

Entrepreneur manages both construction and maintenance

By Whitney Blake
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In 1984, Ablade Odoi-Atsem immigrated to the United States from Ghana. Fourteen years later he founded Odoi Associates Inc., which started as a one-man construction management firm and grew to more than \$8 million in sales in 2006. Based in Greenbelt, it earned a spot on Entrepreneur magazine's "Hot 500" list of the fastest-growing new businesses in 2007.

Though initially offering only construction management services to his clients, Odoi-Atsem realized there was a market for a comprehensive services company. Such a company would not just handle the construction process, but also provide oversight, maintenance and energy management of the facilities once the client's operation was up and running.

"It was just a natural progression," Odoi-Atsem told *The Examiner*. Companies existed that offered construction, facilities and energy management services separately, but not many delivered all three in one package.

You can use the same set of skills for all of these services; the work is not "mutually exclusive," Odoi-Atsem said. The approach lends itself to careful planning from the beginning, since his company will ultimately bear responsibility for the condition of the building for the foreseeable future. There is more of an incentive from the beginning to emphasize superior construction, environmental stewardship and cost-effectiveness.

Now, with an employee base of



Ablade Odoi-Atsem and his wife, Pamela, head Odoi Associates Inc., a construction management firm in Greenbelt. - Courtesy Photo

50, plus consultants, Odoi Associates has secured several major contracts. About 80 percent of the firm's work is with the federal government, with clients such as the Departments of Defense, Labor, Education and Homeland Security, as well as several properties of the General Services Administration and the Department of the Navy.

Odoi-Atsem credits his skilled employees for the firm's success thus far, including one in particular, his wife of 19 years. Pamela, who joined the company in 2004, oversees the business operations as senior vice president. The husband-and-wife duo has complementary professional styles, Communications Manager Darendra Downing said.

For the future, Odoi-Atsem would like to expand his client base, which consists of about 15 major clients in the metro area, into the private sector and across the nation. He's already started projects in New Jersey, Florida and Georgia. He also envisions a day when the private company will go public.

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