anyone who visited their previous headquarters would have found themselves in a three-story house that was built in 1917 and was located on Pine Street just down from the Police Station in the center of Lodi. Their facilities there were anything but plush and space was at a premium. They also owned other houses that they had converted to offices, as well as a warehouse.

Now, after 58 years in business, they have consolidated their operations into one comfortable, roomy and inspiring structure.

Warm tones from the cinnamon-stained Douglas fir used for interior moldings and a lot of the woodwork give visitors the same kind of friendly feeling that the previously converted Pine Street house did.

"We were trying to incorporate some the traditional feel of the old place," said Terry Clark, Vice President of Clark Pest Control.

At the same time there are portions of the new building that are breathtaking in their size. On the second floor is a board room that can serve as a general meeting room and can hold 260 people. The conference room is 3000 square feet.

When configured as a boardroom it looks like a high tech control center. Unique conference tables which were designed by the Creative Wood Company and arranged by Delta Office Systems in Stockton are placed in the center of the large room and surrounded by five drop down screens. Projectors can send videos from the audio/video training studio, or

Internet web pages.

With a flick of a switch floor-to-ceiling drapes pull back and blinds on windows are raised to let natural light flood the room. There are wall dividers that are easily placed or removed so that the room can be used by several groups without disturbing each other. There is a kitchen adjacent to the boardroom.

This building is so large and so well appointed that an appraiser had to go all the way to Napa to find a comparable property, which turned out to be a winery.

Within the building's cocoon of warmth and grace are some high tech operations. There is a large room filled with servers in racks that reach above head height. Clark has about 40 terabytes of storage capacity. They need it. They have about 160,000 customers.

The IT Director, Mike Butchko, who has been with Clark for six years, describes the new facility as "awesome."

There are other needs for so much computing power. The company has its own audio/visual department. This is not the audio/visual department from your high school. It is a high-tech soundproof room where sophisticated electronics are used to create instructional videos that are broadcast to the branches throughout the Clark network.

The famous commercials that coined and popularized the phrase "Clark we need you!" are made elsewhere. This studio is simply to handle the instructional and training needs of the company. The company has about 1100 employees statewide (and a portion of Nevada), and bulks up to about 1200 during the summer.

Mike Furlong, the AV director, has more than 200 training videos at his disposal.

In the accounting department the company has machines that scan checks and create images that are transmitted to the bank. The checks are batched and saved for a time in case there are any disputes. With thousands of customers, Clark has to handle a lot of checks. Their clientele comes from San Diego in the south, up the entire coast north and most of inland Northern California. Los Angeles and Bakersfield areas are licensed to a family member.

In the break room which resembles a small café several employees were seated in a booth that resembled a nice booth in a bistro.

"I love it here," said Cheryl Smith.

"I've been here about twelve years and this is very probable that it's a wonderful place to work," said Janine Nowak.

There are some unique and beautiful light fixtures in the new building. Skylights have recessed and up-facing fluorescent tube lights so that when clouds pass over there is no diminishment of light for those below. Hanging below the skylights are beautifully wrought light fixtures with mesh diffusers from a company called Vista.

Through a hatch and up a ladder onto the roof of the new structure one comes upon an array of solar panels that stretches across the roof in two pitched sectors. One sector more efficiently catches the solar rays as the sun ascends in its path and the other catches the sun as it descends.

The solar system has a 166kW of output and cost $1.7 million. Clark expects $366,000.00 in incentives back from PG&E.

"We believe it's a long-term investment that will have a big payoff," said Clark.

Clark has a brother in Nevada County who has a home solar system which

is almost self supporting in terms of power. Clark became more interested in the solar system for his building when a building he purchased in the Bay Area had an existing solar system on it. That system was heavier than local building codes allowed and needed to be removed. He found a solar designer and contractor who was willing to remove the system and to give him the credit toward a new system on his new building.

This contractor was Aram Alexander who owns Aram solar out of Lathrop California.

Clark expects the system to pay for itself in 12 years. This means that he will save enough money in the electric bills to pay for the cost of the system. He adds dryly that he will "still be paying the bank for a full 25 years."

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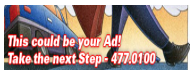
Terry Clark
Clark Pest Control



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