

The C.R. Pittman Construction Company has been a fixture in New Orleans for more than seventy years. Treasurer Jay Pittman, representing the third generation of his family business, speaks about the marketplace and how Industrial Welding Supply helps him stay ahead of it.

JP: We've been in the contracting business in the city of New Orleans since the 1920s. It was my grandfather who started it. Then it was my dad, and now myself and my siblings. We do everything possible to make money and to do the best job we can. But we're not giants. We don't have branch offices all over the place. We're just a little company, and we're counting our pennies.

That's why we're using IWS to manage our supply purchasing. The system they have helps us control our costs. It gives us a good chance to make our way through the marketplace.

How does the IWS system work?

JP: We have a long form purchase order with them, an annual contract. They supply everything from rubber boots to Skill saws, from non-shrink grout to bonding agent. We probably have between 200 and 300 items on our purchase order.

It's a central purchasing agreement—but the purchasing isn't centralized. It doesn't all come to me, and then I have to redistribute it. What happens is that anytime our field guys need something under contract, they can get it from Industrial Welding Supply. IWS holds the inventory and delivers it. We don't worry about employees haggling with some small tools supplier, or going to Home Depot.

This reduces the amount of legwork our field people have to do, and it keeps my superintendent from sitting in his office, pricing rubber boots and rain suits all day. With IWS, I don't have to worry about the price. We've already worked that out.

How is IWS about deliveries?

JP: They deliver most items within twenty-four hours of our call. We regularly purchase and use pretty much everything that's on our agreement, so there's very little they have to special order.

What about off-list items?

JP: We get a discount for any item on their website that's not on our purchase order. For example, if we wanted to buy a laser level, and that wasn't on the P.O., they automatically quote us a discount on the listed price.

Is this a new way of doing business for Pittman Construction?

JP: We've done this sort of thing in the past. This time IWS got the contract. I told their representative that I'd like to have a long-term relationship if I could, because it's bad when you're constantly changing suppliers. The guys in the field like consistency. If they need something, I tell them, "Call this guy." They need something else? Call the same guy. My builders all like IWS, and they know who to call for what they need.

Do you plan to stick with Industrial Welding Supply?

JP: I'd venture to say so. We re-negotiate the contract every twelve months to see what's working and what's not. IWS holds the prices down on whatever items they can, and I keep an eye out for things that need changing, ways to save money. That's what I like. Just give me the best price you got. You don't have to take me to lunch. You don't have to remember me at Christmas—just give me the best price.

And I'll tell you something else I like about IWS: It's a local business. Our last supplier came out of Birmingham, Alabama. With IWS, the money stays right here in Louisiana. I'd rather give a local guy a shot at my business than send money out of the state. That's just the way I feel about it.

C.R. Pittman Construction Company is located at 3021 Franklin Ave., New Orleans, Louisiana, 70122.