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The CEO Magazine
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The Vaughan Way

Vaughan Constructions' Managing Director Andrew Noble reveals how the company has remained successful for more than 60 years.

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Over its 63-year history, Vaughan Constructions' approach to serving its customers has culminated in what it describes as the 'Vaughan Way'. "At its core, our method is to ensure exceptional customer service and operational excellence," Managing Director Andrew Noble tells *The CEO Magazine*, "honouring our commitment to integrity, fairness, responsibility and, more importantly, cultivating a great team and a winning culture."

The business was founded by Kenelm Vaughan in Melbourne in 1955, and offers design and construction services throughout Australia. It has 100-plus employees and has been involved in more than 2,000 construction projects across a variety of sectors. This includes the revitalisation of the Sheraton Mirage in Port Douglas, Queensland; the construction of Sigma Healthcare's advance distribution centre in Perth; and the groundbreaking Coca-Cola Amatil warehouse in New South Wales. Its turnover from construction projects is A\$300

million and the capital value of the its land development pipeline is A\$750 million.

At the heart of Vaughan's operating model is the ethos 'building customers for life'; a concept that is developed through all areas of the business. "Ultimately, everyone in our team plays a significant role in safeguarding our reputation and winning repeat business," Andrew says. "From the administration team who answer the first phone call and development managers managing the early enquiry process through to the onsite construction team who ultimately deliver the build, each will help formulate the customer's opinion of Vaughan and whether they believe the experience has been a positive one."

GROWING WITH THE BUSINESS

Andrew was 18 when he first joined Vaughan Constructions, beginning as an apprentice during the late 1980s. He recalls how the young management team, led by Kenelm's sons, Matthew and Ken, and its group of highly experienced construction »

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workers, were all excited to grow the business. However, it was an economically challenging time and the company had to work hard not only to get onto a tender list, but to win a tender in the end.

Despite the hurdles, the company persevered and overcame them thanks to excellent leadership and loyal, determined staff. Andrew says the experiences he gained throughout his time as a construction worker provided him with a thorough understanding of how the business ran at an operational level.

“I didn’t move from company to company to build my career,” he says. “I recognised relatively early that this place was going somewhere, and that hard work and loyalty would be rewarded with opportunity. I noticed that short-term rewards for jumping ship weren’t going to lead to any improvement in happiness or real career progression.

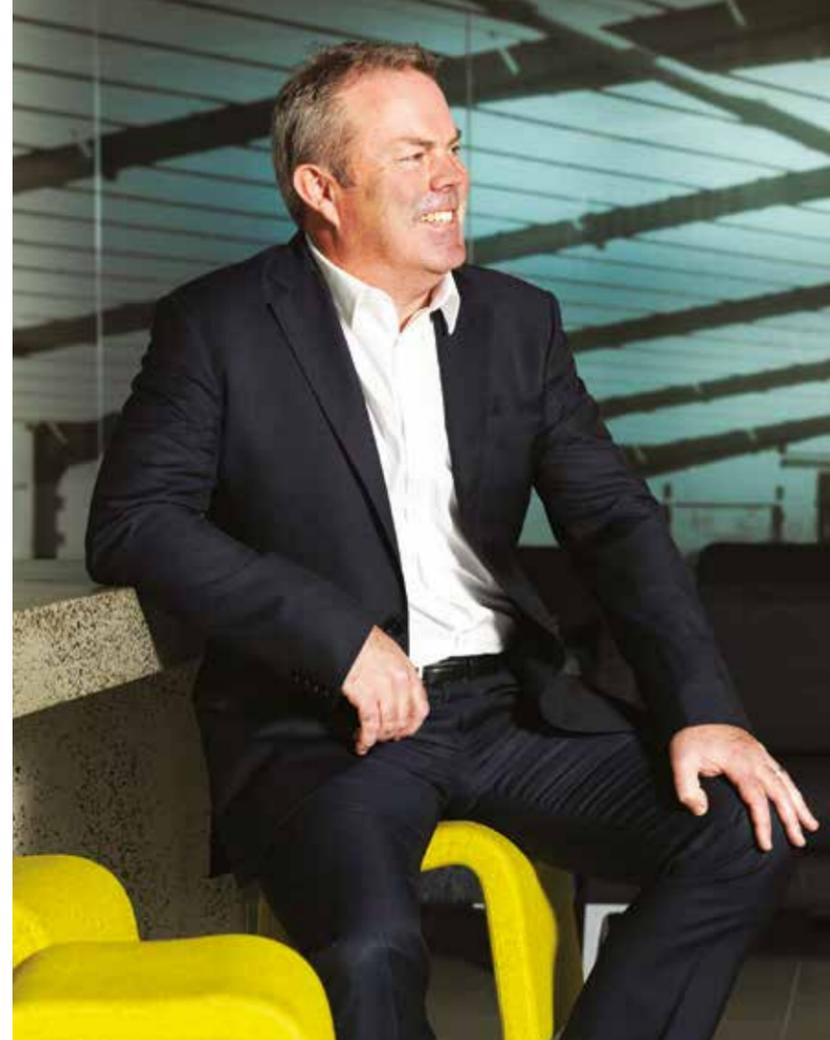
And I felt a deep loyalty to my colleagues and I wanted to grow with them.”

In the mid 1990s, Andrew moved to Sydney to help establish Vaughan’s fledgling office there. “This was a formative time in my development as a manager,” he says. “My learning curve steepened dramatically and I had to press through some hard lessons early on. But the harder the lessons, I believe, the better equipped you are to lead and support others; and I could never replace that experience.”

After working in Sydney, Andrew moved back to Melbourne, where he rose up through the ranks to Managing Director.

Having worked at Vaughan Constructions for more than 30 years, Andrew attributes the company’s longevity and prosperity to its strong business strategy. “Businesses don’t survive for more than 60 years if there isn’t a firm growth strategy in place,” he says. “We critically review our strategy annually, focusing on core target markets where we know we can be successful and we analyse growth sectors, developing penetration strategies before diving in.”

Further, Andrew is proud to have witnessed significant projects come together over the years.



the business and I need to be constantly changing and adapting so we can survive and thrive,” he says.

THE HARD WORK DOESN’T STOP

Andrew explains that much of the work Vaughan does involves taking the customer’s vision for the future of their business, converting it into a clear design scope, and equipping the Vaughan team with the skills to build it. “No one project is exactly the same and in order to meet competitive customer deadlines we often need to find construction methodologies to fast track projects,” he comments.

Vaughan Constructions developed Deakin University’s A\$13 million ManuFutures centre in Victoria. The centre is a hub for researchers to support manufacturing in regional Australia.

Two stand-out projects he identifies are the Dulux automated coatings plant that was completed in 2017, and the company’s construction of Woolworths’ A\$215-million distribution centre in 2018, both of which are located in Melbourne.

Andrew is impressed by the company’s ability to adapt to changing customer requirements, particularly with the rise in automation within the manufacturing sector. “The business has grown and evolved beyond its call for ‘hard working distribution facilities’,” Andrew says. “It is breaking new ground in large-scale automated and food industry-related projects all around the country, which requires a distinctive shift in how Vaughan manages operations.”

Andrew himself is a big believer in the importance of evolving. “I have a picture of Charles Darwin on the pin board next to my phone, which reminds me every day change is happening, and that

To make the client’s dream a reality, Andrew says it all comes down to communication. He believes it is an essential component in every part of the customer’s journey, not just after the project is finished. “Customers want transparency, honesty and integrity throughout the duration of their project,” he says. “Our independent customer research tells us customers want a contractor to tell them honestly how a project is tracking and that’s what we do. If there is a problem, we let them know about it and we develop a solution together.

“It’s how the service continues after the keys are handed over that remains one of the most important factors in customer retention. There’s a great sense of pride in everyone at the company when a client commends it for ‘keeping its promises’. Winning trust is hard, but treasured once received.” ■

“Vaughan Constructions understands that key to building is the relationships they build with their suppliers. Our relationship with Vaughan built over the past 25 years cements our trust and open dialogue.” – Scott Johnson, Manager, Premier Roofing

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