



BUSINESS: The Caisson Company

OWNER: John Christiansen

IN BUSINESS SINCE: 2004

LOCATION: Colorado Springs, Colorado

BOBCAT MACHINES: M2-Series S650 (two) and M-Series S650 (two) skid-steer loaders

BOBCAT ATTACHMENTS: Multiple augers, buckets, pallet forks

BOBCAT DEALER: Bobcat of the Rockies

CORE COMPETENCY

GENERAL CONTRACTOR TRIPLES BUSINESS BY FOCUSING ON SMALLER, SPECIALTY MARKET

When John Christiansen started doing general contracting work straight out of college in 1999, it didn't take long for him to figure out what he liked and, more importantly, what he didn't like about the business.

"I didn't like the large-volume jobs," John says.

He began selecting jobs that involved pavement finishing and site work. By 2001, he was focusing on constructing light pole bases, bollards and sign piers – also known as caissons – for other contractors and discovered a niche market. He found that general and concrete contractors were focusing on bigger jobs, while electrical contractors

didn't have the equipment to complete the type of work. The gap was an opportunity for his crew to offer a turnkey service.

"We started off doing 20 to 25 [caissons] a week," he says. "That was on a good week."

It didn't take long for the business to expand. In 2004, John separated from the general contracting side of the business to concentrate solely on the niche market, changing the company name to The Caisson Company.

"We basically tripled our business at that point," he says. "The Caisson Company does between 200 and 250 projects a year. Each project could have one to 300 bases."

SURVIVING BAD TIMES

The decision to specialize in a core competency helps the company remain stable through economic ups and downs. In a strong economy, The Caisson Company takes on jobs that others pass up. In a down economy, it successfully competes for jobs and is able to keep costs low because of its expertise.

"It takes a lot of little things to do a specialized, turnkey light pole or bollard installation with anchor bolts that have to be accurate, squared up and in the center of the base," John says. "Where somebody else would have to rent equipment and fabricate cages, we have all the materials in stock and the equipment ready to roll."

That equipment includes four Bobcat® S650 skid-steer loaders, buckets, pallet forks and multiple Bobcat auger bits ranging in size from 6 to 36 inches in diameter. The skid-steer loaders are the backbone of the operation, providing the power and precision to drill footings for installations, transport and pour concrete, and perform dirt work.

John learned to operate Bobcat equipment working on construction crews before starting his business, so it was a natural choice later in his career.

"The Caisson Company crews don't operate any other brand than Bobcat skid-steer loaders," John says.

That's not to say the company hasn't demo'd other brands, but they say nothing has ever compared with the reliability and consistency delivered by Bobcat equipment.

CONSISTENCY IS KING

With four crews working on different projects at any given time, consistency is key. Having similar machine controls and settings in each Bobcat loader is important for productivity and safety. If an operator is in a different loader from day to day, the operation is still the same. With consistency across the equipment fleet, operators also know what they can expect for performance from each machine.

"Using a skid-steer loader to drill small caissons for light pole bases and bollards allows us to get into areas that a normal drill rig cannot access," John says. "We can haul concrete into back areas where concrete trucks cannot get into. Our loaders are used every single day to drill holes and make things happen that people didn't think was possible."

RELATIONSHIP RULES BUYING DECISIONS

A long-term relationship with Bobcat of the Rockies also helps the company achieve consistency across their equipment. John has been working with sales specialist Daniel Hankins since purchasing his first piece of Bobcat equipment.

"He sold me my first skid-steer loader in my kitchen," John says.

That background and knowledge means Daniel understands The Caisson Company's business, its equipment preferences like foot controls, the unique

challenges it faces, and the needs of the company and crew.

"He understands every aspect of our business and the reasons that we like our equipment a certain way, what size machine we need," John says. "Having that relationship makes it easier for us to efficiently operate the business. We're able to send an email or text and say, 'Send me a new machine.'"

FORWARD THINKING

Adding more Bobcat equipment to the fleet may be in the near future for The Caisson Company. Along with the hundreds of caisson projects already lined up for its crews and loaders, the company is also looking to expand services by offering trenching and light pole or signpost setting, developing yet another core competency.

Watch a behind-the-scenes video of The Caisson Company putting their core competency to work at [MyWorkSaver.com/Caisson](https://www.myworksaver.com/caisson)



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— JOHN CHRISTIANSEN