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UNINTECH Consulting Engineers, Inc.

Strategic Growth Trumps Slumping Economy

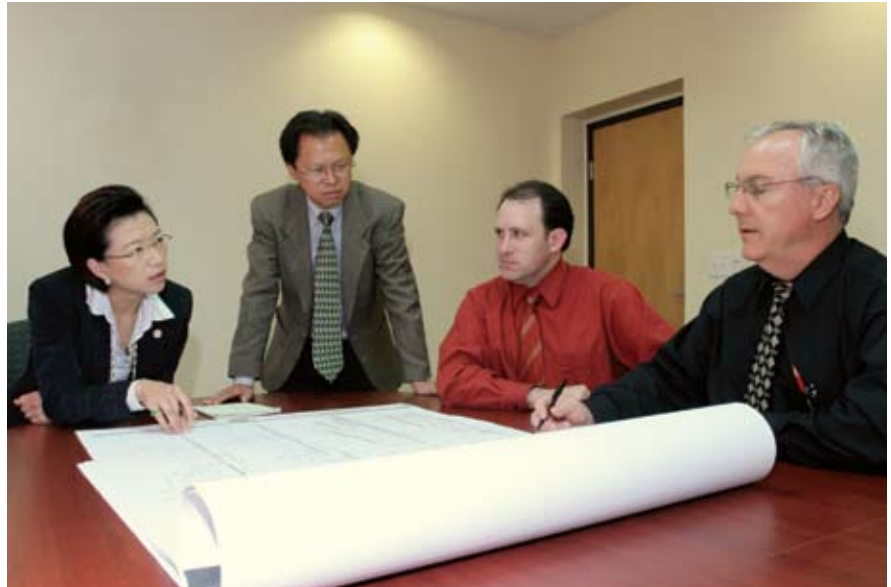
When Elisa Chan became president of UNINTECH Consulting Engineers in 1998, it was chugging along with six employees, offering structural engineering services and specializing in precast concrete structures. Ten years later, the firm has grown to over 50 employees and has expanded into the home building market, added surveying services and a civil engineering division, and participated in a \$1.4 billion highway project where it completed the design of more than 60 bridges and 14 retaining walls.

UNINTECH was founded in 1992 by Chan and her husband, Clifford Hew. As president, her main focuses are business development and strategic planning. Increasing the firm's offerings was first up on her to-do list. "We believe the key to stability in a small business is to diversify," Chan says. "I wanted to move into additional industries and offer additional services."

Chan quickly took advantage of market conditions by moving the firm into the residential housing business during a significant San Antonio housing boom. Then, to increase the firm's efficiency and effectiveness in that market, she added surveying services the following year. She has also added civil and transportation divisions, to satisfy the demands in the commercial, public works, and highway transportation sectors. Creating a one-stop-shop concept for customers has been the goal. "When the client only has to deal with a single firm for different engineering needs, the process becomes more efficient and costs drop," she explains.

Philosophy of Quality and Innovation

UNINTECH works under a philosophy that success comes as a result of providing consistently high-quality services, remaining committed to versatility and innovative



President Elisa Chan, CEO Clifford Hew, P.E., Precast Division Manager Brad Aldridge, P.E., and Civil Division Manager David Brown, P.E. review and discuss the progress of a project.

solutions, and completing each project on time and on budget. "We also strive to keep our employees motivated and challenged," Chan says. "When people are encouraged to think outside the box and to come up with creative ideas, they develop a sense of pride in their work, which, in turn encourages them to work even harder and turn out an even better design solution. We try to start that creative process by acknowledging that each project is different and will present unique challenges."

UNINTECH's ability to provide creative resolution of design challenges allows for increased project constructability and reduced construction time and costs, says Chan. In the Frio City Ramp project for Port San Antonio, UNINTECH was able to provide a more functional design alternative, and as a result prevented the need to impose ramp closures and eliminated potential

clearance problems. Port San Antonio officials agreed it was a better, safer option and received greater public acceptance. In the end, the design also reduced construction costs and shortened the construction schedule.

UNINTECH has also been lauded by *Concrete International* magazine for its commitment to creating more efficient alternatives to the traditional structural systems being utilized in highway projects, says Chan. The magazine praised the firm's innovative Cantilever Precast Concrete retaining wall design as a more economical alternative option to cast-in-place retaining walls, one which requires less time, labor and materials.

Chan says she sees the firm expanding to include educational and health institutions on its client list. "We're also considering expanding geographically."



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