

Company flourishes during recession

Investing in workers pays off on bottom line

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

The rapid growth of Catallo Associates Inc. of Birmingham indicates a trend in business and residential interior design that has gathered momentum for more than a decade.

ident of the 15-member firm, organized in 1977 to provide design service to the corporate and professional community, said his firm, 555 S. Woodward, Birmingham, did "over \$2 million this year . . . while the economy was down — and we were doing things people normally cut."

The Catallo goal for all projects — to

create an efficient, effective work environment under the philosophy "When environments work more effectively so do people" — is reinforced by a strong team approach and a surprising number of specialty skills within the design and space planning fields.

Catallo has a bachelor's degree in fine arts (1967) from Wayne with a specialization in industrial design and graphics, automotive styling and product design.

MINORS in chemistry, French and American history provide additional strength for his diversified professional challenges. Before opening his own firm, Catallo built a strong background in a variety of design projects from the Ford Motor Co. pavilion at the 1968 World's Fair to trade and auto show exhibits and later special design for several major companies.

Among the firms which Catallo and his staff of designers, architects and furnishings specialists have worked with in the past five years are Borg Warner Corp. (world headquarters, Chicago), Libby Foods' world headquarters, Pullman Inc., Cross & Trecker, J. Walter Thompson, McCann-Erickson, Young & Rubicam, Fireman's Fund Insurance, Ernst & Whinney and TTT, (regional offices, Bloomfield Hills).

Many of these, such as the Borg Warner and Libby Foods, are ongoing projects. So far, the firm has done five floors of the Borg Warner world headquarters building.

Continuity, one of the keys to the suc-

cess in an ongoing project, is maintained because of the low staff turnover.

"We're pretty organized, Catallo said. "We work awfully hard and we have excellent people. We have done things to invest in our people such as profit sharing and bonuses. A good retention rate is good for continuity."

Since Catallo and his teams pride themselves on improving the working environment, creating a greater level of efficiency, with strong consideration for future growth, Catallo said, "Ideally we like to be involved before the lease is signed, at the point he termed "the footprint of the building," when the site shape and configuration are determined.

CATALLO WAS quick to stress, however, that whether they are working on their biggest single project, 120,000 square feet for Borg Warner, the 750,000 square feet, in three phases, for the First Center in Southfield, or a small suite of offices in Birmingham,

they work with economy as well as efficiency in mind.

Like budgets and needs, challenges vary dramatically. He recalled that while they worked on the regional offices of the Fireman's Fund Insurance Co. in Southfield, it was business as usual during the day for the company.

"They were occupying the space, so we worked at night and cleaned it up so they could work during the day."

Catallo said that now they are getting into doing retail stores, hair salons and small, enclosed malls. But no matter what the function of the business, Catallo and Associates have a four-phase procedure they follow that begins with an analysis of the space and physical needs.

"We personally interview as many as we can to find out the raw workings — what kind of physical interaction is needed and what kind of equipment and why. . . . We are gathering empirical information, what's the personality of this kind of client — that's what makes the end product successful. We don't

create monuments to ourselves. We're not in the monument business. We're in business to create an environment that will be satisfactory for years to come."

"THIS IS coupled with an analysis of operating procedures, paper and traffic flow. That first analysis, once put down on paper is called a "bubble chart." Circles on a sheet of paper form a floor plan of where the various company functions are performed, for instance, market controller, operations, payroll, product management, customer relations, sales promotion and the like.

During the second phase, space planning, close communication is maintained with the client as it is determined if the present space is adequate, if simply a new plan, or new space is needed. The company often helps in lease negotiations if the latter is the case.

Once the client approves the basic plan, Catallo and Associates move into phase three, design development, in which they do floor plans, architectural drawings, elevations, room and space sketches along with lighting, furniture, fabric, wall and color selections. This often includes sketches of proposed commissioned art works and furnishings to be custom designed. Nothing is left to the imagination.

Once phase three is approved, bids are taken and construction begins and phase four, project management, is underway. The designers follow the progress of the job, interpret plans when necessary and coordinate certain consulting services.



Mindy Saunders/staff photographer

Thomas D. Costello's ability to visualize has always been one of his great strengths whether it is use of space or formation of his own company.

LEGAL NOTICE NOTICE OF APPLICATION

Notification is hereby given that Michigan National Bank-Farmington, 24940 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48334, has filed an application with the Comptroller of the Currency on April 28, 1983 as specified in 12CFR 5 of the Comptroller's Manual for National Banks, for permission to establish a CBCT branch at 3341 Farmington Road, Farmington, Michigan 48024. Any person wishing to comment on this application may file comments in writing with the Regional Administrator of National Banks, Seventh National Bank Region, Sears Tower, Suite 3750, 233 South Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60608 within 10 days after the date of this publication. The non-confidential portions of the application are on file with the Regional Administrator as part of the public file. This file is available for public inspection during regular business hours.

PUBLISHED May 2, 1983

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