

Beyond the Checklist: Taking Care of & Truly Caring for Clients

People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Teddy Roosevelt

Opus' founder, Gerry Rauenhorst believed human inspiration and motivation are largely driven by emotion, empathy and caring for one another. His legacy continues today through the [Opus Foundation](#)®, [GHR Foundation](#) and Opus associates' dedication to giving generously of their time and talents to Opus communities. Gerry established a culture of caring that doesn't stop at stewardship – it transcends to how they treat clients and partners and how they execute their day-to-day work.

Research on business decision-making conducted in 2019 by [B2B International](#) found that 56% of a business persons' final decision is based on emotional factors, while just 44% is based on rational factors. "Sure, companies need to satisfy customers' rational needs and wants – having the right product at the right price in order to enter the consideration set," the study said. "But, in the race between silver and gold, emotion prevails."

It's the human factor. It's the need to know that your building will be delivered by people who care about you and your business. Opus understands that investing in a building is a significant undertaking. So much so, that they state [their mission](#) in terms of what their clients do:

Driven to exceed your expectations and empower your mission through the buildings we deliver.

"It's not about us," said Tim Murnane, President & CEO. "It's about our clients, and understanding their purpose. It's about truly caring and doing more than simply checking the boxes to deliver a project. It's about being willing to give more than anticipated to ensure they are delighted. Our associates continually rise to the occasion for our clients and this is a key differentiator for Opus."

Opus associates *take care of* clients by ensuring the buildings they design and construct meet all of their requirements, and they do it well. *Caring for* clients, on the other hand, involves a willingness to go beyond what's expected to truly engage and show sincere concern for the client, their experience and their success.





Dan Schwab

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Dan Schwab
Project Manager
Opus Design Build, L.L.C.

Caring for Clients & Building Lasting Relationships: Dan Schwab & Iowa Air National Guard

Developing, designing and constructing buildings is a complex process with many moving, interrelated parts. To coordinate activities between various Opus teams and to act as a single point of contact for clients, Opus assigns a project manager to oversee the entire project. "Naturally, we become quite heavily invested in the projects we work on," said Dan Schwab, Project Manager.

For Dan, this was particularly true for the Iowa Air National Guard project, which had experienced setbacks out of Opus' control before he was assigned to it. The 37,000-square-foot project was in Sioux City, Iowa, which required Opus to work with subcontractors they hadn't worked with before. Unfortunately, several of these subs were not meeting the expectations that Opus had for the project. So, Dan and the project's Superintendent spent many hours closely monitoring them and carefully managing project details.

"We needed to step in many times," said Dan. "For instance, after terrazzo flooring was installed in the building, we felt it could be cleaned better. While the subcontractor had technically met standard construction requirements, we knew it could be better and wanted to exceed expectations for the Guard. It was a Friday and the building needed to be ready for the Guard on Monday. We couldn't find a floor cleaning service in the area to do the work, so I rented a floor scrubber and did the cleaning myself over the weekend. The client was pleased with the final product, and so was I."

Toward the end of the project, the Guard became aware of space modifications that would be required before their specialized medical equipment installers flew in the next day. "They came to us and asked if we could make the modifications by the next morning," said Dan. "We understood the importance of this request and we remained working at the job site until after midnight so the client's equipment installation could stay on schedule."

Dan has worked alongside Opus associates on multiple projects in various markets and offices across the country. He said, “It’s one of the consistent themes at Opus – associates truly care about clients and constructing buildings we can be proud of. The Guard understood this and repeatedly voiced their appreciation for our efforts and the hours we poured into the project.”

“We build lasting relationships by caring for our clients,” he said. “This mentality is exhibited in every action and circumstance. If things aren’t going exactly as planned, we do what needs to be done to make it right. Maximizing profits at the expense of the client’s satisfaction is never an option at Opus.”

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Dan, top left, speaks at the grand opening of the Iowa Air National Guard building, pictured top right and bottom.

Beyond Managing the Budget, Allowing for More Informed Decision Making: Kelsie Lanz and Fiat Chrysler Automotive

To support increasing demand for industrial space around Chicago, Opus developed, designed and constructed 1325 Remington in Bolingbrook, Ill. The combination of the building's flexible space and prime location appealed to Fiat Chrysler Automotive (FCA), who entered a long-term lease for 25,523-square-feet and enlisted Opus to design and build a custom employee training center in the space. Due in large part to efforts orchestrated by Kelsie Lanz, Associate Project Manager, the project not only delivered exactly what the client envisioned, but came in under-budget for FCA.



Kelsie Lanz

"Like all fiscally responsible businesses, FCA had a definitive budget for the project," Kelsie said. "In the beginning when subcontractor proposals started coming in, they expressed concern about the possibility of going over budget. So, I created a tracking log for all pricing items, detailing each cost, whether it was above or below our estimate, and its effect on the running total. As price items came in, I updated the log and shared it with FCA so they were always informed. As with all projects, we carefully managed the budget while striving to include as many of the client's 'wish list' items as possible, which FCA appreciated."



1325 Remington
Bolingbrook, Illinois

To ensure FCA received the most building for their budget, Kelsie researched and found cost-saving and value-engineering alternatives for FCA. She also assured them that all building components were accounted for by explaining in detail the various technical aspects of the project, such as Mechanical Electrical Plumbing drawings and submittal items.

“Really, I just felt I was doing my job the way any of my fellow Opus associates would,” she said. “We have a shared commitment to bringing the best value to clients, ensuring they are kept informed at every stage of the project and ultimately happy with the final product. That’s what motivated me to do what I did.”



“Throughout this tenant build-out for FCA, Kelsie modified the approach as needed and made timely decisions to achieve the clients changing goals and needs,” said Jim Caesar, Regional Vice President. “FCA originally intended to hire a construction management consultant to help them manage the Opus Design Build team, but as they saw the project going so well early on with Kelsie’s management and continual communication, they decided it wasn’t necessary and chose to work directly with her and the Opus team.”



Computershare, the first tenant at 1325 Remington, took over 44k square feet in 2017.

Caring Beyond the Building: David Jokipii Krueger & Cretin-Derham Hall

When working in an occupied school where people are working and learning, limiting disruption is critical. Opus associates spend the time to understand the school's requirements and prepare a detailed project management plan. Part of the project planning includes looking for ways to connect closely with the client's work and mission.

While engaged in the [Lentsch Forum](#) for [Cretin-Derham Hall](#), a private high school in St. Paul, Minnesota, Associate Project Manager David Jokipii Krueger had an idea. Could they collaborate with the faculty to use the Opus expertise and equipment onsite to conduct real-time learning demonstrations for the students?



"My manager Scott Shifflett had done similar activities during his work with [Visitation School](#)," David said. "He encouraged me to take on something with Cretin-Derham Hall."

David proposed to the faculty the idea of working together to conduct demonstrations for students who were enrolled in physics classes, and soon planning meetings were underway. David collaborated with physics teachers to assist with developing learning objectives, identifying demos that would intersect with their curriculum and finalizing details. They planned a one-day event that included three demonstrations repeated throughout the day for 120 students across six class periods. The project's superintendent, Craig Anderson, Carpenter General Foreman – Supervisor, also helped by acquiring the required equipment and providing equipment and safety training to facilitate the demonstrations.

"We parked a 60-foot aerial boom lift just outside the front entry of the school near the physics classroom windows to conduct the demonstrations," David said. "This prominent location attracted plenty of attention from students as they came to and from the school throughout the day."

After a brief in-class overview including safety guidelines, the students went outside, mobile devices in-hand to take videos of the three demonstrations.

- In the first demonstration, they learned about gravitational acceleration as pumpkins were dropped from the top of the boom to the ground. Using the videos, they calculated the approximate height of the boom.
- In another demonstration, the students measured terminal velocity by taking videos as softballs and lightweight foam balls were dropped from the top of the boom to the ground.
- For the final demonstration, a bowling ball was hung on a chain attached to the top of the boom, and a ladder was positioned several yards away with a pumpkin on top. The bowling ball was pulled back to the pumpkin and released to swing as a pendulum. Students were asked to make predictions about what would happen with the bowling ball – would it return to smash the pumpkin or swing short? Using videos, the students measured the period of oscillation by timing and calculating how far the ball traveled on its return swing after being released from the pumpkin. They also learned about conservation of energy when the bowling ball came up short and spared the pumpkin.



Cretin-Derham Hall
St. Paul, Minnesota



"Feedback from the faculty was very positive, and students had a blast," David said. "It was a way to connect them to the construction process in an interesting and involved way. It helped to build rapport and demonstrate to the school that we truly care about what their purpose and goals."

"David found a way to proactively build connections between our work and the faculty and students," said Scott Shifflett. "He certainly didn't need to do this to get the job done, but he did it to maximize their positive experience with this project and with Opus. It's a great example of taking the extra step to support our client's mission."

"Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it, they will want to come back and see you do it again, and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do." – Walt Disney

The bottom line? Opus associates *take care of* clients by ensuring the buildings they design and construct meet all of their requirements, and they do it well. It's about going beyond the checklist. By also *caring for* clients, they go beyond what's expected and show their sincere concern for the client, their experience and their success. With Opus, your building will be delivered by people who care about you and your business. Opus understands that investing in a building is a significant undertaking. So much so, that they state their mission in terms of what their clients do: "Driven to exceed your expectations and empower your mission through the buildings we deliver."

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