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BIGGER SANDBOX

THORNHAUS CONSTRUCTION LAYS GROUNDWORK
FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

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On the **JOB** SUMMER 2026 CONTENTS



4

BIGGER SANDBOX

Thornhaus Construction lays groundwork for a bright future

8

ROCK-SOLID FOUNDATION

Contractor transforms rugged terrain with Cat® machines

11

6 NEW CAT® ATTACHMENTS

For Next Generation SSL, CTL, mini hex and backhoe loaders

14

THE RIGHT FIT

Cat® compact equipment anchors versatile operation

18

PREDICTIVE DIAGNOSTIC DATA

Combat downtime by catching problems early



8

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11



THORNHAUS CONSTRUCTION LAYS GROUNDWORK FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

Nestled between the foothills of the Catskills Mountains to the west, and the Hudson River to the east, the town of Saugerties, New York is blessed with natural beauty in a small-town setting.

Once featured in *Budget Travel* magazine as one of the 10 coolest small towns in America, the Hudson Valley community of 19,000-plus has quietly become a comfortable landing spot for those priced out of trendier markets but who still seek vibrant culture, nature, and that elusive sense of upstate New York authenticity.

Saugerties, Dutch for “sawmill,” has a revitalized village center known for its eclectic antique stores, vintage shops, and an array of restaurants.

Working in this setting, two young Saugerties natives who once played together with sandbox toys at the tender age of five are now reshaping the landscape with excavators, dozers and an expanding vision for the future.

For childhood friends Casey Backhaus and Mitch Thornton, the growth of ThornHaus Construction

has been fast, but hardly accidental. What started as landscaping and small excavating work has evolved into a diversified construction business handling everything from site preparation and septic systems to framing houses and building a wide range of related structures throughout Ulster County.

Although the company officially launched in 2021, its roots go much deeper. Backhaus started working in lawn care and landscaping before expanding into hardscaping and skid steer work. His first major machine purchase nine years ago was a Cat® 259 Compact Track Loader.

“I started doing lawns and landscaping when I was 12,” Backhaus says. “Pretty much any type of work you can do with a skid steer, I did it.”

Thornton followed a similar path into construction and excavating work, eventually purchasing a used 307 Mini Excavator from Cat dealer H.O. Penn in 2017. “I kind of fell in love with that machine,” Thornton says. “Even though it was a used machine with a lot of hours, it still ran perfectly fine after more than 20 years.”

As the pair began collaborating on larger projects, they realized they shared similar ambitions and work ethics.

“We’ve known each other since we were very young,” Thornton says. “You can see how it evolved into playing together in a much larger sandbox.”

Rebranding leads to accelerated growth

Originally operating as D&M LLC, the company underwent a significant rebranding effort three years ago, adopting the ThornHaus Construction name to better reflect the wider scope of projects they were pursuing. (D&M LLC is still the name of the parent company.)

“People were less inclined to hire a company called Drainage & More,” Backhaus says. “It sounded kind of cheap, and it didn’t reflect the type of projects we were seeking.”

The change coincided with a major shift in the company’s workload. Instead of focusing primarily on landscaping and drainage projects, ThornHaus began tackling larger residential site development and construction projects.

“We realized early on that it was hard to convince established builders, being as young as we are, that we were capable of handling these larger jobs,” Backhaus explains. “So why not take on the entire job if it’s possible?”

Today, the company performs a wide range of work including excavation, complete site preparation, concrete, masonry, and framing. “We pretty much do the whole shebang,” Backhaus says.

Challenging conditions

A recent project highlights the type of challenges ThornHaus routinely faces while working in the rocky soil in the mid-Hudson Valley region.

The company handled site preparation for a two-lot subdivision, including clearing, driveways and septic system installation. But like many jobs in

“The Cat 308 has probably been the most profitable piece of equipment that we own, it has the ability to do small jobs, big jobs and everything in between.”



— CASEY BACKHAUS, CO-OWNER
THORNHAUS CONSTRUCTION

the area, the site had extensive rock formations close to the surface.

“In our area specifically, there’s usually very little depth to rock,” Thornton says. “Pretty much all the remaining lots only have rock near the surface.”

Rather than hauling material offsite, the crew found ways to turn the challenging conditions into an advantage. By excavating shale from a hillside, the ThornHaus team was able to repurpose the material into driveway base.

The company also uses specialized attachments including hammers, rippers and buckets to support the crushing and screening operation.

Cat equipment at the core

As ThornHaus has grown, Cat equipment has become central to its operation. Aside from one non-Cat excavator, the company’s fleet is comprised entirely of 10 Cat machines. “We’re almost all Cat,” Thornton says.

Among the company’s most valuable machines is its Cat 308 Mini Excavator. “The Cat 308 has probably been the most profitable piece of equipment that we own,” Backhaus says. “It has the ability to do small jobs, big jobs and everything in between.”

Thornton likes the 308’s heated air-ride seat, stating: “It makes a world of difference for us.”

(Continued on page 6)



The machine's transportability is another major advantage. "It's a regular-size excavator when you need one," he says. "And its ability to be towed on a trailer behind a 500-series dump truck is huge."

The company also relies on a Cat D1 dozer for material movement and grading work. "When you do need a dozer, there's nothing you could use that's quicker," Thornton says.

VisionLink™: An extra set of eyes

Technology features on newer Cat machines are helping improve efficiencies as well. ThornHaus uses VisionLink to monitor equipment usage, fuel burn and scheduled maintenance needs.

"VisionLink has been a helpful feature," Backhaus says. "It lets me see what's going to need fuel and whether I should bring fuel with me."

The system also helps the company track machine hours and maintenance intervals, while monitoring equipment activity on jobsites they share with other contractors. "You don't want people hopping in your equipment and using it without permission," he says.

Inside the cab, comfort matters too—especially during long workdays in rough terrain. "The Cat 289D3 has got some of the best air conditioning I've ever experienced in a piece of equipment," Thornton says. "You can hang meat in that thing."

Dealer support matters

Thornton appreciates the far-reaching perspective that H.O. Penn has when it comes to its relationships with customers. "Caterpillar treats their equipment as if it's a long-term investment for the contractor, whereas with other brands, it's a short-term sale," Thornton says.

Just as important as the machines themselves has been the support provided by H.O. Penn and equipment sales representative Scott Cortright.



Thornton and Backhaus emphasize the importance of having responsive dealer support and a knowledgeable sales representative who understands their business. "Scott's half the reason we bought the 305," Thornton says.

The relationship was strengthened after H.O. Penn quickly resolved issues with one of the company's machines. "We said, 'You know what? I'd rather buy from somebody that we know is committed to standing behind the product for the long haul,'" Thornton says.

Cortright believes ThornHaus has made smart decisions by properly sizing equipment and investing in newer machines that support the company's long-term growth.

"I've always been blown away by these guys that, while they are younger, they've always spec'd all their equipment properly for the size of the sites they work on," he says. "And purchasing new equipment with long warranties as part of their fixed upfront costs—that's very important."

Cortright also notes that used equipment can sometimes become a financial trap for contractors trying to save money

upfront. "If you put a lot of hours on a machine and can't afford to buy a new one, then you're doing something wrong," he says.

Cat Financial has played an important role in equipment purchasing decisions.

"Cat Financial is one of the primary drivers for using Cat equipment," Thornton says. The availability of 0% financing on certain purchases helped the young company preserve cash flow, while continuing to expand its fleet.

"The entirety of the lending experience is completely seamless," Thornton adds.

When problems arise, Cortright remains a trusted point of contact. "Anytime we've had any issues, we just get in contact with Scott and the problem is solved," Backhaus says. "If there's an issue with a machine, it's always resolved quickly."

Staying diversified

Although ThornHaus now performs larger residential site work and full-house projects, the company continues to maintain a diversified workload — something Cortright believes is essential for long-term success.

"They stay diversified with what they do," Cortright says. "That's key in this area. In the 22 years I've been here, you're not going to have residential development booming every year. So you need to make sure that you're not focusing on just that segment. You don't want to lose the base work that got you here, because it's very easy for others to move in and try to take over that type of work."

That flexibility has helped the company remain busy even when local excavating needs slowed. "We were the only ones that had pretty steady work all the way through," Thornton says of a recent downturn that impacted some competitors.

The company currently operates with a small, tight-knit crew, focusing heavily on developing team members who can handle multiple aspects of residential construction projects.

"We found that you're better off developing one cohesive team that's

// Caterpillar treats their equipment as if it's a long-term investment for the contractor, whereas with other brands, it's a short-term sale."

together all the time than relying on seasonal help," Backhaus says.

As ThornHaus continues growing, the partners remain focused on sustainability rather than rapid expansion for its own sake. Their philosophy centers on investing in quality equipment, pricing jobs correctly and building a reputation for dependable work.

"Every dollar that keeps us going is our true cost of overhead," Thornton says. "And our Cat machines are a big part of what keeps us going."

For two contractors who started by playing in a sandbox decades ago,

that disciplined approach—combined with Cat equipment and strong dealer support—is helping lay the groundwork for a brighter future. **OTJ**



— MITCH THORNTON, CO-OWNER
THORNHAUS CONSTRUCTION

THORNHAUS CONSTRUCTION

Location: Saugerties, N.Y.

Employees: 4

Dealer: H.O. Penn

Cat® equipment: Mini Excavators: 303, 303.5, 305, 305.5, 308; Compact Track Loaders; 259B3, 289D3, 299D2; 287B Multi Terrain Loader; D1 Dozer





ROCK-SOLID FOUNDATION

CONTRACTOR TRANSFORMS RUGGED TERRAIN WITH CAT® MACHINES

In Northern Arizona, construction often begins with rock. Not soft soil. Not easy digging. Rock.

For L.P.'s Excavating, that reality has shaped the company's approach to everything from equipment selection and GPS grading technology to preventive maintenance and dealer support.

Today, the Williams, Arizona-based contractor handles a wide range of site-development work across the greater Flagstaff area, including subdivision infrastructure, underground utilities, concrete, paving and commercial pad preparation.

"We do full commercial pad preps, underground work for commercial buildings and subdivision infrastructure. Basically, we do subdivisions from start to finish," says Jamie Mace, COO of L.P.'s Excavating, who oversees field operations. "There's a lot of student housing being built in Flagstaff at the moment, and we go in and do all the site prep work. Everything is handled in-house, on a turnkey basis."

That level of capability has helped fuel steady growth for the family-owned company, which traces its roots back to 1978, when founders Larry and Lori Pittenger relocated from Ohio to Arizona and purchased their first backhoe.

After weathering economic downturns and relocating again in the late 1990s to Williams, the company steadily expanded and became one of Northern Arizona's best-known heavy civil contractors. Today, L.P.'s Excavating employs between 80 and 130 people depending on seasonal demand, and operates within roughly a 100-mile radius of Williams and Flagstaff. The company is now actively run by the Pittengers' son-in-law (Mace), and son (Chad).

"We've added concrete crews, paving crews, dirt crews, and underground crews," Mace said. "And our people are versatile—everyone can do everything."

The technical edge

L.P.'s Excavating began utilizing GPS machine control technology roughly 15 years ago during construction of a Love's Travel Stop in Williams. At the time, GPS grading was still relatively uncommon in northern Arizona.

"Initially, we were probably the only ones in northern Arizona using it," Mace said. "But I think everybody else picked up on it because everybody has it now."

Today, approximately 40% to 50% of the company's fleet is GPS-capable, with most of its newer Cat® machines operating with integrated 3D systems. The technology

has significantly improved how projects are executed.

“Back in the day, you’d have guys with lasers running around shooting elevations,” Mace said. “Now you have the site plan on a screen in front of you with live grades anywhere you go.”

The benefits extend beyond productivity alone. GPS machine control has helped reduce survey costs, minimize overdigging and eliminate rework.

“We’ll go into a project and never even have a survey,” Mace said. “We build the whole site without planting a stake. It’s been a huge benefit for us to have that additional capability.”

That precision becomes especially important on athletic-field projects, where grades may need to be within fractions of an inch.

“We’ve done multiple baseball fields, softball fields, football fields and soccer fields with GPS grading,” Mace said. “The precision accuracy has just been unbelievable.”

Support from Empire Southwest and SITECH has played a major role in helping L.P.’s Excavating integrate GPS technology into its fleet.

“When we order them, our SITECH account manager (Kyle Brost) helps us set it up and have everything ready when we take delivery of the new machine,” Mace said.

Managing a large fleet

L.P.’s Excavating operates a large equipment fleet that includes 48 Cat machines.

The fleet includes everything from Cat mini excavators and compact track loaders to larger excavators, wheel loaders, rollers, dozers and asphalt paving equipment. Recent machine additions include a new Cat paver and Cat CB10 roller.

Mace says the company relies heavily on compact and mid-sized machines for utility work, grading and work in confined areas such as apartment complexes, schools and urban projects.

“Some of our projects involve tight spaces,” Mace said. “You need smaller equipment to work efficiently in those tight spaces.”

The company also makes extensive use of technology-enabled attachments, including grader blades and hammers. “We used the BB124 Box Blade attachment with the laser system on one of our Cat skid steers when we did a football field, and it’s unreal how accurate it was,” Mace said.

In rocky northern Arizona terrain, specialized equipment is often essential. L.P. crews utilize a large rock trencher capable of cutting trenches up to 18 feet deep through solid rock.

“Everything’s rock,” Mace said. “That’s been a big addition for us.”

Staying connected

Technology also plays an important role in fleet management and jobsite visibility. The company utilizes Cat VisionLink™ across much of its fleet to monitor machine hours, maintenance intervals, utilization, and to keep tabs on machine locations.

“It comes in handy for estimating, job costing and tracking hours on specific equipment,” Mace said.

Chad Pittenger, CEO of L.P.’s Excavating, says the system provides real-time alerts that help both operators and mechanics stay ahead of potential maintenance and repair issues.

“Anytime there’s a code or anything, I receive an email, and our mechanics get notifications,” Mace said. “It’s very helpful.”

The telematics platform even helps manage rental equipment utilization. That’s significant for a company that may be renting up to 15 pieces of equipment during peak season.

“We can see when a piece of equipment is starting to slow down in usage,”

(Continued on page 10)



Pittenger says. “With VisionLink, you can see the daily run times for production. If a machine is not working at all, that’s a clear indication it needs to be returned to the dealership. So it’s just another eye in the sky for us.”

The company also utilizes certain Cat Detect features and machine controls to help improve safety and operational efficiencies on jobsites.

“If we’re working next to the freeway, we’ll set our limits so the excavators don’t swing out too far,” Mace says.

A solid partnership

As the company has grown, so has its relationship with Empire.

L.P.’s Excavating performs much of its own maintenance using three full-time mechanics, but the contractor still relies heavily on Empire for technical support, performing field service and preventive maintenance at longer intervals.

“We can only go so far on reading what’s going on with the machines,”

Mace says. “The Empire service techs are awesome—they come out anytime we need them.”

Empire supports the contractor through Customer Value Agreements and performing PM services at the scheduled intervals.

“What we do is a CVA basic at 250 and 500 hours,” Pittenger says. “Then Empire comes out and handles the service for the longer intervals.”

Mace says responsiveness from his Cat dealer has been especially critical during the busy construction season.

“I can call Allan (Seabolt) right now and say I want a 352 Excavator tomorrow, and he’ll have it there,” Mace said. “Empire provides so much support for us.”

He also credits the dealership for understanding the realities of northern Arizona construction, where weather interruptions can quickly affect schedules and equipment needs.

“They work with us on our rentals to limit our downtime, which really helps.”

Despite operating a mixed fleet, Mace says Cat equipment remains the company’s preferred choice for production machines. Durability and long-term trade-in value continue to drive those decisions.

For a contractor working in some of Arizona’s toughest conditions, that reliability matters. Because for L.P.’s Excavating, almost every project starts the same way: Breaking through rock.

“Anything that we’re building our fleet with now, if Empire has it, we’re definitely filling our fleet with that equipment,” Mace says.

“And Empire has done so much for us by understanding the changing conditions in northern Arizona where it snows and rains, and by providing machines and product support in a timely manner,” he continues. “None of our projects would be possible without the way they’ve backed us.” **OTJ**

L.P.’S EXCAVATING

Location: Williams, Arizona.

Employees: 80-130

Dealer: Empire Southwest

Cat® equipment: 248 Skid Steer Loader, 259B3 XPS Compact Track Loader; Mini Excavators: 305.5 (2), 308, 308E2; Backhoe Loaders: 414E, 420E, 420F2 (4), 430E (2); Hydraulic Excavators: 315DL, 316EL, 320 (2), 325, 330BL, 330CL, 330FL, 335; Wheel Loaders: 938H (2), 950GC (2), 966K; Dozers: D6, D7H; Motor Graders: 140H, 140M2; Hammers: H90C, H115ES (2); Rollers: CB10, CB224E, PS150C; Compactors: CB34B, CP56B, CG-224D, CP-323C, CS-563D; AP1055 Asphalt Paver





6 NEW CAT® ATTACHMENTS

FOR NEXT GENERATION SSL, CTL, MINI HEX AND BACKHOE LOADERS

Built rugged to deliver reliable performance, six new Cat® attachments are purpose-designed to optimize the performance advantages of Next Generation machines when completing land reclamation, grading, construction, demolition, agriculture, snow removal, trenching and other applications.

The new attachments increase application flexibility of Next Generation Skid Steer Loaders (SSL) and Compact Track Loaders (CTL), mini hydraulic excavators and certain backhoe loader models.

Expanding loader flexibility

Next Generation Cat CTL and SSL models ushered in a new era of machine performance and capabilities.

New Heavy Duty Multipurpose (HD MP) buckets provide increased capacity and durability, matching the higher power and performance of Next Generation loaders. For larger CTLs equipped with rear auxiliary hydraulics, a retrieval winch optimized for land management applications and a ripper/scarifier tool that

breaks up and conditions the ground in grading and landscaping applications.

New Cat HD MP buckets help to optimize SSL and CTL versatility when digging, dozing, clamping, scraping, back dragging, grading and leveling. Designed specifically for Next Gen Cat 250 to 285 models, eight bucket options have widths ranging from 74 to 92 in and capacities of 0.7 to 0.88 yd³. These new HD MP buckets deliver up to 21% higher capacity versus similar standard MP buckets.

With their serrated clam and dozer edges, these new buckets provide better material clamping retention. Reinforced side plates enhance bucket longevity and performance in demanding digging conditions, and bolt-on replaceable cutting edges provide added edge protection, enhance structural strength and prolong bucket life. Serrated steps help to ensure the operator's safety when entering/exiting the cab.

(Continued on page 12)



Ideal for land management

Designed for larger Cat 270 to 285 XE models equipped with rear auxiliary hydraulics, the new Cat Retrieval Winch enables operators to self-retrieve or recover a stuck machine due to challenging terrain or adverse underfoot conditions. Featuring an industrial planetary gear and hydraulic winch motor, this new winch provides a rated line pull of 18,000 lbf. The design minimally impedes the rear camera view to provide the operators with excellent visibility to machine clearances and recovery operations.

With its quick-disconnect hose design, the retrieval winch is integrated into the advance joystick controls for dedicated hydraulic power-in/power-out operation. Its recessed roller fairlead design provides superior protection from damage, while permanently lubricated bronze bushings provide long roller life and smooth winch rope retrieval. Featuring a swing-away winch frame

design, service techs have full-service access to the engine bay with simple removal of the retention-pin.

Efficient ripping/scarifying

Designed for use with Cat CTLs having rear auxiliary hydraulics, the new Ripper/Scarifier breaks up, loosens or conditions the surface layer of compacted soil. This work tool is ideal for scarifying tree roots, fields and small to medium rocks. When paired with the Cat Smart Dozer Blade or Cat Smart Grader Blade, it enhances grading accuracy in construction applications. Integrated with advanced joystick controls, it features dedicated operational control.

Proven tough, the removeable and replaceable shanks and teeth are the same design as those used on Cat motor graders, and its multi-shank design gives the operator the ability to select the number of shanks necessary for the application. The ripper/scarifier's unique

parallelogram linkage design enables shanks and teeth to rotate inward when raised to maximize machine departure angle. When lowered, it enables full-service access to the engine bay for daily maintenance.

High-performance mulching

New Cat Bite-Limiter Mulchers for 6- to 10-ton Cat mini excavators deliver high-performance cutting and mulching of vegetation, saplings and undergrowth from overgrown agricultural and forested terrain. With ribs on the rotor limiting material penetration of the chisel teeth to prevent stalling, the new mulcher quickly reduces trees and shrubs into mulched material, making it ideal for environmental maintenance and land reclamation. Smaller bits provide a finer finish product for fast decomposition.

An integrated thumb bracket enables the operator to pull or push material into position for mulching or to move it away

from the mulching area. With a gauge included to ensure correct sharpening, the chisel teeth deliver a consistent cut and finished product. The design features a variable displacement piston motor that provides high torque at low speeds to power through tough material with reduced risk of stalling and automatically switches displacement to high speed once the material is cleared.

Precise grading

Designed for use with 5- to 10-ton Cat mini excavators, the new tilt rotate system (TRS) Cat Grading Beams delivers precise grading and leveling capabilities, especially for 2D and 3D applications when used with TRS6 and TRS8 attachments. Available 59.5 and 78.7 in widths enable these grading beams to provide efficient, high-performance grading with 360° of rotation and up to 40° angling capability. TRS vibration combines with machine down pressure to effectively compact material for a quality surface finish.

Enabling clean leveling and grading at the jobsite, fixed in-line grading beams

easily collect, transport and spread materials, and spill guards positioned on top of the in-line wings provide added control of material movement. Depth of the heavy-duty roller and scraper assembly is variable via side bearings for added versatility. The heavy-duty scraper cleans the roller drum in both forward and reverse direction to prevent silt, clay, mud and other materials from sticking to the roller bar. When performing material compaction, the roller can be used in both forward and reverse directions.

Ditch cleaning buckets

New pin-on Cat Tilting Ditch Cleaning Buckets feature tilting angle flexibility for digging trenches, slopes and other applications where up to 45° digging angles are required. With widths and capacities ranging from 48 to 60 in, and 12.9 to 16.4 ft³ respectively, bucket designs are available for Next Gen 307.5, 308, 309 and 310 mini excavators as well as center-pivot and side shift backhoe loaders. A two-cylinder bucket design creates equal left/right tilt speed and equal hold

force. Two horizontally positioned tilt cylinders are connected to one auxiliary for precise, synchronized movement of both cylinders.

Their modular bracket design limits loss of breakout and digging forces, and the bracket connection features low offset for maximum digging efficiency. Limiting wear and reducing maintenance, the bucket has a hardened, head center bolt and hardened bushings design. An integrated, tilting head stops protect cylinders from overload, while dirt deflector spill guards protect the cylinder from potential damage. Optimal for grading and digging work, the curved, side plate design with curved cutting edges provides easier material penetration and better loading and unloading. Standard waterholes provide draining capability and anti-vacuum when digging sludge.

More information about the various uses and performance of these and other Cat attachments can be obtained by contacting our dealership. OTJ





THE **RIGHT FIT**

CAT® COMPACT EQUIPMENT ANCHORS VERSATILE OPERATION

Founded on hard work, relationships and a willingness to tackle just about any job, Birmingham, Alabama-based MTT Group built its reputation one project at a time.

From retaining walls and drainage systems to landscape design, remodeling and equipment services, the company has grown steadily over four decades—supported along the way by a growing fleet of Cat® machines and a strong relationship with Cat dealer Thompson Tractor.

For founder Thomas “Tommy” Trimm, success has never been about becoming the biggest contractor in the Birmingham area. Rather, his success is rooted in reliability, responsiveness and long-term customer relationships.

“When I look back on all the relationships we’ve established and the experience acquired along the way, it provides a long-term perspective and the ability to overcome obstacles,” Trimm says. “You don’t ever want to think of yourself as a big deal. We want to stay modest and keep things in perspective and remain humble.”

Today, MTT Group employs about 50 people across multiple business divisions, including Trimm Design Build, a remodeling business, blueprint printing services, and a newly launched equipment rental and operator-services division. The core landscape and hardscape business alone employs approximately 30 people and handles projects across the southeastern U.S.

The company’s work ranges from residential landscape construction to large commercial retaining wall installations for major clients, including multifamily housing developers and Tacala Companies, one of the nation’s largest Taco Bell franchisees. Wherever Tacala builds throughout the Southeast, MTT Group is often there constructing retaining walls alongside local site contractors.

Expanding scope

Versatility has become a defining company trait. Trimm says customer demand has pushed the business to expand beyond traditional landscaping into a broader design-build operation.

"You can't just do landscaping anymore," he says. "Customers want you to do the whole project."

That means handling drainage, irrigation, grading, lighting, and hardscape construction—often all within the same project. Trimm considers drainage expertise especially important. "You need to control the water to make a site look good and function properly," he says.

To support that growing scope of work, MTT Group has steadily expanded its equipment fleet over the past decade. The company began purchasing Cat compact equipment 13 years ago after a rental representative at Thompson Tractor introduced Trimm to financing options through Cat Financial.

At the time, Trimm considered competing brands, but the down payments required by other manufacturers made purchasing difficult. "We bought our first two Cat machines in 2013," he recalls.

// We bought our first two Cat machines in 2013. We know the value of Cat machines and how important they are to keep us running. They hold their value for a long time."



—THOMAS "TOMMY" TRIMM, FOUNDER
MTT GROUP

Growing fleet

Today, his Cat fleet includes 11 Cat machines among 17 total pieces of equipment. Over the years, the company has owned a range of compact track loaders, skid steers and mini excavators, including Cat 255 Compact Track Loaders, 259s, 279s, and 306 and 301.7 Mini Excavators.

Trimm says one of the biggest advantages of Cat equipment is durability and long-term value retention. "I really like that about Cat machines," he says. "They hold their value for a long time."

Having operated other brands over the years, Trimm believes Cat machines have proven more durable for his type of work. "Other brands don't stand up the way our Cat equipment does," he says.

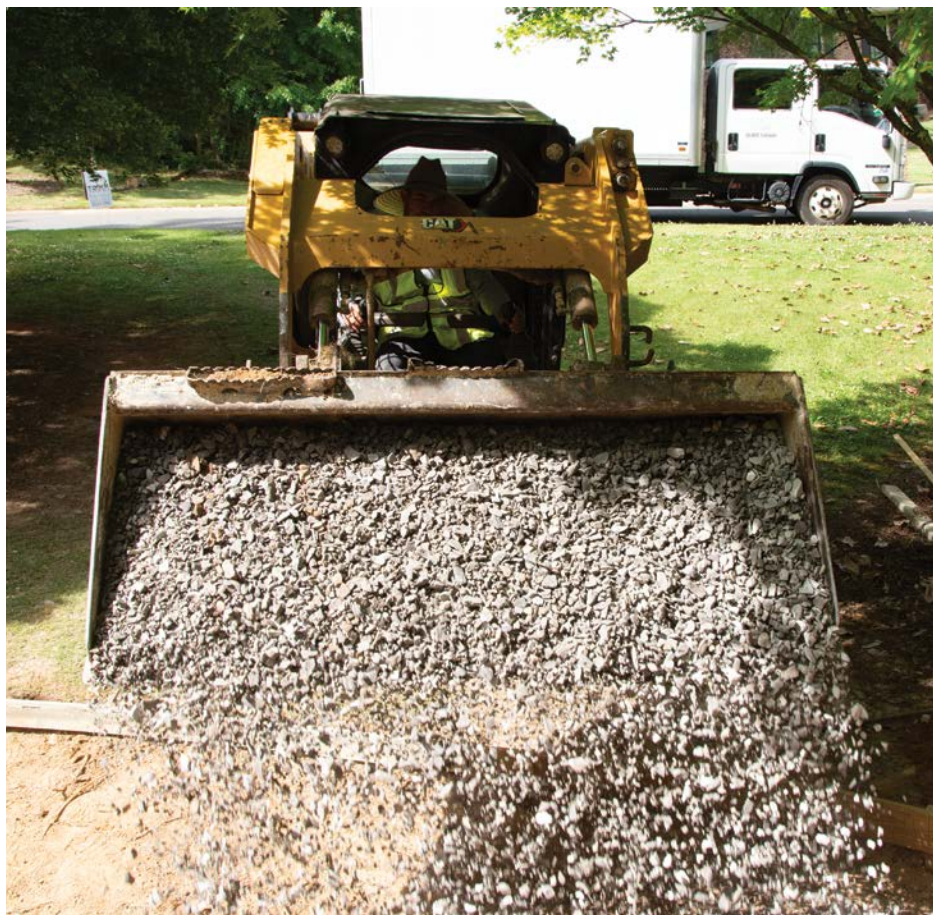
That reliability matters when equipment downtime can quickly disrupt project schedules and negatively impact profitability. MTT Group performs much of its own maintenance and closely monitors service intervals using VisionLink™ telematics.

"We know the value of Cat Machines and how important they are to keep us running," Trimm says. "When a machine goes down, it costs us money with delays."

Connected fleet

VisionLink enables the company to track machine locations, operating hours and maintenance needs across multiple projects. "When you have this many pieces, you'll actually forget where one is sometimes," Trimm says with a laugh.

(Continued on page 16)



MTT GROUP

Location: Trussville, Alabama.

Employees: 50

Dealer: Thompson Tractor

Cat® equipment: Mini Excavators: 301.7, 303.5E CR, 304E2 (2), 305.5E2, 306; Compact Track Loaders: 255 (2), 259B3, 259D (2), 259D3 (3), 279D3; 255TH Telehandler



“So we’ll look it up and say, ‘Oh yeah, that machine’s over there.’”

The telematics system also supports preventive maintenance planning. Trimm says Thompson Tractor proactively notifies the company when service intervals are approaching and ships filters and maintenance parts directly to the office. “That’s kind of a neat thing,” he says.

Among the fleet’s newest additions is the Cat 255 Compact Track Loader, which Trimm praised for combining high lift capacity with compact dimensions. “What I like about the 255 is it doesn’t take up any more space than a 259,” he says. “But they also have a lot more lift capacity.”

The machine’s compact size is particularly important for residential work where access is limited. “I can load a tri-axle dump truck with a 255, which I could not do with a 259,” Trimm explains. “But I don’t want a giant machine because we work in a lot of residential areas where you have very tight access.”

Compact precision

Another machine that has impressed both Trimm and his operators is the Cat 301.7 mini excavator. Initially skeptical about smaller excavators, Trimm changed his opinion after renting one for a project with extremely tight access.

“We used to think they were a joke because they were so little,” he admits. “But now everybody wants to use it.”

The machine has become especially valuable for drainage work and projects requiring precision excavation around sidewalks, landscaping and confined spaces. “We can keep jobsites nice and neat and clean,” Trimm says. “The cleanup is far less than what it might have been if we used a larger machine.”

Because the machine is lightweight, crews can often protect lawns and finished surfaces simply by laying down plywood before traveling across sensitive areas. “We don’t do any damage to lawns,” he says.

Attachments also play a major role in maximizing machine versatility. MTT

Group regularly uses augers, hydraulic hammers and Harley Rakes for soil preparation and grading. Trimm says he often purchases new attachments together with new machines to expand jobsite flexibility.

“We try to buy attachments that are interchangeable,” he says.

The company’s purchasing strategy reflects Trimm’s long-term mindset toward fleet management. Rather than operating machines until failure, the company continuously cycles equipment through planned purchases financed through Cat Financial.

“As soon as one is paid off, I’ll usually buy another machine,” he says.

He credits Cat Financial with making that process fast and straightforward. “It’s so easy that I’ve literally purchased a \$125,000 package and e-signed the documents while stopped at a red light,” he says.

Trimm says the consistency of the financing relationship and automatic

payment structure has simplified fleet expansion while helping the company maintain a strong credit standing.

Lasting relationships

Equally important has been the support he receives from Thompson Tractor sales representative Eric Hutcheson and the broader dealership team. Trimm says the dealership is always responsive whenever questions arise regarding parts, service or machine recommendations.

Thompson Tractor personnel also assist with machine setup, operator orientation and equipment demonstrations before purchases are finalized. “They always let us demo a piece before we buy it,” Trimm says. “We’ve always been happy with the quality of Cat machines.”

That relationship-based approach mirrors the philosophy Trimm applies within his own business. He believes long-term success often grows from small opportunities and consistent

customer service rather than chasing only large contracts.

One example still stands out. Years ago, Trimm agreed to build a small retaining wall that other contractors had ignored because the project wasn’t considered big enough. “No one wanted to touch it,” he recalls.

The customer owned a large horse ranch, leading to years of additional work and introductions to other influential clients. Trimm estimates that single small project ultimately generated millions of dollars in business opportunities.

“I’m not going to turn down a small project,” he says. “You never know what that first small job might lead to.”

That same philosophy extends to mentoring younger contractors and building industry relationships. Trimm remembers looking up to established business owners early in his career and

appreciates those who were willing to share advice.

“If you come up and talk to them, most people who are successful will help you,” he says. “They want to pass that along.”

Looking ahead, MTT Group plans to continue expanding its equipment capabilities with larger compact machines, telehandlers and additional mini excavators. The company is also growing its equipment-services division, which provides machines with operators for specialty excavation and short-duration projects.

But despite the company’s growth, Trimm remains focused on maintaining the same practical, hands-on approach that helped build the business from the very beginning.

“You want customers to feel like they’re working with somebody approachable,” he says. “You’ve got to be there throughout the entire project.” **OTJ**





PREDICTIVE DIAGNOSTIC DATA

COMBAT DOWNTIME BY CATCHING PROBLEMS EARLY

The importance of planned maintenance cannot be overstated. Inspections, fluid analysis, oil and filter changes, and other preventive steps help you keep equipment running efficiently and profitably. But don't overlook the key role data plays, too—both catching problems early and predicting issues before they happen. With digital diagnostics and service recommendations in your toolbox, you can prioritize maintenance tasks and boost your machine's uptime.

Right-On-Time Maintenance

If you use equipment management software like VisionLink™ or access the resources available on the Cat® Central app, then you already have access to timely, personalized data about your equipment. Now there's a new feature—the option to turn on service recommendations—that delivers actionable information right to your mobile device.

These predictive alerts that warn you of issues such as a filter being clogged or low coolant, enable you to act within minutes of learning about them. That's important because predictive maintenance is more efficient. When you avoid acting too soon, too late, too often or not at all, you can save time and money.

Solve Problems, Save Time

Even better, service recommendations do more than just warn you about potential issues. They also include tailored recommendations that fit your equipment's specific needs and link you to resources to solve small problems before they become major.

For example, receiving a predictive notification that your backhoe loader is due for Level 2 PM service in two weeks. Right from the message, you can either click to schedule that service with us—or you can go straight to a shopping cart on **Parts.Cat.Com** or **Cat Central** pre-populated with everything you need to do the work yourself. It's fast, convenient and personalized for you.

Easy-To-Understand, Real-Time Diagnostics

How the process works is simple.

Turn on the option to receive service recommendations in VisionLink™ or Cat Central. Behind the scenes, technology is constantly gathering relevant data: telematics, fluid analysis, inspections, engineering recommendations, dealer service records and more. Predictive analytics and machine learning tools evaluate that data in real time to predict critical service events for your equipment.

When there's a need for you to take action, a notification pops up on your mobile device. As your dealer, we're notified, too, so we're ready to help with parts or repairs if necessary. Worried about receiving too many alerts? You can decide how you receive notifications—on your mobile device and elsewhere—by adjusting your settings in VisionLink or Cat Central anytime.

Start defeating downtime with real-time diagnostic data. Contact our dealership and let us show you how to turn on service recommendations for all of your Cat equipment. [OTJ](#)



NEW 255 & 265 Compact Track Loaders

MORE POWER. MORE PERFORMANCE. MORE COMFORT.

While the Cat® D3 series compact track loader helped set performance and technology standards, the new next generation Cat 255 and 265 Compact Track Loaders build on the D3 series legacy.

Representing a ground-up redesign of the D3 series, the new Cat 255 replaces the 259D3, while the Cat 265 replaces both the 279D3 and 289D3 models. These next generation models capitalize on the D3 series compact track loader with enhanced operator comfort and new features that improve engine, lift, and tilt performance.

Redesign Highlights

Both the 255 and 265 loaders feature improved engines. The 255 loader is powered by Cat C2.8T and the 265 loader is powered by Cat C2.8TA, resulting in increased RPM ranges and torque.

When it comes to lift height and tilt performance, the 255 and 265 loaders improve on the previous Cat D3 series. With its height to the B-pin increase, the 265 model has a maximum lift height of 11 feet, setting a new standard for its class.

The Cat 255 and 265 each have larger cab design compared to the Cat D3 series, giving you more foot space, hip room, and a taller ceiling. When selecting a Cat 255 or

265, you also have the option to pick a comfortable and temperature-controlled seat. An optional one-piece, sealed, and pressurized cab provides a clean and quiet workspace with excellent air distribution through optimally placed vents throughout the cab.

An eight-inch Advanced Touchscreen Monitor provides cutting-edge functionality and control that includes an integrated radio, Bluetooth® connectivity, and multi-camera (side-view) option, and supports 32 languages.

Both the 255 and 265 have the ability to operate all Cat Smart Attachments, with the option to integrate Cat Product Link™ Elite for improved fleet management.

If you're interested in adding the new Cat 255 or 265 compact track loader to your fleet, or want to learn more, contact our dealership.

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