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### INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES

## New MCAA President Rick Gopffarth: Creating Leaders

Motivating and encouraging the MEP industry's next generation to develop their leadership skills is a focus for Gopffarth during his presidential term.

[Kelly L. Faloon](#)

**Rick Gopffarth**, vice president of preconstruction at mechanical and process construction company Dynamic Systems (DSI), oversees business development, estimating and engineering activities for the North Texas Division. He manages mechanical projects within the semiconductor, pharmaceutical, mission-critical, healthcare, laboratory and large commercial industries.



With a background in architecture and construction management and an interest in prefabrication, Gopffarth started his career as DSI's first project manager.

Past president of the Mechanical Contractors Association of Dallas, Gopffarth serves on the board of the MCA of Texas. At the national level, he is chair of the Mechanical Contractors Association of America's (MCAA) Education Committee, and began his term as 2024-2025 president at the recent MCAA convention in March.

We spoke with Gopffarth after the convention about his hopes for the organization, his passion for developing the next generation of mechanical industry leaders, and the need to help members navigate the industry's ongoing labor issues.

***CONTRACTOR: How did you know you wanted to be part of the mechanical contracting industry? How did you get your start?***



Rick Gopffarth.

Rick Gopffarth: When I met **Randy** and **Russell Rehmman**, two of the early DSI pioneers, I had no knowledge of the mechanical contracting industry. With an architectural background, I was good at drawing and drafting and was extremely intrigued by the detailing involved in the prefabrication of mechanical systems.

After completing a second degree in construction management, I eventually interviewed with Randy Rehmman for what I

thought was a detailing position. I was surprised and blessed to become the first project manager Dynamic Systems ever hired. That turn of events changed my life forever.

***CONTRACTOR: What do you love about your job?***

**RG:** Without a doubt, it's the life-long relationships I have built through the years. Working in a difficult industry is much easier when you know friends are at your side and have your back. After 34 years in the industry, I tell people I have the largest family in the world.

***CONTRACTOR: What do you dislike about your job?***

**RG:** The risk and pressure that have been pushed down to the mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) trades. However, like this country's first responders, I believe the risk and

pressure motivate people within our industry. Mechanical contractors choose to run towards the fire, not away.

***CONTRACTOR: What piece of advice helped you in your career?***

**RG:** Surround yourself with smart people. Never be the smartest person on your team (which was easy for me — ha!).

Listen and learn from everyone you interact with. Whether an apprentice or a business owner, lessons and advice can be gained through your daily interactions if you simply take the time to listen.

Never put off until tomorrow what you can take care of today. Tomorrow may throw a curveball at you, and procrastinated tasks will become a problem.

***CONTRACTOR: Do you have children, and what do you want them to know about mechanical contracting?***

**RG:** Debbie and I have no children. If we did, I would be candid about the intensity and hard work that come with the business. I would also make sure they know that their potential success is unlimited if they are willing to accept the challenge. No greater industry impacts our communities and the people in our lives.

***CONTRACTOR: What's the biggest problem facing mechanical contractors today? And how is MCAA helping?***

**RG:** Navigating industry-wide labor shortages that impact ownership groups, developers, architecture/engineering firms, construction managers, general contractors, the MEP trades, and specialty contractors. Facing the size, speed and complexity of today's projects with diluted talent at the top of the construction pyramid indirectly forces additional risk to the MEP trades.

Expanding MCAA's depth of educational offerings and resources in the coming years will be paramount. Our MCAA staff, national board of directors and committee members

understand the challenge and are committed to our success.

***CONTRACTOR: What are you most passionate about in the industry? How do you hope to work on this issue while MCAA president?***

**RG:** Developing the next generation of industry leaders. MCAA will launch a new initiative, Foundations of Field Leadership, to encourage, motivate and prepare our best United Association (UA) apprentices and journeypersons to take the next step in our industry.

In addition, the John R. Gentile Foundation (JRGF) and MCAA's Career Development Initiative will continue to recruit the nation's top collegiate talent into the mechanical contracting industry.

***CONTRACTOR: How do mechanical contractors use technology today? What about the future?***

**RG:** Keeping up with technology is critical to MCAA's success and the success of our members. From engineering, preconstruction, virtual design and construction (VDC), prefabrication and key operational platforms, new technological systems will enable and prepare our contractor members to be successful in today's industry.

The annual MEP Innovation Conference held every January—sponsored by MCAA, the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association and the National Electrical Contractors Association—will continue to pave the technological future for our MEP contractors and UA partners.

***CONTRACTOR: How can mechanical contractors and mechanical engineers collaborate better to ensure the best possible outcome on a client's project?***

**RG:** The speed and complexity of today's projects result in more design-build or heavy design-assist opportunities for mechanical contractors. Integrating the VDC resources, prefabrication capabilities and constructability experience of mechanical contractors into the early development of projects will become more prevalent.

Strengthening the engineering capabilities of our contractor members and joint initiatives between MCAA and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers will become critical in the coming years.

***CONTRACTOR: When speaking to young people in the industry, how do you describe the benefits of MCAA membership?***

RG: Mechanical contracting is and has always been a relationship-driven business. MCAA offers its members a wealth of resources and educational offerings that assist young people in learning to navigate and become leaders in our industry.

However, the No. 1 resource MCAA has to offer is our members. The relationships built through MCAA will provide young people with the key contacts and tools they need to be successful in their careers.

***CONTRACTOR: What is MCAA doing to recruit people into the industry (contracting and engineering)?***

RG: JRGF and MCAA's Career Development Initiative help MCAA members connect with students and veterans for full-time employment. In June, MCAA will host our annual Women in the Mechanical Industry conference, promoting the career development opportunities available for women in our industry.

In September, MCAA's annual Great Futures Forum directly connects the top young talent from universities that host MCAA student chapters with our contractor members.

Recruiting in the coming years by both MCAA and the UA will largely determine our success. Both organizations have the people, tools and resources to succeed in this effort.

***CONTRACTOR: Are you optimistic about the future of mechanical contracting? Why?***

RG: Due to the complication and pace of today's projects, I see the traditional construction pyramid being reshaped in the coming years with the MEP trades moving up in the hierarchy. There are more opportunities for our contractor members now than I have seen

in my career. I firmly believe those opportunities will only intensify in the next five to 10 years.

***CONTRACTOR: If you only had one message to give to your fellow contractors, what would it be?***

**RG:** Work hard, surround yourself with great people, lean on your friends and relationships, but more than anything, have fun. We are part of the greatest industry in the world. Embrace it, own it and enjoy the ride!

*Kelly Faloon is a contributing writer to CONTRACTOR magazine and principal of Faloon Editorial Services. The former editor of Plumbing & Mechanical magazine, she has more than 35 years of experience in B2B publishing, with 26 of those years writing about the plumbing, heating, cooling and piping industry. Faloon is a journalism graduate of Michigan State University. You can reach her at [kelly@falooneditorialservices.com](mailto:kelly@falooneditorialservices.com).*

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