




Renovations by Med-Tek Contracting Inc. at St. John's University resulted in classrooms, high-tech spaces like this Animation Lab, and a new high-tech conference suite for the university's Cyber Security Systems and Homeland Security programs.

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The entrance to St. John's University's new Cyber Security lab, part of a large renovation by Med-Tek Contracting Inc. to house the university's Cyber Security Systems and Homeland Security programs.

RENOVATION WITHOUT DISRUPTION

When businesses remodel, but need to stay open, *Med-Tek Contracting Inc.* brings stealthy solutions

by Ralph Fuller

As a general contractor working in New York City, *Med-Tek Contracting Inc.* (Med-Tek) specializes in renovations in tight spaces, where it works in close proximity to people who are going about their regular day—from shopping to teaching to performing heart surgery.

"We're used to working in occupied spaces, whether it's at stores like Bloomingdale's, Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue or hospitals like Mount Sinai and New York-Presbyterian," says Gabriel McMahon, Med-Tek President. "Often, we go into a space and try to make it seem like we're not there. We do our work with the least disruption possible to the world around us."

The effort is particularly delicate at medical facilities. "We've worked in a lot of operating rooms where there's heart surgery underway on the other side of the wall," he says. "Sometimes, we spend as much time worrying about infection control as about the work itself."

Dealing with infection control means, for starters, that Med-Tek workers have to decontaminate themselves before entering the space. Just like medical personnel, they disinfect and don hospital scrubs, shoe covers and hairnets.

It means worrying about negative airflow—making sure ambient air seeps into the room, not from it, so that no dust escapes. It means bringing in high-powered exhaust

systems equipped with HEPA air filters to capture any dust generated. Often, it means using STARC Systems temporary wall panels to build tight barriers around the workspace to seal it off—basically constructing a room around the room. And, it means, at the end, taking it all down so that no trace of it remains.

RELISHING NEW YORK...AND SUNSHINE

Gabriel studied civil engineering and was working in his native Ireland when he visited his brother in New York City in the late 1990s. “I stayed for the summer,” he says. “I loved it. I loved the city, the opportunities, the sunshine all the time. In 1998, I moved to New York and I never left.” He has subsequently become a naturalized U.S. citizen.

After settling in the United States, he worked as a project manager for a New York contractor on projects that spanned health care, retail, high-end residential and commercial construction. When he started his own company in 2008, his initial focus was on medical projects. Hence, the name Med-Tek.

Today, he maintains offices located about a mile north of the Bronx. His work is all centered on the New York metropolitan area. And, it's all renovations, nothing ground-up.

Like many general contractors, the company places emphasis on comprehensive preconstruction planning and relies on a pool of trusted subcontractors for the



Med-Tek Contracting Inc.'s renovation of New York-Presbyterian Hospital's Central Sterile unit included fitting of electrical, water, high-pressure steam, drain and dedicated exhaust systems.

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Gabriel McMahon founded Med-Tek Contracting Inc. in 2008.

various elements of work, overseen by Med-Tek superintendents and project managers. However, the Med-Tek staff does include a half-dozen specially trained carpenters and laborers with extensive expertise in infection control.

METICULOUS PLANNING

Planning and preparation are key to success, both in materials and logistics. "We work to develop a tailored scope of services for each job, obviously individualized to each client's specific needs," Gabriel says. "We analyze what existing materials need to be taken out, cutting back the plumbing and the electrical to the source, what MEP (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) systems need to go in, other equipment that might be relevant, and materials and finishes that will be needed. This includes working with manufacturers like GE and Siemens to facilitate installation of medical equipment like CT scanners and mammography machines.

"We outline the stages that need to be sequenced, like putting a mechanical unit in before we can lay down the floor. We identify factors that require long lead times, like two restaurants I'm currently pricing. They have to have a particular blue granite from France. That means a significant lead time has to be taken into account."

Gabriel notes that in his proposals he tries to factor in the unknowns and gaps in the plan. He's not sure whether it's a compliment or an impediment that, when his firm submits proposals on jobs and doesn't win them, often the owner will require that the winning firm actually follow the steps outlined in Med-Tek's plan. In any event, he works with each client to arrive at a realistic budget and expectations. He uses tools like Procore management software to help make sure the job comes in on time and within budget.

"By the time the project gets to the construction phase, the plan is set up and the subcontractors are coordinated," he says.

CLIENTS WHO CALL AGAIN

Med-Tek has a lengthy list of clients who have hired the firm repeatedly over many years.

One has been the Mount Sinai Health System, with eight hospitals throughout the New York metropolitan region. Med-Tek has completed numerous projects with them. Gabriel cites a recent 10,000-square-foot job creating



Patient exam rooms were part of a 16,000-square-foot renovation by Med-Tek Contracting Inc. at Mount Sinai's Chelsea Medical Center for cancer treatment.



Construction of a dispensing pharmacy by Med-Tek Contractors Inc. at Mount Sinai's Astoria Queens campus included a new roofing system and structural steel to support the pharmacy's dedicated HVAC system.



The transaction window fronts a new dispensing pharmacy constructed by Med-Tek Contracting Inc. at Mount Sinai's Astoria Queens campus.

expanded quarters for the Cancer Center in a new wing of Mount Sinai's Chelsea Medical Center. Phase 2 of the building's retrofit involved 16,000 square feet of new and existing space to create a patient exam wing equipped with mammography equipment and offices for physicians and other staff. This was done in four phases, staggered to accommodate hospital workflow.

At Mount Sinai's Astoria Queens campus, Med-Tek revamped space on the second floor to create a new dispensing pharmacy with clean rooms built to USP 797 and 800 standards. Challenging because of stringent hospital building codes, the work included the full range of MEP, finishes and millwork. It also involved installation of a new roofing system and structural steel to support the pharmacy's dedicated HVAC system of negative airflow rooms.

For New York-Presbyterian Hospital, recent jobs have involved a cardiology suite, a diagnostic radiology suite with a central sterile unit, a women's imaging center and an emergency department administrative suite.

Beyond health care, Gabriel is particularly proud of Med-Tek's high-end retail clients and its higher education activities. "Generally, when we work in a department store like a Macy's," Gabriel says, "we're building a shop within a store. The national chain rolls out a design for all its stores and provides the millwork, glass panels and other accoutrements. We separate out a 200-square-foot section and, while shoppers browse around us, we build a new boutique behind plastic sheeting." In this year when COVID-19 has caused trials and turmoil for many retailers, he notes that their work in this sector has slowed down temporarily.

In the higher education market, one repeat client is St. John's University in Queens, where Med-Tek recently renovated 30,000 square feet of classroom and corridor space on two floors of Marillac Hall. It followed up with a high-tech conference suite and classrooms for the school's Cyber Security Systems and Homeland Security programs in St. Augustine Hall.

A FOUNDATION OF HIGH STANDARDS

Gabriel believes that the reason that his firm has so many repeat clients is ultimately because of their consistent work product. "These customers return to us because they know our mission is to give them quality results," he says. "A lot of this is having top-flight carpenters, electricians, plumbers and other workers on their projects.

"When it comes to hiring subcontractors, I choose carefully because you're only as good as the team working on the job. And I support them. We have an excellent safety record, reasonable expectations and honest pay."

He adds, "Customers know that we give them honest costing, reliable schedules, attention to detail, strong client communication and quality workmanship. These high standards are the foundation of our business." 🐼

Freelance writer Ralph Fuller has more than 30 years' experience explaining topics as diverse as rare tropical diseases, alternative fuels, highway safety technologies and the fishes and critters on coral reefs.