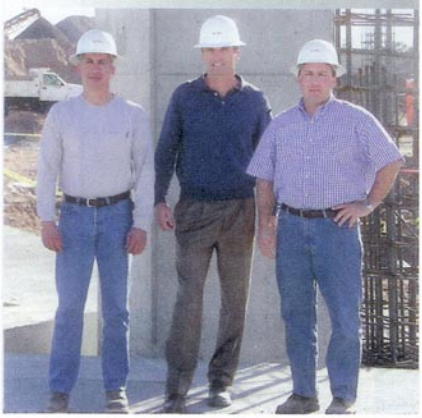
Suntec Concrete Inc.

Phoenix, Arizona

Jerry Barnier, President



The Suntec Concrete team includes (l to r) vice president David Chavez, president and founder Jerry Barnier, vice president Derek Wright, and (not pictured) vice president Paul Sierpina.

■ I started in the trades as a framing carpenter, working for a GC who was having some trouble with his concrete forming. It did not take long before I realized there was more opportunity in concrete than there was in framing so I made the transition to the concrete forming division and managed that division for about 5 years. Then, in 1984—nearly 20 years ago—several of us did a buyout of that division and spun it into Suntec Concrete.

■ We try to keep a balanced workload. We run separate divisions with a division manager for tilt, for foundations, for flatwork, for structural—all the distinct areas. We try to maintain balance and growth in all those areas equally, and we try to avoid one division becoming dominant over the others.

■ We strive for unparalleled quality, and, in order to achieve that, we offer continual training courses to our people. The most unique program is our Spanish/English class. The classes are about 50-50 Spanish and English and taught by our foremen—that's the fun part. It puts us all, tradesmen and managers, at the same level and creates great communication. I could never learn Spanish in high school, but I'm learning it now.

■ The biggest benefit we get out of the training—and all of our lead people are required to teach a class—is that we get an amazing chance to see the potential our guys have. When you put them into a classroom environment, a lot of things show up that don't show up out on a jobsite. And that is one of the reasons we don't take the classes out of house. We get to be right there with the guys, and we get to know them and see potential you would never dream was there. On the job, we may see just a good tradesman but sometimes there's a lot more.

■ We have a lot of young people in the company and they drive the management direction because they're so growth oriented. I would like to relax a little more, but they are on a mission to build something bigger, so I have to hang with them. They are a force that constantly keeps the pressure on all of us.

■ We go into jobs intent on exceeding our customers' expectations. We are at our best when the expectations are really demanding. We spend a lot of time doing upfront planning and providing design input and putting a game plan together. Then we go in with some really specialized crews that can execute from Day One. That really gives us some impact.

■ The most important thing for a concrete contractor to keep in mind is to exceed the customer's expectations in terms of quality and performing the work. Set your own standard of performance and quality and constantly raise that bar.

■ My No. 1 goal is being able to put a challenging workload in front of the guys continuously and watch them reach new heights in their skills. We're a little bit dependent on where the market takes us, and when certain parts of the market dry up, it's hard to keep the growth and momentum going.

■ A trend we see is a lot more use of decorative tilt-up and a lot more Class A office space being built with tilt-up. That's something that wasn't there even 3 years ago.

■ The best team in the company is the administrative staff of mainly women who handle all of the support functions for the work crews, jobs, and general contractors. They use a wide variety of technology as efficiently as possible—eight office-staff members handling 300 people out on the sites. They are a study in efficiency and have incredible unique abilities—they're "bulletproof."