

PMI

ENERGY SOLUTIONS





A Decade of **Hard-Fought Success**





Written by William Young

Electrical services provider PMI Energy Solutions, LLC was started in March 2011 by its current President and Chief Executive Officer George A. Williams, following his nearly thirty-year career in the corporate utility sector.

After leaving college, Williams initially worked as an electrical engineer and later served in many other roles, before completing a stint as Chief Operating Officer of the El Paso Electric Company. In 2011, he bought into Illinois electrical company Gaffney's PMI, which was seeking a utility executive with a wide network of connections to start a utility

business wing. This presented the opportunity to begin PMI Energy Solutions, an endeavor that will soon enter its tenth year of business.

The company installs electrical distribution infrastructure and performs maintenance services, directional boring, street-light installations, technical services, and more. Although the business began in the Midwest and still has much of its business in and around the Illinois area, it recently expanded its services to the East Coast, specifically in Philadelphia and its suburban region. ▶▶



► The company has also introduced services to its roster including installing manholes, underground structures, electrical duct banks, and similar projects. Alongside this set of offerings, the company provides nationwide storm restoration services including helping communities and businesses with hurricane recovery, a side of the business with which Williams and his crews have been busier than normal during the summer of 2020, thanks to an especially active hurricane season. This company has been a big part of recovery work following every major storm.

The company works at being the best at what it does so that its clients can always be satisfied with what they receive. PMI is committed to “performing our work in a safe and high-quality manner.”

Williams defines the company’s internal culture as strongly team and family-oriented as reflected by its motto: ‘One Team/One Purpose,’ meaning that everyone in the company is focused on and committed to the success of the company and not themselves or their own organizations. This approach requires much camaraderie, and management makes a concerted effort to accommodate employee needs and understand their lives so they may be flexible in uncertain times. For example, the ongoing COVID-19 crisis has required employees to work from home more often, and the company has done its best to accommodate this.



Williams emphasizes the company’s four core values: Safety, with safe work practices in every respect; quality, since “the job must be done right the first time,” he says; integrity, to nurture a customer’s trust in the company; and customer-based solutions, where all levels of the company participate in open dialogue with a customer to find out exactly what is desired so that the final product is to their liking. PMI adheres to the values and work ethic that brought it success in the first place. ►►



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► Beyond its work portfolio, the company is immensely proud to support charitable organizations in and around its home state. Some of this assistance goes toward organizations that have helped the company with hiring resources such as ComEd's Construct program that provides training and employment opportunities for minority entrants to the construction industry or the American Association of Blacks in Energy.

PMI also supports many philanthropic organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Quad County and Chicago Urban Leagues, and Tuskegee NEXT which describes its mission as being dedicated to transforming "the lives of at-risk youth through aviation education and career path opportunities, so they can transform their communities." Several of the company's employees even serve on boards for organizations like these. Williams is pleased that PMI has been able to give back to its community for so many years and does not plan to stop.

A big part of PMI's identity is that it is one of the largest African-American-owned businesses in its specific line of work. Although many utility companies dedicate between ten to forty percent of their spend to diverse companies, these companies are not necessarily all owned by members of a minority group. Some may be women-owned or veteran-owned.

Williams reveals that a high amount of minority-owned businesses in this arena either fail or do not enter at all because of the high cost for entry. He estimates that a typical utility crew will cost a quarter of a million dollars to outfit with the correct equipment and tooling before any money is brought in. On top of this, customers expect a company to be established for a few years before they have any confidence in their ability to perform.

The funding necessary for the growth of PMI has been an ongoing challenge, and Williams admits that the company had to go through some unprofitable years in the beginning due to the capital-intensive nature of the industry. Initially, he had to dig into his own nest egg to keep the business afloat, before any bank would partner with him to provide funding to support the growth of the business. After the first few years, he managed to establish both the banking and customer relationships that sustain PMI's growth.

The scouting and securing of skilled employees is another issue, as new people in the construction industry generally want to work for established companies. As a result, companies on the rise experience more turnover at the beginning. However, PMI endured those early years and is now viewed as a more mature company, side-stepping this particular problem more easily.

Finally, customer retention is vital because attracting clients can be initially difficult with a newer company's lack of an industry

track record. Williams remembers the time spent struggling with this as being frustrating since although he had already made his name working for other companies, he found that he had to prove himself all over again to secure ongoing business.

He feels that it can be “tough to get in the door with a customer and easy to get kicked out.” Clients can be very demanding, but for those outfits that are able to stick it out, there is a light at the end of the tunnel as PMI will soon be celebrating its first decade as a business.

The current outlook for the company involves continued growth in the Midwest and on the East Coast with the assistance of its partner. Plans also include an expansion to the West Coast, which Williams foresees as ripe with opportunity for market growth.

In the past ten years, the company has had to overcome many obstacles and, although Williams admits that retaining talented employees and a consistent customer base is still a focus to this day, a sturdy network of relationships has helped these problems be solved time and again. A decade of achieving wins and overcoming setbacks has empowered PMI Energy Solutions to continue its work in the utility industry, and the promise of further expansion bodes well for its bright future. ■



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