

They'll Take Manhattan

DTM embraces past, future with fearlessness.

by Kaija Wilkinson

Embarking on their third decade in business, the principals of DTM Inc., of College Point, New York, said relationship building and customized service are keys to helping their elevator-consulting business grow and thrive. Just as the world, nation and New York City (NYC) have withstood hardship and repeatedly found a way to come back strong, so has DTM, which got its start thanks to founder and CEO Joseph C. Montesano seeing opportunity in adversity.

According to Montesano's son, Nicholas J. "Nick" Montesano, DTM president, his father saw a niche that needed to be filled in the early 1980s, leading to a decision to leave his job at Westinghouse in March 1982 to start DTM Drafting and Consulting Services Inc., originally located in the family dining room in Queens, New York. Nick Montesano explains:

"At the time, many [building] owners were using major mechanical and engineering firms to help them come up with designs for buildings with the architects in reference to the vertical-transportation systems. It was also common for the big manufacturers, such as Westinghouse and Otis, to provide this type of engineering service free of charge to their clients when they were designing new buildings. As the economy tightened and as there was accountability within firms to control costs, the big manufacturers stopped providing this service. Joseph Montesano realized that there was an opportunity, and that there would be a demand for an independent expert to give advice to the owners and architects as the skyline of the city continued to grow."

Demand turned out to be greater than Joseph Montesano anticipated, prompting a relocation



Top: Joseph Montesano and his wife, Minnie
Bottom: (front row) Nick Montesano; his wife, Noreen; and their sons, (back row, l-r) Matthew and Michael

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from dining room to basement to, finally, DTM's current headquarters in a historic three-story house in College Point, New York. At that point, DTM's approximately 15 employees had become too much for the basement. "From the vision of having a one-man operation and keeping himself busy, while having a hand in designing some of Manhattan's new high rises, the business vastly advanced to needing to hire employees to help with field surveys, design and engineering," Nick Montesano said. Since then, DTM has built numerous mutually beneficial relationships with property owners and managers, with a focus on individualized attention Montesano describes as

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Equitable Building Manhattan

unsurpassed. DTM's corporate headquarters are convenient to Manhattan via mass transit or car, and within 10 min. of La Guardia Airport. In addition, DTM opened a satellite office on Manhattan's west side that enables field crews to quickly reach clients in that part of the city.

Nick Montesano describes DTM as a boutique consulting firm, which has, as his father originally envisioned, played a role in building and preserving NYC. The firm's client list reads like a who's-who of the city's elite. It includes such iconic projects

as the Flatiron building (ELEVATOR WORLD, November 1999) and The Russian Tea Room (EW, March 2000). DTM designed the elevator system in the original 7 World Trade Center (WTC), which was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and modernized the world headquarters for JP Morgan Chase at 270 Park Avenue (EW, February 1999).

DTM won an architectural award for its design of the vertical-transportation system at the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel venting viaduct, and lately, it has been

handling several modernization projects that include designing destination-dispatch systems for older buildings. Nick Montesano said the team is particularly proud of its role in designing a state-of-the-art destination-dispatch system for 31 Penn Plaza, which helped bring it from a Class-B to Class-A office building. Nick Montesano observed:

"As part of the many projects we have been lucky enough to be engaged for, DTM has been on top of bridges, under the water, in corporate headquarters and in condominium and co-op apartments."

On any given day, this involves providing expert project oversight and advice to thousands of property owners, managers and real-estate companies in the NYC area and beyond. Keeping pace with daily demands is challenging but rewarding, Nick Montesano said. Government regulations that drive up

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operating costs present an even greater challenge, he added. The company also finds it difficult to find personnel who possess the right mix of field expertise, management experience and aptitude. Nick Montesano said:

"People think they can just step into the consulting industry but do not realize the challenges and managerial aspects of the business, particularly [in] dealing with owners and architects in reference to designs and vertical-transportation-systems criteria."

DTM has been fortunate, he said, in that it has forged relationships with major clients that persist to this day. For example, one of the first calls Joseph Montesano received after becoming an independent consultant was from Silverstein Properties, Inc., a major player with an NYC portfolio that includes 7 WTC, the city's first Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design-certified office building.

Nick Montesano said DTM is inspired by clients such as Silverstein. He stated:

"As you know, when the country faced the challenge of 9/11, it dramatically affected everyone's life, including the Silverstein organization. But through pure determination, Larry Silverstein fought his critics and many municipalities to prove successful with rebuilding the World Trade Center complex. All of us at DTM are proud to have the Silverstein organization as our major client and friend over the years, working closely with it on its vertical-transportation needs, and look forward to rebuilding the entire WTC site to show the world how strong the U.S. is and how diligent, persistent and hardnosed New Yorkers are when faced with the greatest of deterrents."

Another client who has been with DTM from the beginning is Boston Properties, Inc., which has highrises in such markets as NYC; San Francisco; Washington, D.C.; and Boston. Over the years, DTM has worked with approximately 3,000 clients, Nick Montesano estimates, and a large number

of them are repeat customers. A new code requirement implemented in 2009 by the NYC Department of Buildings resulted in a surge in business, as more property owners and managers realized they needed to have more regular elevator inspections. "Our overall growth in base building contracts and new design has been consistent over the years, and I do anticipate that these contracts and our inspection aspect of the industry will continue to prosper," Nick Montesano stated. While the company has felt the effects of the economic downturn in the form of more competitive prices for professional services, he said the market in NYC has stayed more or less stable. Since a large percentage of DTM's business is in the NYC area, the company is less susceptible to national and global economic pressures.

The continuing trend of OEMs acquiring independents, in turn shrinking the playing field, is the biggest challenge facing the industry, Nick Montesano said, adding: "With each acquisition, the elevator industry becomes smaller, and the resources and options for owners, consultants and even suppliers narrow," he said. He expects the trend to continue. He also expects DTM to continue to thrive in spite of it. "New companies, if they make it past the first five years, will usually be successful for some time," Montesano said. Keeping abreast of advancing technology and planning for the future, Montesano said DTM has implemented a new software program by Helios Enterprise Solution

Group that enables field and office operations to be conducted on a tablet from anywhere in the organization.

Nick Montesano attributes the company's success to a strong support system:

"I am blessed with wonderful family and friends, starting with my father, Joseph, who has not only been my dad, but my mentor. Without his love and support, I

" I am proud of the success DTM has had and hopeful it will be in the family for many generations to come. "

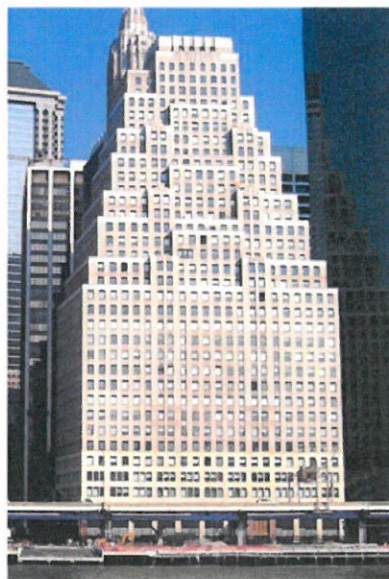
– Joseph Montesano, DTM founder and CEO

would be lost, and without his vision, there would be no DTM. The unwavering love from my mother, Domenica Theresa Montesano (the DTM for whom the company is named), continues to keep the family strong. My sister, Susan Warr, works daily to keep DTM on the straight, narrow and prosperous path. My sister, Nancy Schnier's love and support is always appreciated. My wife, Noreen's love and strength has never wavered in support of me and DTM. And the love of my boys, Matthew and Michael, completes my life. I am also grateful for the entire DTM family who work diligently every day to ensure the company's success, and to my many friends, of whom I cannot mention all, but all are thought of equally fondly. In particular, I want to recognize the special relationship I have with the Elevator World family, which includes Ricia Hendrick, T. Bruce MacKinnon and my close friend (who is like a brother), Bob Caporale, whose time shared at industry events make it all worthwhile."

Adds Joseph Montesano: "I am proud of the success DTM has had and hopeful it will be in the family for many generations to come." 🌐



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