

## **Carpenter/Robbins Commercial Real Estate, Inc. Feature Alive East Bay**

Ten years ago, John Carpenter of Alamo and John Robbins of Orinda were a pair of commercial real estate executives who had had successful careers as high level employees. Each had celebrated his fiftieth birthday and seemed to be more likely candidates for retirement than for beginning a brand new multi-million dollar enterprise with a unique value proposition.

Robbins had run a consulting business out of his home since 1993, but by 1998 he decided that to truly fulfill his vision he would need a partner whose skills would be complimentary to his own. "John (Carpenter) and I had worked together over the years. We both have a passion for client service and a strong desire to be the very best we can be," Robbins said. "Together, we are able to provide clients a stronger and more diverse skill set, and as a result we have built a bigger and stronger business."

Carpenter/Robbins Commercial Real Estate, Inc. became a \$3 million business by 2007, and Robbins projects over 50 percent growth for 2008. In fact given the five new people added this year, he would not be surprised if it doubled. "We are a temporary real estate department for business and government entities with commercial real estate needs," Robbins said. The company only represents tenants both public and private sector, and focuses on strategic planning, and cost reduction through a creative application of their sixty years of combined experience.

Today, Carpenter/Robbins has a professional staff of 14 people with two support staff working in San Ramon and was recognized last year as one of the fastest growing firms in the Bay Area. The firm specializes on a select group of growth companies in the greater Bay Area and has over 750,000 square feet of projects in such far away places as Tampa, FL and Austin, TX. This highly specialized firm seems to have a special hold on companies it services, providing literally hundreds of repeat engagements over the years.

Each partner received a big boost from a spouse who encouraged them to go off on their own. "Moving to a small company was my wife's idea," Carpenter said. "She said, 'you've been doing it for someone else for a long time, why not do it for yourself!' It was the push I needed; I'll always be indebted to her for that vote of confidence." Robbins wife was also a catalyst. "By 1993 I had had it with commuting sometimes over 2 hours, with working for someone else and with the politics of a big company. I recognized I wasn't getting any younger, and if I wanted to live my dreams I was approaching now-or-never time. With the encouragement of my wife, I gave my employer 90 days notice."

In the world of complex financial institutions: "We describe our firm as a David in the Goliath world of commercial real estate," Carpenter said. "We have structured the company around the concept of always keeping our clients best interest first." The firm does that by following three principles:

- 1. It has no landlord conflicts of interest, because it only represents tenants.*
- 2. It acts as a relocation concierge, working from the strategic planning phase of relocation all the way through to the move-in pizza party.*

*3. It specializes in saving clients money by looking at their real estate as a vehicle to drive dollars to the company's bottom line rather than just a vessel to hold workers.*

Passion and the desire to truly understand customer needs are the secret to Carpenter/Robbins' business success and also forms their advice for others interested in making the leap from employee to employer.

"People who are successful as entrepreneurs are all passionate about what they are doing," says Carpenter. "One must have passion, because that passion creates energy and creativity which eventually leads to innovation and a unique value proposition."

"We take nothing for granted," adds Robbins. "We never assume we are keeping our customers happy, we ask them. Part of taking nothing for granted is our strong desire to understand our clients. Let me offer a government sector example. When we got our first GSA contract, John and I went to DC and took the same classes as our clients took to understand their process. We then structured our business to meet their needs, not ours."

The fortitude to strike forward and the gumption not to strike out has been a winning proposition for two East Bay men who saw their fiftieth birthdays as the beginning of the most rewarding phase of their lives. "We are very proud that we have built a company where we have given some terrific people a great job in a collegial environment which allows them to fulfill their dreams," said Robbins.

*For more information on Carpenter/Robbins Commercial Real Estate, Inc. visit [www.crcre.com](http://www.crcre.com) or call 925-866-1300.*