

RMX NORTHEAST INC.

Building Successful Business Partnerships with Property Managers

by Megan E. Monahan

For almost two decades, Waltham, Mass., native Tony Chiarelli climbed the corporate construction ladder, progressing from field supervisor to project manager to general manager while working for a variety of building restoration contractors.

Seven years ago, he decided he wanted to bring his knowledge and experience to the engineering and design field. Soon, some of the condominium property managers with whom he worked agreed to give him a chance to do a better job.

So, in 2001, Chiarelli says, he decided to “hang out his shingle and go for it,” founding his own building envelope consulting and engineering firm, RMX Northeast Inc. Based in Milford, Mass., the company offers a cornucopia of construction management services, including project design, condominium reserve studies, condition surveys and preventative maintenance programs.

The company boasts a staff of experienced consultants and project managers, as well as several hundred clients, three-fourths of which are property managers or condominium associations.

Dan Milinazzo, a senior project manager with more than 10 years of construction experience and a degree in architectural engineering from Boston’s prestigious Wentworth Institute of Technology, and Christian Wright, a senior project manager with a 15-year construction background including work on Harvard University’s Medical School library, round out the top of RMX’s staff,

which services not only all of New England, but also the entire East Coast.

Partnering with Clients

The senior staff at RMX emphasize that they focus on seeing their property manager clients as business partners.

“We strive to maximize the return on investment for the property managers

about being honest with them if their budgets are inaccurate or unrealistic.

These budget adjustments can happen at both ends of the spectrum. Sometimes the client’s conception about the scope of a project is too involved and, ultimately, beyond its budget. Other times, the client feels that the project should be smaller, only to find that incorporating multiple disciplines into a single project can be more cost-effective.

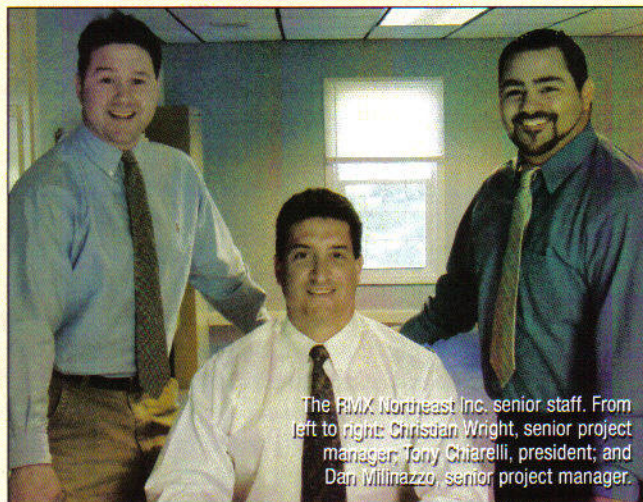
RMX not only cooperates with property managers on their budgets, Chiarelli says, but also offers a dynamic mix of talented engineers and consultants. Coupled with Milinazzo’s more current academic knowledge, Chiarelli and Wright have more than 35 years of combined industry experience organizing both large-scale and small-scale projects. Such a diversely talented staff enables RMX to easily and effectively partner with all clients and personnel involved

in a property, regardless of their industry knowledge or background.

No Cookie Cutters, Please

With its diverse, experienced staff, RMX serves as the guide and expert through the ups and downs of a building project for every property manager with whom they work.

“Every property is different,” explains Chiarelli. “Every project is a customized project, and every siding and roofing project is not the same. There are always special nuances to every property. Nothing that we do here is cookie cutter.”



The RMX Northeast Inc. senior staff. From left to right: Christian Wright, senior project manager; Tony Chiarelli, president; and Dan Milinazzo, senior project manager.

with whom we work,” says Wright. “We can be a terrific resource to them. Our job is to make them look good. They utilize the services that we provide as a tool that makes their lives a lot easier.”

According to Chiarelli, what distinguishes RMX from other building envelope consultants is that his company prides itself on guiding property managers through the pros and cons of every decision for their property’s building project from start to finish as part of the entire property picture, not just within a single project. In addition, he and his employees strive to adhere to the property managers’ budget and aren’t shy

Tracy Rhodes, a portfolio manager for Sterling Services Inc., a property management firm in Holliston, Mass., with a decade of experience in condominium management, can attest to the personalized attention she receives courtesy of RMX Northeast.

Rhodes, who oversees 600 condo units for Sterling and has worked with Chiarelli's company since its early days, says she would absolutely recommend RMX to another property-management company in a heartbeat.

"Tony (Chiarelli) has done a multitude of projects for me, including reserve studies, construction audits, roof replacement projects, and one large insurance remodel," explains Rhodes. "The project that stands out would be the insurance job. It was a devastating water loss to a single mother, and Tony went above and beyond to help out the owner. He really demonstrated his expertise and professionalism in that case."

Furthermore, Chiarelli says that RMX personalizes its reserve studies, which analyze every component of properties and serve as a roadmap for property managers in prioritizing capital projects for their boards' consideration. Whereas some other providers offer pre-canned reports for their clients, RMX's business philosophy aims to meet and understand each manager's individual needs, as well as the complexities of each property.

A Crystal Ball

Property managers appreciate the clarity and precision in RMX's reserve studies—especially now that the recent troubles in the housing market will hold condo associations even more accountable for their financial reserves. These reserve studies are used by property managers as tools for long-term planning, according to Wright. Some reserve studies, adds Wright, often read like an endless, dizzying spreadsheet of seemingly meaningless facts and figures that property managers have to spend hours translating into an understandable, practical format for their boards.

RMX's Experts Offer:

- Reserve Studies
- Design Specifications
- Preventative Maintenance Programs
- Condition Surveys
- Contract Administration/Construction Management
- Expert Witness/Insurance Claim Services

However, RMX's studies are organized into meaningful, clear, relevant reports that property managers can expediently present to condominium boards for their immediate application to decision-making and long-term planning on capital projects.

For instance, when a board needs to determine the amount of funding necessary for its next capital project, RMX's in-depth reserve studies and condition surveys, which the company provides to each and every client, enable property managers to anticipate such future capital budget needs. Reserve studies measure the quality and longevity of every part of each property, enabling property managers to see into the future, says Milinazzo.

"If there are shortfalls in a board's budget or capital project planning, we know when and where they're going to come," explains Milinazzo. "To do this, we familiarize ourselves with the function and cost of every building's components, and we investigate the issues and problems relative to each component. Those findings are then illustrated in the study."

Just the Facts, Ma'am

RMX prides itself on personalized reserve studies for their clients, and Chiarelli says the company is an asset to property managers when they attend board meetings to explain the report's findings, as well as highlight the nuances and impact of an upcoming capital project to condominium residents.

After completing a building envelope survey of 14 buildings at Taunton, Mass.-based Pilgrim Village Condominiums in 2005, Chiarelli says, it became clear that a complete siding-replacement project was necessary. However, a very vocal, volatile minority of residents, who became a majority of attendees at the association's board meetings, insisted that the siding replacement was an unnecessary expense and that only small repairs and painting were needed, adds Chiarelli.

"We had to prove to the residents that the project was necessary," says Chiarelli. "So we frequently attended the board meetings to do just that. And, even though there wasn't a property manager in that case, the role we played with that property is the same we play with any property. Since we're objective building professionals, we just presented the facts to the residents and the board. We eventually convinced an overwhelming majority of the crowd that the project was indeed necessary. We try to be there to provide the best long-term building solutions for our clients."

Victor DeMatos, board president of Pilgrim Village Condominiums at the time of the siding project and a current trustee, says RMX Northeast's guidance and professionalism proved an essential ingredient to what was ultimately a major capital expense and a successful building project for his condo association.

"Their attention to detail and creativity to explain the conditions to the community really made a difference for us," says DeMatos. "Tony and his staff were able to diagnose significant water-penetration issues and also suggested the appropriate resolutions for a long-term fix. I would confidently recommend them to any condominium association."

For more information or to contact RMX Northeast Inc., please call 508-482-9415 or visit the company's Web site, at www.RMXNE.com. RMX is available to provide informational programs for your condominium association on a variety of building envelope topics. Contact Tony Chiarelli at tony@rmxne.com.