

"I think we're just easy to work with."

> Jeff Heymann,
regional manager

New York Giants

+ Benson Industries takes a bite of the Big Apple and bolsters its reputation as a leader in the curtainwall industry with some major projects in the works. *By Chris Petersen*

Benson Industries

www.bensonglobal.com

2011 revenue: \$150 million

Headquarters: New York City

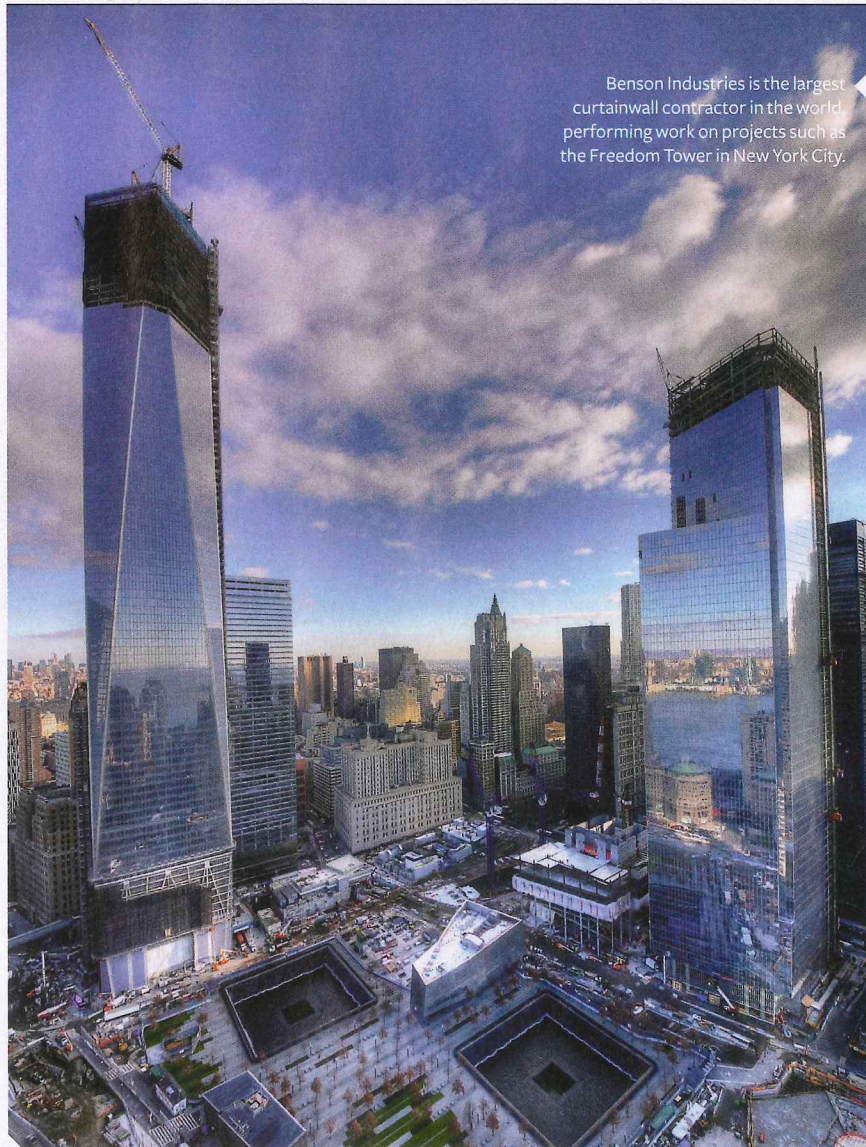
Employees: 200

Specialty: Curtain wall construction

> **Many New Yorkers will tell you that** there's never a good reason to leave New York City, and that there isn't anything in the world that you can't find in the Big Apple. Although there are plenty of high-rise curtainwall opportunities all over the Eastern Seaboard, Benson Industries chooses to concentrate on New York City with its Northeastern operations because it's the best way to ensure the company maintains its stellar reputation in the curtainwall business.

Benson Industries has been headquartered in Portland, Ore., since 1928, but the company opened its New York City office in 2004 after completing several successful projects in the metro area. These projects included the New York Times building in 2003, according to Regional Manager Jeff Heymann. Since the company established a permanent home in the Northeast, Benson Industries has completed nearly a dozen significant projects.

Already the largest curtainwall contractor in the world, Benson Industries' reputation has followed it to New York City, and the company has some impressive projects in the works, including Freedom Tower on the former site of the World Trade Center. Heymann says the impetus for the company's success comes not only from the quality work it performs, but also from its ability to work closely with clients and make things much easier for them.



Benson Industries is the largest curtainwall contractor in the world performing work on projects such as the Freedom Tower in New York City.

"I think we're just easy to work with," Heymann says.

Quality Work

Heymann says Benson Industries stands out in the curtainwall niche in New York

City, although the competition is as fierce as it is anywhere.

"Since we're focused in on custom high-rise curtainwall, the competition is similar to other parts of the country," he says, noting that most of the large



Benson Industries says it remains quality-driven by being a hands-on contractor.

national companies have a presence in the marketplace, along with numerous regional contractors.

However, Benson Industries distinguishes itself through a few vitally important characteristics, according to Heymann. First and foremost is the fact that the company chooses not to venture too far away from the New York City area, as this makes it easier for the company to guarantee the quality of the engineering, fabrication and installation services it provides. The company has a long-term strategic alliance with partners in Washington, D.C., and has examined the opportunity to work in Connecticut, but for the most part it

believes focusing on New York City is the best way to ensure quality. The other side of what makes Benson Industries a leader is how it works with its clients.

“I think what distinguishes us is the same thing that distinguishes us all over the country, and that’s that we’re totally quality-driven,” Heymann says. Even though the company works all around the world, Benson Industries still is an independent contractor and not part of a larger conglomerate. As a result, Benson Industries remains a hands-on company that values its customers and partners with them as best it can. This has led to the company acquiring numerous repeat customers.

New York Focus

Working with those repeat customers has helped Benson Industries survive in the soft economy. Heymann says the

POHL is very pleased to fabricate and provide the embossed Stainless Steel panels for the Curtain Wall of the WTC Tower # 1, designed by SOM New York and manufactured and installed by Benson Industries LLC. The stainless steel chevrons are made of 2mm embossed “Top Pearl” stainless steel panels using stainless steel sheet type AISI 316 bright annealed and stretcher leveled. The typical chevrons consist of 2 stainless steel panels in the size of 4’ x 17’. There are 1847 stainless steel panels installed on the Curtain Wall. The weight of these panels is 250 metric tons. The panels are formed and stiffened by a custom-made stainless steel corrugation engineered and fabricated by POHL. POHL has served the US market since 1986 and specializes in the engineering and production of custom made Rainscreen facade systems using primarily solid, noncombustible materials, like metals, terracotta, and glass.

construction market in New York City is still somewhat down, which has kept margins relatively tight, although Benson Industries' profit margins are still within comfortable boundaries. Working with repeat customers is a good

way for the company to minimize risk, Heymann says, and emphasizes that Benson Industries prefers to walk into a project "with our eyes open."

Among the projects Benson Industries has taken on in recent years are the

United Nations Secretariat building, the New York Times building and The Visionaire in Battery Park City.

The Visionaire is a 35-story apartment building that features numerous sustainable elements, not the least of which is the low-emissivity glass and terra cotta curtain wall, created and installed by Benson Industries, Heyman explains. The curtainwall provides a thermal break between the interior and exterior, creating more efficient heating and cooling of the building.

Green Builder

Sustainable design elements aren't just for a few select buildings anymore, and Heymann says Benson Industries has recognized the impact green building has had on the industry. "We have upped our game worldwide by incorporating more efficient thermal isolation in our designs," he says.

"We've also added personnel and resources in thermal modeling, as this area becomes very important during the performance mock-up and shop drawing phase," he adds.

Because of the nature of the work Benson Industries does, every design must be modeled and tested individually to ensure that it meets the energy codes and the clients' requirements. "We have a good understanding of how to incorporate triple glazing, photo-voltaics, fixed and operable sunscreens, and shading devices into our curtainwalls," Heymann explains. "We have also developed both passive and active double-wall systems. We've changed our



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"It is of huge significance for our people back in Portland, and it's a huge source of pride for us and the local unions who are working for us. You are reminded every day when you walk on the site of how important it is."

shipping protocol to soften our carbon footprint by using rail rather than over-the-road trucks in shipping material from our West Coast manufacturing facilities."

Freedom Tower

Heymann says the project the company is most proud of in New York City right now is its work on towers 1 and 4 at Freedom Tower, on the site of what was once the World Trade Center in Manhattan.

"It is of huge significance for our people back in Portland, and it's a huge source of pride for us and the local unions who are working for us," Heymann says. "You are reminded every day when you walk on the site of how important it is."

Not only is the work significant in an emotional sense for the company, but Heymann says Freedom Tower is a big project in a technical sense, too. "Freedom Tower is our largest contract to date in square footage and total contract amount," he says. "The most challenging aspect from a design standpoint was incorporating the significant blast design requirements that are invisible to the curtainwall aesthetic.

"From a field installation point of view, the stainless steel panels required some special rigging and the mechanical plenum areas proved challenging to coordinate with all the beam penetrations," he continues. "The SOM/Liebskind elegant design actually helps the installation. The building's generous footprint allows for many typical conditions and

repetition, which resulted in significant efficiencies in rates of installation for curtainwall panels."

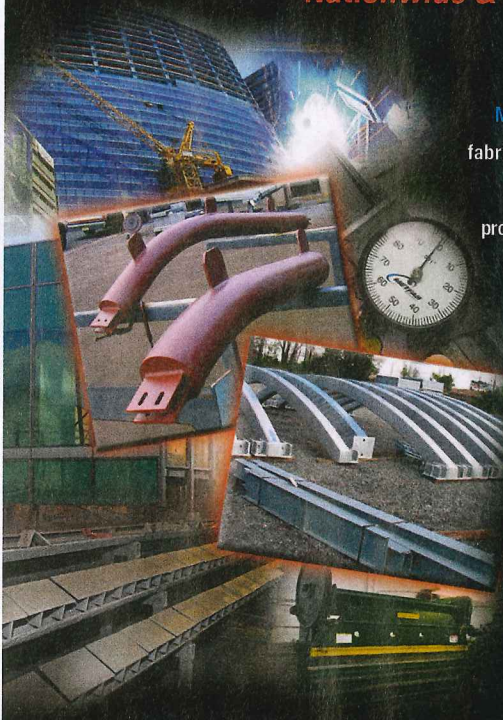
Heymann explains that Benson Industries looks forward to building off its success in the city and growing along

with the progress in the metro area. "I think Manhattan will be at the forefront of building activity increasing, so we're excited about the opportunity to participate in some projects that are on the drawing board," he says. ☺

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