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DCI Engineers buys San Francisco firm

- *Principal Jeff Brink said DCI felt it could get jobs faster by buying SDE, a well regarded structural engineering firm, rather than opening a new office in the area.*

By [LYNN PORTER](#)

Journal Staff Reporter

There are nearly 40 construction cranes at project sites in San Francisco, and DCI Engineers Principal Jeff Brink says his firm wants a bigger bite of that market. So the Seattle-based structural and civil engineering firm bought Structural Design Engineers of San Francisco to expand its presence in the Bay Area quickly.

Brink will head up the new office, now known as DCI+SDE. It has 11 employees, eight from SDE and the rest from DCI, and is interviewing to hire three more.

"We've done work down there," Brink said. "We want to do more. It's a booming market."

The acquisition closed in April. Terms were not released.

Brink said DCI felt it could get jobs faster by buying SDE, a well regarded structural engineering firm, rather than opening a new office in the area, which has many high quality engineering practices.

Technology is what's driving the Bay Area office market, he said.

The Puget Sound region has technology giants Amazon.com and Microsoft, which are DCI clients, he said, but the Bay Area has many more of these large tech firms.

"You've got Google, and Apple and Salesforce — and the list just goes on and on," he said.

DCI also expects a lot more apartments to be built in that region, which has lagged Seattle in that type of development, Brink said.

"San Francisco hasn't even seen that burst of apartment building yet," he said, "but the demand is certainly there."

The firm also anticipates a lot of hotel construction, and some retail, although retail development in the Bay Area has been consistently strong, even during the downturn, he said.

The firm doesn't expect much hospital construction near-term, given a hospital building boom in the Bay Area over the last five years, although it does anticipate some medical office development.

San Francisco has a number of public sector projects under way, and SDE has clients in that market. Brink said DCI+SDE will continue that work, including low-income housing and on-call projects for the San Francisco Port Authority. The office is also working on education projects, including a 12-story student housing complex.

SDE, which was established in 1984, is the second firm DCI has purchased in its 25-year history.

Last year it bought M.R. Richards Engineering in Eugene, Ore., to try to get more projects in that area, where large public clients often use local consultants. It also opened an office in Irvine, Calif., to capitalize on growth in the Southern California market.

The firm has about 180 employees, with offices also in Spokane, Portland, San Diego and Austin, Texas.

Brink declined to give specifics about other plans DCI may have for expansion, except to say, "We're always looking for opportunities for growth in new markets."

Locally it is working on the North Lot mixed-use project in Pioneer Square and Stone34, a "deep green" office and retail development in Fremont. It was on the project team for the recently



Brink

completed Bullitt Center, the first commercial building to target Living Building status.

Brink said DCI has increased hiring in Seattle since last year, and has lots of work in the Puget Sound region.

He anticipates “quite a bit” of office development near-term in Seattle and Bellevue as vacancies continue to fall, and said Amazon.com won’t be the only firm driving that.

The firm also expects a number of hospitality projects to get under way soon due to pent-up demand, and some retail development.

Apartment development in Seattle will likely slow following the recent boom, Brink said, but it will pick up in Bellevue.

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