

# US BUILDERS REVIEW

THE MAGAZINE FOR LEADING CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

## HARDT ELECTRIC

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# HARDT

# ELECTRIC

## FAMILY BUSINESS MAINTAINS DECADES OF PRESENCE

*in Chicagoland*

Produced by Dave Gushee and Written by Tom Faunce



For more than 40 years, Hardt Electric has been a household name in the Chicagoland electrical contracting market. Specializing in industrial, commercial and residential work, Hardt Electric employs a staff of experts to provide innovative and efficient solutions. The company also maintains a communications division that provides low-voltage, fiber-optic and audiovisual cabling solutions. By providing installation, service and maintenance, Hardt Electric creates and maintains top-performing communication systems.

Founded in the early '70s, the roots of Hardt Electric date back to the 1930s when Carl Hardt founded C&H Electric to repair electric motors. As the company grew, the focus shifted to electrical contracting and in 1956 Carl joined the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). Eventually Carl's sons joined the business and in 1973 the company split in half with David and Bill Hardt establishing Hardt Electric, which joined NECA in 1975.

Hardt Electric began with two service trucks and six electricians. Bill and David have since built the company into a midsized contracting firm serving the Chicago metropolitan area and employing approximately 65 people. With Bill having since retired, David and his son Peter are now running the day-to-day operations. Upon graduating from Purdue University in 1998 with a degree in building construction management, Peter worked for several electrical contractors on the West Coast in order to gain experience before returning to Chicago and joining the family business in 2003.

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### Passing the torch

When David Hardt was elected president-elect of NECA in 2013, Peter stepped up and became chief operating officer of Hardt Electric. "At that same time, we began working with MCA, a consulting firm out of Flint, Michigan, to instill the Agile Construction Process (AGC) into our firm," says David. "We've had a lot of exciting transitional elements happening here in the past few years with me becoming president of NECA, Peter taking over the leadership and instituting a new management process."

Now in his second year of a three-year term as president of NECA, David first joined the Chicago Cook County Chapter's executive board in 1988 and served on it for 25 years, including terms as governor and president. He has also served as a trustee for the chapter's joint pension and benefit trust.

As president of NECA with his company as a member, Hardt is a strong believer in the value of associations. "I think networking with fellow contractors has helped guide our company," he says. "NECA offers many services in education, training, safety and marketing, which can help any company in a professional manner."

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Combining his efforts with NECA and Hardt Electric, David has implemented multiple processes from NECA into his company such as instituting CW/CEs, helper classes, fabrication and certain methods of preplanning projects. “We’ve implemented many tools to measure the success of different aspects of the business,” says Hardt. “That’s very important because if you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it.”

## **Energy efficiency**

With an emphasis on sustainability, the team at Hardt Electric is experienced in designing, installing and servicing alternative energy and sustainable systems. A notable project that Hardt Electric completed was with Other World Computing (OWC), a manufacturer/supplier of award-winning products for Apple Computers and mobile devices. Hardt Electric helped OWC's Woodstock, Illinois, facility to produce more energy than it consumes.

Hardt Electric utilized the most efficient photovoltaic modules along with DC optimizers to provide advanced module-based monitoring, maximum energy performance per module and enhanced safety with automatic shutdown to the module level with SafeDC voltage protection. "On a job like this we would typically have about six workers on the job but some jobs we'll have upward of 20," says Peter. "We have the ability to self-perform a majority of our own work. The only time we might sub something out is if there is any special underground work required."

In addition to the bottom line, Hardt Electric has numerous metrics to gauge the success of each project. The communication through the AGC is crucial to every job running smoothly. Safety is always the top priority on every jobsite for Hardt Electric. "We go through an extensive safety-planning process before stepping foot on each job," says Peter. "We have zero accidents on our projects."

Now in its third generation of the Hardt family, Hardt Electric remains an agile company with the ability to adapt to change and stay ahead of the game. Due to recent numerous retirements, the company has replaced approximately 75 percent of its office staff. "We've gone through some major transitions with not only our people but also with our processes," says Peter. "We also work with some local colleges and universities to help with our recruiting efforts."

After more than four decades of service, Hardt Electric's expertise and professionalism is displayed in every project the company completes. With a commitment to providing industry-leading electrical service to a wide range of industries, Hardt Electric Inc. remains a leader in electrical contracting in the Chicagoland region. •

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