



WYNKOOP EQUIPMENT CO.

This Clarence, Iowa, ag contractor relies on word of mouth to generate business

Todd Wynkoop, owner of Wynkoop Equipment Co., has a policy of accepting any job he's asked to do by customers of his Clarence, Iowa, agricultural contracting service.

"I try not to turn down a job just because it's a small project where we don't make much money," explained Wynkoop. His two-operator company concentrates on agricultural conservation projects for farmers in Cedar County and the surrounding area. "The customer may call me the next time and have a larger project for us."

That generates word-of-mouth referrals, according to Wynkoop. "It gets around that we don't have a minimum charge. I've never run an ad since I started. We have built a personal relationship with the farming community and we are proud of that."

Established ag customer base

Todd Wynkoop established the personal relationships he has with his farmer customers while working as a mechanic for an agricultural equipment dealer. "The customers there knew me and knew what I was about. I started contracting ag jobs part time in 1987 before quitting my full-time job with the dealership in 1994."

Wynkoop got into the ag contracting business "by mistake," he laughed. "It all started with a fascination with crawlers. A farmer gave me a little crawler to do a job for him. I eventually bought it, fixed it up and tried to do some work. But I found out I needed a real machine to do anything, so I bought an old dozer," continued Wynkoop. "Then I needed a hoe, so I bought that. I finally got so busy that I either needed to quit my job at the dealership or sell the equipment. I was a year behind in my jobs until my brother Timm came and helped."

Timm Wynkoop worked as an equipment operator for eight years before he joined Wynkoop Equipment Co. in 1997. The other member of the Wynkoop team is office manager Sue Sander. "She works part time for me and attends grad school," noted Todd Wynkoop. "She handles our paperwork and bookkeeping. I'd hate to try to manage this business without either of them."

Conservation work is flagship

Todd Wynkoop said 90 percent of his firm's business is agricultural work. "The bulk of our business is conservation work, building waterways and some ponds," he observed. "The next largest segment of our work is demolition — houses, farmsteads, a few trees."

Wynkoop noted that farmers can receive cost-sharing incentives from state and federal agencies if they put waterways in their fields to prevent erosion. "The waterways have to be built to government specs so we work with agencies like the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Services Administration. They design everything we do for them."

Many of the waterway projects the Wynkoops work on in the spring and fall are cost-shared waterways for the county or the

Todd Wynkoop (right) and his brother, Timm Wynkoop, operate Wynkoop Equipment Co., which specializes in agricultural conservation projects. RMS territory manager Delane Wolter (center) helps meet their equipment needs.



federal government. "We do those waterways from start to finish," Wynkoop said. "We shape the waterway, seed it, and if needed, put in fabric liners or any structures."

The laser is an integral tool the Wynkoops use when building waterways. "I've used a laser ever since I started dozing," acknowledged Wynkoop. "My brother uses the laser, but he's such a natural operator that he could probably do as well without it. Many people do waterways around here, but we take pride in knowing we have done some of the better-looking ones."

The remainder of Wynkoop Equipment Co.'s work is new construction for buildings and houses. "We might put in some water lines or a street," said Wynkoop, "but most of our work is ag-related."

A 2003 job found Wynkoop finishing the parking lot for a new church in Tipton, Iowa. "We made the pad for it in 2002 and dug the footings," Wynkoop stated. "We built part of the parking lot earlier in the year so they could operate the church and we finished the job last fall."

Unique railcar bridge projects

Several unique jobs involved making bridges out of railcars. "We took a 100-foot-long railroad car, cut it in half, and laid the two pieces side by side to replace a bridge on an acreage near West Branch, Iowa," said Wynkoop. "We took the old bridge out with two excavators but kept the footings from the old bridge. Using both excavators as cranes, we lifted the railcar halves onto the footings, then welded them together. We installed similar railcar bridges in Lost Nation and Stanwood, Iowa, except we dug and poured the footings."

Equipment uptime important

When Todd Wynkoop started his company, he bought used equipment he could work on himself. But as business picked up, he found that downtime and repairs were costing him money and production, so he turned to Road Machinery & Supplies Co. and territory manager Delane Wolter for new Dressta and Komatsu equipment.

Wynkoop's fleet now includes a new Dressta TD-15H crawler tractor, a Komatsu PC200LC-6 hydraulic excavator and a Load King 553SS trailer from RMS.



"My time is worth more now," affirmed Wynkoop. "I can't spend it fixing old machinery. So we bought this new Dressta TD-15H crawler tractor last fall. I won't have to work on it nearly as much as our older equipment. If I'm not working on it, I can be working with it. We'll probably buy new machines from now on."

The new Dressta TD-15H tractor is equipped with a seven-yard blade and features a unique two-speed steering system. "We're not pushing rocks or trees, so we can make gradual turns," noted Wynkoop. "With the Dressta, you always have power to both tracks, and until I experienced it, I thought it was a sales pitch. It actually does power around the corner."

"The two-speed steering is exceptional," Wynkoop continued. "I also like the balance, the gradability with the large blade and the visibility. It's the biggest dozer we have, but it's not so big that I can't transport it where I need to. It's a lot more powerful than our other dozer, so it does quite a bit more work per hour."

Wynkoop says his Dressta is easy to service and maintain. "I can take this machine apart with regular tools, and because we do all our own work, that's a huge plus for us," he noted. Wynkoop still owns a 1973 Dresser TD-15C dozer he bought used. "I hope my new Dressta TD-15H lasts as long as this 31-year-old C," he said. "It has about 20,000 hours on it now, and it had 6,000 or 7,000 hours when I bought it."

The Wynkoops also like their Komatsu PC200LC-6 excavator, which is equipped with a thumb attachment. "We use the thumb virtually all the time," Wynkoop said. "Even digging dirt, we try to get more of it with the thumb. Timm always uses it in demolition. We can pull fencing and posts, we can drive posts. We just built a bridge and used the hoe to push the pilings."

Todd Wynkoop recently purchased this Dressta TD-15H dozer from RMS. "I like the balance and visibility, and the two-speed steering is exceptional," he noted.



Sue Sander,
office manager

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Quality equipment for quality work

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As for as the Komatsu PC200, "It's an awesome machine compared to the other excavator we own," commented Wynkoop. "It does more work and has better visibility. Timm has operated other brands, and he really likes that machine."

"It's comfortable and operator-friendly," agreed Timm Wynkoop. "It's quiet and fast, and it has a lot of power."

Todd Wynkoop is also pleased with RMS and the relationship he has forged with territory manager Delane Wolter, from RMS' Cedar Rapids, Iowa, branch. "Delane is one of the few salesmen I call back willingly," he said. "He convinced me to buy our Load King trailer, which was one of the smarter things I've done.

We needed a bigger trailer for the Komatsu, and we needed to detach the trailer for safety instead of loading over the back. The trailer is strong and super-easy to use.

"I've never had any trouble getting anything from RMS," continued Wynkoop. "Parts availability is good, and they answer my questions about service technicalities. I'm sure if we ever run into a repair we can't handle, RMS will be able to take care of it."

Wynkoop added that he worked closely with the finance team at RMS to acquire his equipment. "They were extremely helpful in tailoring the finance package to meet my needs," he said. "That was an important consideration when I purchased the Dressta dozer."

Quality work leads to repeat business

Todd Wynkoop credited the quality work he and Timm produce for the success of Wynkoop Equipment Co. "We do the best job we can and try to please everybody," he stated. "Our repeat business and repeat customers indicate we're doing something right."

He also praised the operating abilities of his brother. "Timm can do anything I can do, but better," he marveled. "People come looking specifically for Timm. Most of the time he operates the equipment, which frees me up to do the administrative part of the business. That's why he runs the newer dozer and hoe — he does most of the work."

Business is good, but hectic

Todd Wynkoop noted that Wynkoop Equipment Co. is very busy. "In the spring and fall — any time the farmer can be in the field — we are in there working on waterways," he said. "It's really hectic, dawn to dusk, seven days a week, unless it rains. In the last three years, there hasn't been a non-peak season. Once the corn is planted, we can't do waterways anymore, but we always have projects to do," he continued.

"I don't really see us growing much more and having a whole crew of employees. My goal is to end up with some really nice equipment and upgrade the rest of my fleet," he concluded. ■



This bridge on a farm operation near Stanwood, Iowa, was constructed out of railroad cars. It's one of the unique agricultural improvement projects completed by Wynkoop Equipment Co.

Timm Wynkoop uses Wynkoop Equipment Co.'s new Komatsu PC200LC-6 excavator to demolish this house in Tipton, Iowa. "It's comfortable and operator-friendly as well as quiet, fast and powerful," he noted.

