

**CLIENT FOCUS:**

**UNIVERSAL BUILDERS SUPPLY, INC.:  
A SUCCESSFUL THIRD-GENERATION FAMILY BUSINESS**

Far too often, a family business starts out with the best of intentions, relations, and idealism and ends in acrimony, disputes, and even litigation. How is it, then, that the family members of [Universal Builders Supply, Inc.](#) ("UBS"), a third-generation family-owned business, are not only speaking to each other, but are on very good terms? And how, in this slow economy, does the company manage to be enjoying its most successful five years in over eighty years of doing business?

First, a little bit about UBS. UBS designs and erects the hoists, scaffolding and safety cocoons around buildings under construction. It has provided these services for such famous historic construction projects as the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, and, more recently, Grand Central Terminal and the AOL Time Warner complex, to name just a few. UBS is currently owned by Kevin O'Callaghan. Headquartered in New Rochelle, New York with offices worldwide, UBS employs approximately one-hundred and fifty people.

UBS was founded in 1931 by Harold O'Callaghan Sr. His two sons, Harold Jr. and Tony, joined the business in their early twenties and, when their father fell ill shortly thereafter, learned the business by baptism by fire and eventually bought out their father to provide for their mother and sister.

Harold Jr. and Tony have ten children between them. All the children worked on UBS job sites during their summers in high school. Of the ten, only Kevin, his brother Craig and their cousin Cal have worked in the business full-time. Kevin and Craig purchased UBS from their father in 1995.

When asked what fostered the success of UBS, Kevin answered "mentoring and fairness". When Kevin and Craig began working together, their father Tony mentored them in a way that let them make and then learn from their mistakes. While perhaps more difficult for their father, this way of mentoring strengthened the business.

Their father also made sure that everything was split equally between them. This framework of fairness and education continued until Craig's interests led him toward real estate development and other investment opportunities. Craig left the company in 2004 and Kevin purchased Craig's interest in 2006.

How has UBS thrived while so many other businesses are struggling in this economy?

First, Kevin believes that there has been a "flight to quality" (as well as a little bit of old-fashioned luck). UBS works closely with clients to "give them their utopia" while making sure that the clients' goals and expectations are realistic.

Second, UBS has used the economic downturn as an opportunity to become more judicious in how it marshals its assets by choosing which builders with whom it works, what projects are thought to be "real", and whether the owner is of high moral character with the capacity to pay its bills.

UBS and Danziger & Markhoff LLP have a long history together. The firm began representing Harold Sr. in the late 1960s and has continued to represent UBS through each of the three generations, watching it grow in both numbers and prominence and serve as a model of a successful family business.

To learn more about Universal Builders Supply, Inc., visit their website at [www.ubs1.com](http://www.ubs1.com). ■

*Please contact Robert B. Danziger, Esq., or Michael Markhoff, Esq., with any questions about business succession planning.*

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