

Morrison-Maierle taps new president

By JOHN HARRINGTON - IR Business Editor - 02/12/06

A leadership change comes at a time of remarkable growth for Morrison-Maierle, the Helena-based engineering firm with offices in nine cities.

Effective at the beginning of the year, Bob Morrison, grandson of company founder John Morrison and an engineer who's been with the company since 1991, became president and CEO of the firm. Jim Maierle, who has been with the firm since 1971 and who held those two positions since 1997, will remain as chairman of the board and will focus on financial management and growth.

The transition comes as the company has openings in every office and faces surging demand for its services.

"For the first time in my career we're passing up opportunities for substantial projects because we can't marshal the resources to do the jobs," Maierle said. "It's a different environment when we're turning away work, compared to the '80s when there was very little growth in Montana and we were just fighting for survival."

The state's oldest and largest engineering firm, Morrison-Maierle has grown from 251 employees in 2003 to 330 last year and is advertising for several more. Morrison said most of the growth is in the company's core service areas of engineering, surveying and planning.

"We'll be looking at ways to diversify, but I don't see anything concrete right now," Morrison said. He added that as with many industries, customer service is becoming increasingly important, so the company will dedicate resources to keeping its clients happy.

"A lot of times, the technical side isn't the hardest part of the job," he said. "In many cases, client service can differentiate you from your competition."

In addition to Helena, the firm has offices in five other Montana cities as well as two in Arizona and a Salt Lake office that opened last year. Maierle said expansion into the Pacific Northwest is likely in the next several years.

Morrison-Maierle is involved in several major projects around town, including the Custer Avenue interchange on I-15, the Helena sewer master plan and the structural design of the St. Peter's Hospital expansion.

John Harrington can be reached at 447-4080 or john.harringtonhelenair.com.

