

# Creativity in a Pinch

PARRON HALL IS NO STRANGER TO QUICK, INNOVATIVE THINKING

The cover story in this issue highlights a construction project in San Diego for Parron Hall Office Interiors and presents one of the obstacles company President Jim Herr had to face in order to meet his deadline. *Office Furniture & Design* sat down with Herr to discuss the rest of his 25,000 square-foot showroom project, learn how a fleet of tractors saved the day, and why he was happy when ordered to hire 24-hour security for his facility.

#### Office Furniture & Design:

Your project is now complete and you couldn't be happier. But it was not an easy process, was it?

#### Jim Herr:

You could say that. It was amazing how in the end it all came together. In a couple of cases money had to be thrown at it, but that is certainly one of the lessons learned from my project. Money is going to be spent on obstacles that you do not anticipate. You can plan on it.

**Q. What other problems popped up on the project?**

**A.** I have already described the process we went through to deal with the moisture on the slab (see Cover Story, p.7). The irony of it all, the specialized sealer we used as a moisture barrier failed. Despite our efforts, within two months of installation, we had a black tar-like

substance oozing through the seams of the carpet. We had to rip it all up and start over. During this time, we were unable to use the facility and canceled all of our opening celebrations.

**Q. When was this finally resolved and when did you open?**

**A.** We have been open for business since April. We simply didn't take customers through that portion of the showroom. As for our openings, we never had them. The carpet issue was finally resolved in late October and we are now planning to have a series of open houses to replace what would have been our grand opening.

**Q. Wasn't there also an issue with your parking lot?**

**A.** The parking lot is one of the last things that they put down in a building like this. It was amazing, the contractor would get the area prepped and ready to go and a storm would hit and turn the area into mud puddles. This went on for months. Finally—10 days before our move-in date—we decided it had to be done, regardless.

We had the contractor bring in tractors to aerate the ground and churn the dirt. The idea was to churn the soil and attempt to dry things enough to get the asphalt down before another storm would hit. The attempt was successful and the certificate of occupancy came the Friday night before the Saturday we were moving.



**Q. What about the run-in with the fire marshal?**

**A.** In order to meet our deadline, we decided to stage the showroom and work space furniture in our warehouse so we could install all the furniture in the last three weeks of the project. About this time, the fire marshal came to do his inspection. He flipped out that we had product stored in the warehouse and assembled in the showroom prior to his sign-off.

He was so upset that he told me to remove everything from the warehouse and store it off site. Eventually, we came to the agreement that if I had a 24-hour guard service patrol the facility until his approval, he would allow us to keep the product in place. We had a security service doing 24-hour fire monitoring of the facility for about six days. The cost was about \$6,000 extra, but this was far cheaper than the alternative.

**Q. Would you do it again?**

**A.** Absolutely. We now have a state-of-the-art showroom that we are proud of. We are also operationally more efficient than ever before. In 2005 our sales grew over 10 percent and we lowered our distribution department labor expense. We like it, the customers like it, and the facility really embodies who we are as a company. 