

# ATTENTION TO DETAIL

*Primary Mechanical, Inc. celebrates  
24 years of excellence*

by Susan Diemont-Conwell



Bert and Lori Faye own Primary Mechanical, Inc., which provides mechanical and HVAC services throughout San Diego, California.

**A**ttention to detail is more than a good business practice to Bert Faye, owner and CEO of *Primary Mechanical, Inc.* It's absolutely essential in his line of work. The company provides mechanical and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) services to residential, commercial, industrial and pharmaceutical customers throughout San Diego, California.

Pharmaceutical customers, in particular, require that the company adhere to very specific standard operating procedures. "This is a niche market for Primary Mechanical," Bert says. "Not everyone is trusted to provide services to this industry." Bert explains that pharmaceutical facilities house labs and cleanrooms where products are manufactured. "These are controlled environments that contain very low levels of pollutants. Rooms must be kept absolutely free from dust, airborne microbes, aerosol particles and chemical vapors," he adds.

Labs and cleanrooms require material and equipment specific to the industry. "Because the air is heavily

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Primary Mechanical, Inc. performs a mechanical installation of rooftop ductwork at an international automotive research and development facility.

filtered, these rooms need larger air-handling and exhaust systems than normal commercial projects,” he says. Ductwork, too, is extensive. “When we do an installation, every single connection we make must be inspected. The work is very exciting, and I love the challenge.”

### TRUSTED PROVIDER

Bert has enjoyed the trust of the pharmaceutical industry since his early years as an industry professional. “I started in a small shop in my hometown of Ramona, California,” he says. “Soon after, I joined University Mechanical & Engineering Contractors. At that time, it was the fifth-largest HVAC company in the country.” At University Mechanical, Bert received hands-on training in advanced technology, providing services to university labs and cleanrooms.

When Bert made the decision to start his own business in 1994, he had

**“Honesty and integrity mean everything to me. I’ll never talk you into doing something that’s not needed, and I don’t cut corners on a job.”**

Bert Faye, Owner and CEO, Primary Mechanical, Inc.

customers ready and waiting. “I was frustrated with the company I was working with at the time. Honesty and integrity mean everything to me. I’ll never talk you into doing something that’s not needed, and I don’t cut corners on a job,” he says. “One week, I printed up some business cards. I handed out a few to consultants and other business associates and then went on vacation for a week. When I returned, I had six months’ worth of business waiting for me.”

Mentor Lonnie Mosley introduced Bert to his first pharmaceutical

customer. “I’ve known Lonnie since 1979. Back in the early days, we used to work together on cleanrooms and labs throughout San Diego County,” Bert says. “When I started my business, he was certifying labs and serving as a cleanroom and lab consultant. He introduced me to Ionis Pharmaceuticals, and I’ve been working with them ever since.”

In addition to Ionis, Primary Mechanical has served other industry giants for more than 20 years, including Beckman Coulter, Inc., Axelgaard Manufacturing Co. and Calbiotech. “I’ve always had good



Primary Mechanical, Inc.'s Archan Phandanouvong applies duct sealer.



relationships with project engineers. They know that I will always execute a project exactly as designed.”

## FAMILY COMPANY

From Primary Mechanical’s early days, Bert’s wife, Lori, has played an integral role in the business. “When Bert started the business, we had a newborn and two young children at home, and I was working full time as a purchasing agent for an aerospace company. I’d spend nights and weekends helping Bert with contracts and bookkeeping,” Lori says.

“Lori was involved from day one,” Bert says. “From working in the aerospace industry, Lori had an understanding of contracts and strict standard operating procedures. She’s helped the company tremendously.”

The couple’s three sons, Rob, Ryan and Anthony, have also had a hand in the business over the years. “The kids grew up around power tools. The work came very naturally to them,” Bert says.

Beginning in their high school years, the couple’s sons worked for the company during their winter, spring and summer breaks. “They learned how to read drawings and made good estimators,” Bert notes. While Rob still works for the company, heading up the construction labor and service department, Ryan and Anthony work in the construction industry. “Our youngest, Anthony, works for a general contractor that specializes in cleanrooms and labs,” Bert says.

“We never pushed our sons into the industry,” Lori says. “We always told them they could do whatever they wanted to do. They all really liked the work though and pursued educational training in the field.”

## GIVING OTHERS A START

In addition to giving his sons a start in the industry, Bert has helped others as well. “I started out in 1975, sweeping floors in a sheet metal shop. I worked my way up over the years and am proud to give others a chance as well,” he says.

After graduating high school, Kurt Miller worked at Primary Mechanical. Today, he owns his own general contracting company, KM Services & Construction, and often works as a subcontractor for Primary Mechanical. “Lori helped him

learn the financial side of the business, and I mentored him in getting his license,” Bert says.

Another high school graduate, Ryan Wolf, began his tenure with the company sweeping the floors of the shop. “Ryan worked for us while he attended University of California, San Diego. He went from sweeping floors to driving trucks to estimating projects. He finally left us after getting accepted to medical school in South Carolina,” Bert notes.

Like Bert and Lori, Primary Mechanical's employees are honest and hardworking. “Our employees are so caring,” Lori says. “I sometimes get calls from the field asking if we can give a customer a special rate. They might say, ‘I’m with a 90-year-old woman with no family. Can we comp her services or give her a discount?’ I love that they have good hearts and are always looking out for our customers. And we also try to be accommodating to our customers. They mean the world to us.”

The company takes care of its employees by providing flexible time off, extra days of vacation, bonuses and even personal loans at times. “We have an open-door policy. Employees can talk to us at any time. Sometimes they need assistance buying a home or a car. If they’re in a bind, we try to help them in any way we can,” Lori says.

With a team of 11 employees, Primary Mechanical is proud to be a local small business. “Because we’re small, we’re very nimble. Customers



Primary Mechanical, Inc. prepares for the start-up of a Carrier® air conditioner unit.



Primary Mechanical, Inc.'s team includes (clockwise, starting from top left): Jonathan Lundgren, Superintendent; Joshua Huffer, Project Manager; Mark Telles, Estimator; Rob Faye, Superintendent/Service Manager; Lynda Brewer, Senior Administrative Assistant; Bert Faye, CEO; and Lori Faye, CFO.

don't have to navigate through several layers of management to get help, and we can be on site within 48 hours,” Bert says.

Lori adds that customers are often surprised to see Bert at job sites every day. “He’s out there every day on important projects. Bert knows the building standards. He can look

at a plan and quickly figure out what’s needed,” she says.

“I like working closely with customers, and I’m proud of the trust we’ve earned over the years. Customers know that when Primary Mechanical is on a job, we’ll execute that job with precision and excellence,” Bert says. 🦉

*Susan Diemont-Conwell of Torma Communications has been helping businesses tell their stories for more than 20 years. She’s had the pleasure of writing for just about every industry—from health care to energy to nonprofit.*