



RIDING THE TECHNOLOGY WAVE

CONCRETE CONTRACTOR SEES RAPID GROWTH

When Jeff Wissing and a partner started building homes almost 30 years ago, they couldn't have imagined the enormous impact technology would eventually play in the evolution and increased size of the small, residential-home-building venture. Revenues in the \$500,000 to million-dollar range characterized those early years. Jeff specialized in concrete flatwork; his former partner was a master carpenter.

The company was built on a foundation of strong ideals that continue as guiding principles today.

Jeff's sons, Beau and Bentz, joined Heartland Concrete & Construction (HCC) about 10 years ago. Under their father's continuing guidance, they now own and operate the Hastings, Nebraska-based firm. Having built a stellar reputation for accuracy, speed, efficiency and honesty, the firm serves general

contractors all across Nebraska and throughout the surrounding Midwestern states, even extending beyond when responding to the needs of general-contracting customers.

Technology drives explosive growth

By embracing the latest construction-industry technologies, HCC eventually became a concrete forming-and-pouring powerhouse, with annual revenues skyrocketing to more than \$25 million. HCC's complete range of concrete-construction services has grown to include design/build, precision grading, foundations, slab-on-grade work, and cast-in-place walls.

"For us technology is everything," says Beau Wissing, vice president of the family firm. "I'll tell you right now, without the Cat® Compact Track Loaders and



Box Blades and Trimble Robotic Total Stations, there's zero chance we'd be as successful, or possibly even be in business today. Embracing rapidly advancing technologies has meant everything to our rapid growth and business success. That's why every crew appreciates having its own Trimble Robotic Total Station."

While staffing has increased twentyfold from those early days, Heartland's 100 employees currently apply their skills when and where needed on the various phases of 25 to 30 projects of all sizes, types and complexities at any given time. HCC poured more than 115,000 cu. yd. of concrete in total during 2021 on projects ranging from parking lots to office slabs and massive warehouse foundations and floors. By dollar volume, HCC revenues are approximately 75 percent commercial/ industrial and 25 percent public works.

“ Our general contracting customers are just blown away by the precision and productivity that our Cat box blade equipped CTLs routinely deliver.”

Cloud-based operations

“We're doing all cloud-based estimating, surveying and specifying for project footings, flatwork and walls,” Wissing says. “In preparing to pour the flatwork, we're grading, spot checking and double checking. Technology is absolutely integrated across everything we're doing. An excellent example is the integrated guidance systems utilized on our box blades and laser screeds. Technology is truly utilized across every facet of our business. The more efficient we can be, the more production we can achieve. At the same time, technology keeps us safer and more up to date.”

Team members have access to project designs, specifications and supporting data on their cell phones, so superintendents have all of the needed information at their fingertips. The ability to upload the entire jobsite layout is a big plus. Anyone can access

it remotely to update it, track it or reprogram the design. Team leaders can even make design changes on the fly from their offices. The revised design is promptly uploaded and shared with the field supervisors and operators and loaded into the Trimble Robotic Total Stations that communicate with the smart machines performing the work.

Technology has helped HCC more accurately bid all aspects of each project, and ultimately win more bids. For example, on a recent multi-million-dollar bid for a huge package distribution center in Omaha—involving footings, walls, a massive floor slab and parking lot plus some sidewalks and small driveways—HCC bid on and won all of the concrete work. Each specialty crew—footings, flatwork, walls and site improvements—will ultimately tackle their respective project pieces in a very efficient, carefully coordinated manner considering the overall project timeline, as well as the timing requirements of the other subs.

“HCC enjoys an excellent reputation with general contractors to the point we're frequently asked to handle a project without submitting a formal

– **BEAU WISSING, OWNER**
HEARTLAND CONCRETE & CONSTRUCTION

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bid,” Wissing says. “We tell customers straight up we’re not obsessed with being the cheapest, but we will provide them with what we believe is the longest-lasting, best-quality product for their needs. And we’ll complete the project in a timely manner and stand behind it. Thanks to our equipment and the technology we utilize, we’re able to deliver on that promise.

“One thing that has always been really important to my dad and me and we share this with our team members is—making sure that everything we do is always our best effort to provide better quality and outstanding value for our customers,” he adds. “For us, same as Caterpillar, it’s about being the best value, not necessarily the cheapest price.”

Technology has certainly made HCC’s impressive growth significantly more attainable. The Wissing family realizes the firm must focus on doing great work, treating people right and giving customers a fair, value-driven price. But in the end, the decisions to invest in quality equipment and the latest technologies have made it easier for HCC team members to achieve that.

Cat machines play key roles

Cat 259 and 289 Compact Track Loaders (CTL) equipped with Cat Box Blades are the workhorses of the operation.

“We use Cat CTLs, mini hydraulic excavators and a telehandler because they can do everything,” Wissing says. “They’re on every job and with as many attachments as Caterpillar offers, we’re able to use them for almost everything on most jobsites. They run buckets, forks, brooms—the whole nine yards.”

HEARTLAND CONCRETE & CONSTRUCTION

Owners: Beau and Bentz Wissing

Location: Hastings, Neb.

Employees: 100

Cat® equipment: 259D3 and 289D3 Compact Track Loaders, 305E2 Mini Excavators (2), TL1255 Telehandler



Wissing considers the CTLs equipped with fully integrated 3D box blades his most important assets because they’ve had the most significant impact on project operations.

“They deliver crazy-good technology that’s so accurate on every jobsite. Our general contracting customers are just blown away by the precision and productivity that our Cat box blade equipped CTLs routinely deliver.”

To illustrate the difference technology has made, Wissing says there was a time when HCC was finish grading just 5,000 to 6,000 sq. ft. a day, and it required six or eight workers pulling string lines and checking grades.

“It would take all day,” he recalls. “Now we show up with the Cat box blade equipped CTLs and we’re grading





30,000 sq. ft. in four or five hours. And the accuracy we're achieving is plus or minus one-eighth of an inch. It's just so accurate that it eliminates any errors, and costly rework. It also cuts a ton of man hours and frees up our work crews to handle other priorities, so we can be more productive. Our fellow subcontractors are really impressed."

75% more productivity

With the same number of crew members, HCC can now typically complete at least 75 percent more work each day. HCC crews will form and prep a jobsite in one day, then a 3D controlled laser screed comes in and will pour the whole thing in a day. With the Cat box blade and laser screed units working together, HCC has completed as much as 30,000 square feet from start to finish in two days.

"Compared to the past, if you had a week, realistically you'd end up strip pouring a job because our team didn't have a box blade equipped CTL and a laser screed on the job, so you're probably talking as much as 10 or 12 days," Wissing says. "So, it's unreal how much impact those two high-tech machines have on the workflow timeline."

Dealer support

HCC's machines are used hard as concrete crews, working in multiple shifts around the clock, often recording as much as 60 hours each per week. The equipment is frequently operating all the time, day and night, and not always in optimal conditions.

"So, to have that support system that Nebraska Machinery (NMC) provides, you can't put a value on it." Wissing says. "If a machine goes down, a lot of times we know what it is, and it's a simple fix—we can call and NMC is great to work with from that standpoint. You just call them and talk to a technician, and they help you out.

"Even when a machine needs to go into their shop, it's just a higher level of trust and respect. When you take it to NMC, you feel confident that the work is getting done right, and right away." **OTJ**

CUSTOMERS RELY ON HCC

For the past two decades, Heartland Concrete & Construction (HCC) has worked hard to earn its reputation as a top-quality concrete company. The priority is to ensure that every job is performed to meet and exceed the needs and expectations of its customers.

A growing list of general contractors that HCC works with have come to rely upon the firm for delivering on-time, high-quality projects.

"Of the many subcontractors in our industry, specifically in your company's field of work (concrete construction), Heartland Concrete & Construction is at the top in my book," says C. Ryan Plock, a senior project manager for Henning Companies.

"The quality of work provided by your crews is top notch, and their work ethic along with personalities in the field make your teams a joy to work with. That was the first time I'd been exposed to total station layout by a concrete subcontractor and really enjoyed seeing it in action. Every anchor bolt was placed perfectly and the floor slopes, walls, curbs, and other critically placed items were exactly where they needed to be. Also, the normally challenging floor pours required in a hatchery were done with precision and the finish was superb."

"As a general contractor, I rate subcontractors' teams on their ability to meet budget, schedule, and quality," says Tanner Hackle, president of Hackle Construction, Inc. "And Heartland's desire for quality is at the top of the list."

Adds Jason Hulsebus, a project manager for Hampton Enterprises, Inc.:

"The quality of HCC's work is among the best in the business, and we can always trust that they will far exceed anyone's expectations. Heartland Concrete utilizes technology that many other concrete companies are not taking advantage of."