

2015 COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION RETREAT



Fast forward

Construction execs
give insights to
industry's road ahead

They spoke of resources and real estate, and human resources and sustainability. They discussed strategies in finding qualified people to help replenish the human resources that were lost amid the recent downturn.

In a climate that continues to trend upward, executives attending the 2015 *Commercial Construction & Renovation* Retreat were positive about the road ahead and what it could mean for the industry's future.

The discussions were part of the roundtable discussion held during the three-day event at Houston's Hotel Derek, which included myriad networking opportunities such as a skeet shooting competition at the American Shooting Center.

Following is the final installment of our Retreat coverage, including a look at our Friday afternoon forum. For more information, visit us at www.ccr-mag.com.



Jon Armour
Project Manager
JLL



Jermaine Brown
Construction Mgr
Francesca's



Darrel Chaney
Consultant
Prime Retail Services



Albert Chincuanco
Sr. Director of Construction
Francesca's



Sean Coakley
Director Store Facilities
ANN INC.



Grace Daly
ShopTalk 360



Steve DeBerardino
National Accounts
Cosentino NA



Richard Flores
South Region PM-Store
Development Team
Whole Foods



Brad Gaskins
Principal
The McIntosh Group



Mike Gordon
Facilities Manager
South Region
Einstein Noah



Sara Korvi
Interior/ Procurement
specialist
H&M



Christine Mastandrea
VP of Corporate Strategy
Whitestone REIT



Jan McKenzie
National Accounts
Assa Abloy



Mike Morelli
National Accounts
Signage Solutions



Patrick Ringlever
Bus Development
Interplan LLC



Roz Strapko
Account Executive
Exclusive Retail Interiors



David Tanner
Director of Construction
Steak 'n Shake
Enterprises, Inc.



Chris Varney
Principal/SVP
EMG



Julia Versteegh
Director of Marketing &
Business Development
Storefloors



Tom Walsh
Sr. Dir, Global Store
Development
Under Armour



Joe Wegrzyniak
Sr VP of Construction
Jersey Mike's



CCR: What type of things are you seeing around redesign and sustainability?

Mike Gordon, Einstein Noah Restaurant Group: I think we have the same challenges. We run into what everybody else is running into – resources and finding good real estate. With us doing this co-brand, we’re moving locations, because we don’t have enough space and it’s hard to stay where we are. In some locations, if we want to expand, we may need a couple more hundred feet. We’re running into a lot of problems there.

With co-branding, we’re looking at how are we going to do this, how do we want to do this? We’re looking at the front of the house right now, the back of the house, where the oven is, and different things like putting dishwashers into the stores [etc.]. How deep back into the house do we go?

Chris Varney, EMG: You mentioned nighttime remodels and some of the challenges. Several of our customers seem to prefer nighttime remodels. What struggles have you experienced and what should be done differently?

Einstein’s Gordon: It’s not a struggle. It can be done. I’ve done it. I just don’t

think it’s wise. If you’re going to do an in depth remodel that we’re doing in our co-brand, then you really need to shut the location down and do it right, instead of trying to do it in pieces over multiple nights.

I think we have the same challenges. We run into what everybody else is running into – resources and finding good real estate.

– Mike Gordon,
Einstein Noah Restaurant Group

Tom Walsh, Under Armour: I think just the unrelenting speed to market that I think we probably all have experienced at some level is whether you’re completely developing a new concept. Speed to market is a trend we’ve experienced, and that’s from a store design and space standpoint. We have been simplifying what the space is and what we put into a space, to the point where they’re very vanilla. It becomes all about the product. I know everybody says that, but that’s we’re trying to do now, from a consistency and scalability standpoint.

Localization is a huge part of every story. And for a company like Under Armour, when the experience within the store is so important, from a design standpoint, we have to design the stores simple, cost effective. They can be scaled and it’s consistent across the globe.

CCR: You’re building a lot of stores, internationally, correct?

Under Armour’s Tom Walsh: Yes, we don’t have nearly the number of stores that a lot of folks have here yet, but we’re building quite a bit over the next three years internationally. When you go international, and you have partner stores, the consistency of the scalability is obviously important. We talked a little about sustainability. If you look at consistency and scalability, it’s kind of an indirect feeder for sustainability. You’re not creating one-offs—from a fixture standpoint, we’re using fixtures now that are the same fixture that go into a Dick’s Sporting Goods in Colorado or a Brand House Store in Chongqing, China.

What you do from a localization standpoint changes things that affect the experience. It’s the mannequins, the marketing, the graphics. It’s the way the lighting’s done or the scent or sounds in the stores that change. We found that by getting that consistency and scalability across the design, it helps with the cost, which helps with the maintenance. It does start to create this life cycle.



CCR: What types of trends and challenges are you seeing out there?

Under Armour's Tom Walsh: One trend we've seen is in the amount of digital being used in the stores today. We have a lot of digital in our stores. We're not doing digital like iPads and things like that for POP, but it is more of a difficult play. I've seen that with other retailers.

Mike Morelli, Signage Solutions: We starting to see a flip in the sign industry, where people care more about the project management and performance – hitting deadlines, communication and maximizing signage area and then closed out. That's becoming more and more valuable; more than price, which is a good trend for us.

We've always taken pride in our project management team. That, along with competitive pricing, has grown our national business. We invest in experienced professionals and encourage forward thinking. We put professionals in place so they can maintain the model we put forth.

“I have to say that I'm impressed with the collaboration over the last few years. Retail has been in decline for maybe five or six years. Now it is coming back – and the pace is very demanding.”

– Jan McKenzie, ASSA ABLOY

One challenge that rears its face now and again is permitting. A lot of these new centers are getting these “tenant coordinators” for a lack of a better term, that think they know how to build a sign. They spec out a sign that's completely impossible to build or one that doesn't get the biggest impact for your brand.

David Tanner, Steak 'N Shake: We see IT – or TI – space becoming more and more driven in the trends are out there. We've walked into the TI space that literally does not have a slab, period. You have to put in the plumbing, the water – everything.

In thinking of where the industry has come during the 2000s, development has been challenged in that the greatest issues in deal making and putting deals together – tax implications on developments and REITS – everything makes them skinnier and skinnier. Having to find that same profit margin because REITS promised they would give a certain amount back to those developers related to that REIT have to still meet that margin, while cutting all the extremes out. That's a trend, but it also presents a challenge.

The challenge is unspoken. I think we're all educated. We've been in the business. We know what those challenges would bring if

you walk into those situations and have to overcome them. It's not in our budgets. It's hard to explain to our development guys. It's hard to get them to understand the criteria we need to bring forward. I love the idea about qualifying your GCs and teaching your architects.

Our biggest challenge internally right now is bringing on qualified GCs. I know that what I did back in the big box many years ago to bring in qualified people. Today, it's tough when you have anywhere from a 3,000-to a 4,000-square-foot building that sits on an acre that has 80 parts and the guy has been a patriarch in the area, not only for his family, but also for the community. He knows everybody in town, so he doesn't want to butter anybody else's bread from out of town. He wants to butter this guy with the red pickup truck who has three people in it who have come to build a store.

That is constantly in our faces, and we don't have the legal precedence behind this to allow for something different on the franchise side. The franchisee has the ability to say I don't care what you say, “I'm going to use my brother-in-law's cousin's uncle to put that in.” And when you're 120 days late, and you haven't opened the store according to what you told the guys on Wall Street, it goes downhill.

So the biggest challenge is finding good, qualified GCs. We have approved a ton. We have a great group who follow us around the country.

Steve DeBerardino, Cosentino

North America: We are seeing a couple of trends. First, in the area of products, we are seeing a big move to large formats, whether that is countertops, flooring, interior wall cladding and facades. Cosentino is well positioned to

take advantage of this large format trend with both our flagship Silestone engineered stone product, and our new indoor/outdoor, 100 percent mineral Dekton material. We make Dekton in a very large format. Dekton is an ultra compact material that's made in a very large format for all uses – countertops, flooring, interior cladding and exterior facades.

It's an exciting move to large formats, but the challenge is that there is not many specifications out there, whether it's for flooring, wall cladding or façade work. We're really driving the bus in the architectural and design community.

In addition, timelines are being squeezed, specifically regarding countertops. Usually when they are installed, cabinets have to go in first, and, unfortunately, they never go in the same way. Walls are just not straight. Cosentino is used to dealing with this for our customers and providing an acceptable look to your countertop.

Invariably, that means we must come out and template and measure that job, which adds another five to seven days, depending on the size and complexity of the materials. That's a lot of time. So the timeline being squeezed is a great opportunity for us to show that we're not just a product, but part of your team, able to work

with other parts of the overall construction group to address issues before they develop, and making sure that we are on top of your schedule throughout the process.

CCR: What has been the biggest surprise you've seen this year in relation to the marketplace?

Cosentino North America's DeBerardino: The bad is that there is a lack of trained technicians. I don't care if it's an electrician, a mason, flooring guy, you name it; there is a lack of technicians, fabricators and installers out there. It's really impacting the timeline to get the job done. Every commercial job I'm involved in seems to be getting stretched more and more, as you wait for that person who is still tied up on another project.

Cosentino is prepared with trained, experienced personnel that you can tap into to either fabricate, fabricate and install, or even help problem solve at the design phase of the project. There's a dearth of trained technicians out there and we have to deal with it.

On the good side, we see a trend where decision makers want to select durable and sustainable materials – not ones that are completely price driven. Price is important, but it has to be a competitive thing. There's a better understanding of performance of the product and sustainability, which is refreshing. That's a nice development.

Steak 'N Shake's Taylor: The biggest surprise this year came about mid-year for us in an above average price jump just across the board. We saw a price jump in construction all the way across the board to equipment of close to 5 to 7 percent. It was bittersweet. Bittersweet means that increase came for those general contractors hired to do the volume of business coming out of those manufacturers.

At the same time, that cut a company with lead time increases for a number of things –everything from mobilizing the job to actually getting your equipment and your signage and everything else onboard. For us, it kind of caught us a little off guard. That little bit of change has us trying to justify to the franchisee, who we gave certain numbers to a year ago. Why am I paying more than you paid last year?



The biggest surprise I've seen in the marketplace is taking place in Atlanta, where the City of Atlanta had a 20-year lease with their baseball team, the Atlanta Braves.

– Darrel Chaney, Prime Retail Services

Signage Solutions' Morelli: We are seeing a huge growth in the retail segment. We also saw turn times get quicker, from signed lease to store opening. Several pop ups and new trendy retailers, including restaurants are hitting the marketplace giving us the opportunity to expand our footprint in many different segments. The square footage for a typical retail store has been reduced therefore shaving time off the build out and making our deadlines much more critical.

Under Armour's Walsh: For me, this year [2015] was interesting. We have a very small team at Under Armour. There is our development team, and our partners, whether they're architects, engineers, vendors, suppliers [etc.]. We've treated our partners like extensions of our team. The surprise was the amount of growth that our company continues to have. Our partners took their eyes off the ball and took the work for granted. I was just dumbfounded, to be honest. The work that you have is right in front of you. You don't have to sell the service. It's yours.

Einstein's Gordon: One of the things I've seen on the construction side is that there are not enough plumbers and electricians out there. When you have your job bid, your GC has trouble being able to get the numbers back from the guys in a timely manner. A lot of these guys will inflate their prices because they have so much work. They think that if I bump up the price, I don't get the job, and they end up getting the job. I've seen this delay the construction process. There's certain markets where it is virtually impossible to get your bids back when you need them because of the timeframe it takes a lot of the GCs to be able to get the information for themselves.

Jan McKenzie, ASSA ABLLOY: I have to say that I'm impressed with the collaboration over the last few years. Retail has been in decline for maybe five or six years. Now it is coming back – and the pace is very demanding. The other thing that I see is transparency – from the buyer side, to the manufacturer, and the seller side. It has to do with the cost, codes and sustainability. Sometimes the transparency is forced, but it is a good trend.



Brad Gaskins, The McIntosh Group:

We're really starting to see a lot more proactive programs to comply with accessibility issues, as opposed to waiting until the back end and getting the lawsuits.

Jon Armour, JLL: Over the last year and a half or so, we've seen project cost escalations in excess of 20 percent in some of our projects. That's in the Houston market. The client directed who he wanted to build the project. We'd go through a bidding process, and then ultimately it would be the client's decision. Oftentimes, you end up with people who really didn't put a lot of work in bidding the project because they knew they were going to get it. In a competitive bidding atmosphere, the prices are starting to go back down to that same 20 percent, back to where they were about two years ago. It's about relationships. The relationship with the GC and the client needs to be a sustainable one over a period of time in order to bring all of this quality and all this stuff together.

Joe Wegrzyniak, Jersey Mike's: We corporately back franchisees' efforts to move forward with their architectural documents and site surveys. Out of the 180 or so that we're going to build this year, we only ended up having two fall through. So, for us,

My biggest surprise is around sustainability. It's still a big buzzword. To Storefloors, that's all it is. Hardly anybody comes to us wanting green, sustainable type products.

— Julia Versteegh, Storefloors

You support your methods by opening it up financially to say it works. Trust the system that we have it in place. We try to make it simple enough for somebody to understand, and systems are in place because they work. We're delaying with people who don't deal with building out new stores. They might be great operators, but do they know how to run Einstein Bagel? It's about partnerships. It's our job is to educate.

\$15,000 to start a process weeks – sometimes months – prior to an executed lease and us working on projects, a lot of our projects still don't have executed leases, but we're in permitting for them. It's a way for us to back fill the pipeline. Our pipeline is constantly being filled from site approval, which is prior to executed leases, all the way through in construction.

A good 20 percent of our jobs are falling into that point. Again, the corporate structure of backing the franchisees by giving them the sense that if the site falls through, we're going to pick that expense up, which builds the relationship between the franchisee and enables us to move projects faster than the standard timeframe. Now you have 90 to 150 days to build that location now.

JLL's Armour: We have a number of projects that migrate out of the pipeline and are also in process of real estate deals. There's no lease signed. We've engaged in a due diligence process with the city or the municipality and to do site invasive work. It really pays off, because it saves us in the permit process and the clients' deals are usually pretty solid. It's possible that out of the due diligence process, what we get is information that's important to relay to people who sometimes go back and rewrite portions of the lease based on the information you extract from a site through the invasive process.

Steak 'n Shake's Tanner: So you're saying you take on that small portion of due diligence; if it goes to that deal, it's your baby.

Jersey Mike's Wegrzyniak: How do you convince people to move forward?

JLL's Armour: What I try to do is make sure that the relationship is pretty tight, so that things like that – critical dates and schedules [etc.] don't fall through the cracks. We encourage biweekly meetings to go over all transactions for projects, status of the projects and things like that. There's good communication between groups of people to make sure that the deal does go through. If there are any issues in the jurisdiction over the property with the lease, everybody's involved in it. No one's blindsided later.

Patrick Ringlever, Interplan: With regards to the due diligence previously discussed, we have developed a dedicated permitting department in



of Atlanta had a 20-year lease with their baseball team, the Atlanta Braves. The lease was to run out in 2016, at the end of the baseball season. The Braves asked for around \$200 million in renovations to the ballpark – the ballpark is 20 years old and is in great shape. But they say they didn't want to spend the money, so they went out and purchased a new track of land [in Marietta, Ga.].

They're building a city around the baseball park. It's going have hotels, restaurants, office space, high-rise office space and high-rise hotels. It will open in 2017. The City of Atlanta is going to be left with a beautiful baseball facility that they don't know what to do with. They have a big quandary there.

I don't know if the planning was an issue or what, but it's a shame to see something like that go. The new facility they're building is huge. The lease has already been signed and restaurants have already leased their space and construction of the ballpark is going up.

Sean Coakley, Ann Inc.: I don't know if it's just the marketplace this year, but in general I'm surprised that people don't listen. It never fails to amaze me. If you want to do business with me, and I am spending time talking with you, telling you how to do it, in essence to set you up for success, why wouldn't you listen? But more often than not, they don't listen; it leaves me shaking my head.

“With a lot of the plans we have, in the next year, we'd like to make sure the team provides value to them and that we're the partner they signed us up to be.”

– Patrick Ringlever, Interplan

our office that is responsible for providing not only the permitting of all our clients' projects but also the upfront site investigation reports. For a tenant lease space, you can find out so much about permit timeframes, exterior design requirements, and landlord approval processes that can impact your lease. We have noticed that tenants are signing leases which often times include timeframes for having completed permit drawings ready for Landlord review or even construction start dates. If the tenant is able to have some up front due diligence completed prior to signing of the lease, they can find out valuable information that can assist them in better lease negotiations.

JLL's Armour: Sometimes payments or fees have been obligated in the lease to be paid in the construction budget. You have to be working tightly with the transactions associates to fully understand all the monies obligated at various stages of project development.

Darrel Chaney, Prime Retail Services: The biggest surprise I've seen in the marketplace is taking place in Atlanta, where the City

Roz Strapko, Exclusive Retail Interiors: My biggest surprise this year is how many clients have come to us not only asking for fixtures, furniture and design but also consolidation and project management. That is our specialty, but in the past, clients would handle more of the project management and consolidation on their end. I think retailers have seen the value in utilizing a company like ours to not only fabricate their fixtures, but also to value engineer and maintain their inventory as well and to work with a one stop shop like ours.

EMG's Varney: My biggest surprise has been that every program and project a retailer is embarking on is getting approved. Once approved, it is amazing how quickly they want to get to market and without proper planning that creates problems. Several clients performing TIs are relying on a landlord or a broker to take pictures and tell them what's out there and they are not performing the proper due diligence. The lack of proper due diligence creates problems during the construction phase and leads to unanticipated cost.

The other surprising thing is that there is a lot of franchise work and I don't see corporate PM's getting out timely to sites to verify that the integrity of the brand is being maintained. They will get to the site eventually, but it is surprising that the effort is not there to spend time with the franchisee before the site is open.

Sara Korvi, H&M: I've only been in my position in the United States for about six months, but what I see as the biggest surprise is the global exchange of best practice. To be able to move across the country, move to different states, move to different places and to be able to exchange information — best practice — is something. The codes are different. The laws are different — everything. There are a lot of things that you can't use because of laws and codes. I see it as a huge benefit.

“How do you convince people to move forward? You support your methods by opening it up financially to say it works. Trust the system that we have it in place.”

— Joe Wegrzyniak, Jersey Mike's

Julia Versteegh, Storefloors: My biggest surprise is around sustainability. It's still a big buzzword. To Storefloors, that's all it is. Hardly anybody comes to us wanting green, sustainable type products. I know many companies out there aspire to make more sustainable stores, yet it's rare that someone comes to us looking for more sustainable flooring options. As important as it is, I'm amazed that we don't get such requests on a regular basis. Maybe it's because of shortened timeframes and smaller budgets; but if that was it, I'd still expect the conversation to come up. Or maybe there is so much else that designers are focused on, that there's no time for it to be a priority yet for the majority of retailers.

Richard Flores, Whole Foods: I wanted to kind of echo the sentiment today about the shortages of GCs and labor. I don't know why there are still shortages and long lead times on materials and equipment. It seems like they also would know about the trend in construction. In my case, you can have refrigerated cases that take eight to 10 or 12 weeks, where I've talked to people who have had to add a second shift just to continue to get the product done and it's still late. Why would you tell somebody it's on the shelf if it's not available?

Steak 'n Shake's Tanner: We tried to do what they did many years ago. We would get vendors with a certain percentage of volume in the stores that would keep an extra store in inventory. You just roll the inventory based on that, so that you're always trying to

cycle it to where there's one store in reserve that you would have in an emergency. But to your point, everybody is lean manufacturing now. It has come down to just in time.

And it is a challenge to get vendors to truly take that capital, investment and cost — in some cases a half million or a quarter million dollars — and put it on the shelf and rotate it out of inventory. That's a whole new concept. We used to do it years ago. But now it's a whole new concept with lean inventory management, with lean process and development.

Whole Foods' Flores: To get it back to what I'm saying, they had to add a second crew. It seems like it would have been smart to just think six or eight months before, use your own crew to continue, and then push out your product versus having to put in another time or another shift. Imagine the dollars being spent for that. I think it would be more profitable if we'd taken those terms versus having to put in the second shift.

Jersey Mike's Wegrzyniak: We over communicate. We send out weekly reports to all our national accounts showing them what's in the process. Our expectation is by over communicating, we expect them to keep up with it — to manage it without having to stock it.

None of our brands would be caught off guard by saying, “My God, you're opening 20 stores in the first quarter.

We're communicating weekly with them on those changes. For us, it's really worked great to communicate.

Another positive is that we were for the second year in a row from National Restaurant News as the fastest growing QSR consecutively. The amount of phone calls you get from people who want to join the company because of it is pretty incredible. Half of my day is reading emails or taking phone calls from perspective people. My philosophy is I never know whom I need.

The other surprise I saw is that as we develop these 180 stores, we had very few issues with our providers keeping up with us. They didn't drop the ball and say, “We ran out of stock. We just don't have it.” They gave us something else, enabling us to open and do those things. So our vendors actually pulled through for us.

CCR: Are you direct buying from your vendors?

Jersey Mike's Wegrzyniak: That's a good question. It's a mixed bag. Some is direct; some is through vendors. We're seeing a lot less middle people, per se. We communicate — all our equipment packages, our furniture graphics, all of that goes direct to the manufacturer. So if there is something bought through a third party supplier, they're notified as well. That information ends up going right to manufacturers.

CCR: They already have those — even though they're buying from the GC or someone else, if you buy them, they still have all that in stock?

Jersey Mike's Wegrzyniak: Not necessarily in stock, but they coordinate and facilitate that delivery process for us based on our communication, our timelines for us.

CCR: What does 2016 hold in store?

Jersey Mike's Wegrzyniak: I may have said it before, but we opened more stores every year since I've been there — and that has been for eight years. So, my goal for next year, personally, is to open more stores in 2016 than I did in 2015, which corporately I believe we're trying to open. The plan is to open 200 to 225 stores next year.

Whole Foods' Flores: As far as we're concerned, we're looking forward to expanding, and putting more remodels and new stores out there in the market in our region.

Storefloors' Versteegh: My goal in 2016 is to increase communication and education to our clients and prospects.

H&M's Korvi: Our goal for 2016 is also expansion. We're growing, so we're planning to open 100 new stores and rebuilding some stores.

EMG's Varney: Our goal for 2016 would continue to be an extension of your staff, and to provide value with scalability and consistency on a national basis.

Exclusive Retail Interiors' Strapko: This year is going to be a good year for us. We just got a new contract with a very high-end hair salon and will be doing two other new constructs. I think 2016 will be fantastic. I'm looking forward to it.

Ann Inc.'s Coakley: My goal is to have smooth integrations with my new service partners. I have three words that I go back to consistently when I describe what is important to me and they are relationships, partnerships, and teamwork. It all starts with relationships for me, can I work with this person or company? When I feel that connection is there, then you have the foundation on which to build a partnership. Partnerships are successful when all of the parties involved derive benefits from the partnership, and that is best achieved through great teamwork.

Prime Retail Services 's Chaney: Our president and CEO would want me to say our goal is to increase our revenue another \$5 million by the end of the year. Having said that, I'm sure we want to continue our growth pace internally, with a strong, steady pace.

Interplan's Ringlever: We will be rolling out a new company website along with our new company message, "40 years and 40,000 projects". Our whole company is based on developing relationships

On the good side, we see a trend of decision makers wanting to select durable and sustainable materials.

— Steve DeBerardino,
Cosentino North America

with our clients so that we become a trusted architectural partner. That is only earned one project at a time and is what we plan to continue on with this year as well.

JLL's Armour: Currently there are a lot of different types of local projects that are assigned across project managers that travel from different areas. I would like to see some efficiencies in performing these projects with a local team.

The McIntosh Group's Gaskins:

I believe our goals for 2016 are to continue learning, improving by providing better value to our clients and extending our footprint.

ASSA ABLOY's McKenzie:

Our goal is to help our customers realize their goals. The best way to do that is to work/plan with reliable supply chain partners and to be able to provide sustainable cost savings.

Einstein's Gordon: My goal would be really to have a successful co-brand roll out for 2016.

Under Armour's Walsh: A goal that I have for our team is that as we continue to grow globally, to gain process alignment around what we do in North America, tighten those up and scale.

Signage Solutions' Morelli: My goal is to grow more relationships and maintain our level of service to exceed our clients' expectations.

Steak 'N Shake Tanner: The departmental goals for all of us is definitely to reduce cost of crude delivery and to grow a pipeline. Pipeline growth is definitely something that we're focused on in the business right now.

Cosentino North America's DeBerardino: Cosentino's commercial business is growing at a very fast clip — year over year. My personal goal is to exceed Cosentino's overall commercial growth in the national account side. That's a nice goal to have. The only way I know how to do that is being part of your team, understanding your needs, reducing your budget and providing value to you and being part of your solutions to shrinking your timelines.

Grace Daly, ShopTalk 360: My goal with ShopTalk 360, the design, construction and facilities industries' podcast talk show, is to chat with more industry professionals to share their POVs, victories and challenges. I've love to have air time with them on a ShopTalk 360 show and perhaps interview them for an upcoming Inspiring Leadership book. I am also very excited my industry fiction series: SHOP will be made into a book later next year. **CCR**

Houston – We have a Retreat

Attendees kick off first night with Italian dinner

The best thing about Houston is its diversity when it comes to food. Known as one of the city's best Italian restaurants, the Grotto offered the ideal spot to kick off the 2015 *Commercial Construction & Renovation Retreat*. The cozy setting and warm atmosphere was like a trip to the Old Country. The dinner was the first part of the Retreat, which was held Oct. 1-4 at the Hotel Derek.



PULL

Networking heads to the shooting range

They came. They networked. They shot (skeet, that is). That's what attendees of the 2015 Commercial Construction & Renovation Retreat in Houston had the opportunity to do at the American Shooting Center, located on 563 acres in George Bush Park. If you want the inside scoop, you'll have to ask them. What happens on the range – stays on the range. The networking event was part of the three-day Retreat, held Oct. 1-4 at the Hotel Derek.

Do as Texans do

When in Texas, you have to try the steak, right? To celebrate the activities of the first two days, attendees of the 2015 Commercial Construction & Renovation Retreat headed to one of Houston's premiere haunts – Sullivan's Steakhouse. Defined by its rich interiors and expansive wine cellar, Sullivan's provided the perfect backdrop to discuss the events of the first two days. The dinner was part of the three-day Retreat, held Oct. 1-4 at the Hotel Derek.



A Houston-sized lunch – New York Style

When it comes to lunch, nobody does it like New Yorkers – even in Houston. Lauded the world over for its famous deli sandwiches, Lenny & Ziggy's NY Deli hit the Houston market in 1999 – and never looked back. What better way for attendees of the 2015 Commercial Construction & Renovation Retreat to network after skeet shooting. The lunch was part of the three-day Retreat, which was held Oct. 1-4 at the Hotel Derek in Houston.