

Attractions

management

VOL 18 Q2 2013

ON THE COVER

Johnny Cash

The music legend's boyhood home is restored to tell the story of life in The New Deal era

Tim Fisher

Village Roadshow's CEO defies the recession

SOCIAL MEDIA

Move your business beyond your website

NEW OPENINGS

Den Blå Planet

Rio Tinto Alcan Planetarium

The Exploratorium

Perot Museum of Nature and Science

Click here to subscribe to the print edition
www.attractionsmanagement.co.uk/subs

IMAGE: ABC PHOTO ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



THE FORREC TEAM

Entertainment designers Forrec are one team with a global commitment through representatives in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, China, South-East Asia, India and Latin America and the Caribbean

GORDON DORRETT

Role: President and CEO

Territory: Everywhere

Characteristics: Progressive, determined, adaptive

Industry experience: 25 years+

Career path: Landscape

Architect to President and CEO of internationally renowned firm

Q: What is Forrec and what has contributed to its longevity?

Gordon: I wish I could say this was all carefully planned, but like many things in life, it was a matter of recognising opportunities and running with them.

In the mid-60s we got our first big break when Forrec's parent firm was chosen to develop the landscape architecture for the 67 World Expo in Montreal.

The job included an amusement park and we subsequently attracted other commissions, including West Edmonton Mall. The firm eventually became Forrec, the world's largest professional firm dedicated to entertainment design.

I like to think Forrec is somewhat irreverent and willing to try anything. Our success over the past 40 years stems from our willingness to take what I refer to as 'design leaps'. We've sprung from one idea to the next in non traditional design leaps, such as from landscape architectural practice to entertainment design, and from designing for entertainment clients to designing for retail, resort and science centre clients and, finally, from working



locally to working internationally.

Q: Has this approach always led to success for Forrec?

Gordon: I'd be lying if I said yes – we've definitely learned from the school of hard knocks. Fortunately, we've had more success than failure along the way. Our entrepreneurial approach has served us well. However, we've spent the last few years taking a hard look at who we are and how we work and we've made a strategic company leap from opportunistic to focused sustainability.

Q: What does 'focused sustainability' mean to Forrec?

Gordon: In our formative years, we grew

organically but to be a successful company we've had to make sure that our business side was as well developed as our creative side – left and right brain if you will. We're taking a much more proactive approach to business.

Q: Has your new focus had an impact on the organisation of the company?

Gordon: Absolutely! We've had to change to grow. We now have five distinct internal design studios; Architectural, Graphics, Interiors, Landscape Architecture and Creative – the backbone of our design solutions. Since the majority of our projects require many, if not all of these skills our studios work collaboratively in large multi-disciplinary teams.



We go to market by the type of projects we do and each of these types is directed by an in-house industry expert – a Sector Lead. Although our collaborative working methods mean there are no ‘star’ creators on our projects, Forrec’s clients benefit from the more than 300 years of expertise of our management team.

Q: Where is the design work done?

Gordon: Although 90 per cent of Forrec’s projects are outside Canada, all of our work is still done in our Toronto studio. By keeping all of our work in one studio we’ve been able to grow our expertise and continue to ensure the quality of our work. This means one team, one global commitment.

Q: Tell us about your global reach

Gordon: The directors of Forrec made a decision to invest time, money and resources to develop long term relationships in each of the world regions we’re working in. Our executive vice presidents and regional directors are based in offices around the globe and lead our business development initiatives. As our brand ambassadors they are building relationships and finding and securing new business globally.

JAMES LIU

Role: Regional director
 Territory: China
 Characteristics: Forward-thinking, respectful, smart
 Industry experience: 10 years+
 Career path: Architect to new business development

Q: What are the benefits of building long term relationships?

James: The surest indicator of a successful business relationship has very little to do with the content of the contract. Our relationships revolve around improving our services to our customers by offering solutions tailored to local markets. As regional directors we’re building relationships with like-minded firms who add value to the services that we already provide to our clients. For example, in Asia we’re embarking on a partnership with Tongji Architectural Design Group Ltd, one of the leading design institutes in China. These partnerships help us to extend the range of services we provide and ensure we keep a consistent quality of service.



Q: Why has Forrec been successful in China when so many other companies have failed?

James: I live and work in China and I’ve seen Western businesses come and go over the years. Forrec is not a flash in the pan firm. We’ve been doing business in China for 20 years; we’ve developed detailed knowledge of the market and have a firm understanding of the cultural landscape here. We’re successful because of our commitment to the market and to understanding the entertainment and leisure needs and desires of the Chinese people.

We are proud of our business acumen
– creating experiences that put people
first and make business sense



MIGUEL LAMEIRO

Role: Regional director

Territory: Latin America
and the Caribbean

Characteristics: Analytical,
energetic, professional

Industry experience: 15 years+

Career path: Educator to new
business development

**Q: Technology: a tool or a trap when
doing business internationally?**

Miguel: It is easy to become seduced by the latest technologies, especially when working globally. We keep it simple. After all, it is not only about what you say – it's also how you say it. Some collaborative tools are very powerful, they enable us to move faster, keep everyone on the team up to date and solve problems, which improves the quality of service to our clients. We believe face-to-face communication is still the best way to get a job done and that's why we have dedicated team members on the ground around the globe.

**Q: How does Forrec balance design
value with commercial sense?**

Teri: The firm has an outstanding reputation for creative solutions that work: design can be really cool, but it has to be functional as well. At Forrec, we're proud of our business acumen – creating experiences that put people first while also making business sense.

Because we manage our business conservatively and apply the same judgement to the choices we make for our clients, they come back.

I've known Gordon and the Forrec team for 25 years. I hired them while at HIT Entertainment and worked alongside them while at INTAMIN and WhiteWater/Prime Play, so I've been a customer and a business partner. Now I've joined the team as Regional Director of EMEA, because I love Forrec's design philosophy.



JIM BOWEN

Role: Regional director

Territory: South East Asia

Characteristics: Practical,
entrepreneurial, creative

Industry experience: 20 years+

Career path: Retail expert to
new business development



TERI RUFFLEY

Role: Regional director

Territory: Europe, Middle
East and North Africa

Characteristics: Seriously
fun, focused, empathetic

Industry experience: 25 years+

Career path: Attraction
and event licensing to new
business development

**Q: Forrec's team works across time,
space and organisational boundaries.
What keeps the team together?**

Jim: We're diverse and yet we all share the same passion and desire to excel and be the best.

We are driven by creativity, technical know-how, and a sense of humour. Our team is a reflection of the people we work for. We can speak multiple languages and the depth and range of know-how, from teaching to operating world class attractions and everything in between, is really quite astonishing.

The spirit at Forrec resonates throughout the entire team regardless of where we are in the world. We don't succeed in spite of one another, but because of one another. We are collaborators and people who really enjoy helping others – we're people people!

**Q: What does the future
look like for Forrec?**

Gordon: I'm a little biased, but from where I stand, the future looks brilliant for Forrec. But – and there's always a but – to stay at the top in our industry, we have to keep thinking and learning – developing and nurturing our creative left and business right brain as one, without losing sight of where we came from and what we value. ●

We like cool,
crazy, creative,
out-there stuff
... that works.

Theme Parks Water Parks Entertainment Centres



Puteri Harbour Family Theme Park, Malaysia

Retail and Mixed-use Resorts and Leisure Communities



LEGOLAND Malaysia, Malaysia

Science and Culture Hospitality



Happy Magic Watercube, China



Designing Success