

## ROCHESTERCHAMBERTOP100

## Building the team key for construction firm

A pair of civil engineers who met as RIT students founded Hamilton Stern

By ANDREA DECKERT

**C**reating a winning team has been a key to the success of Hamilton Stern Construction LLC.

“We only half-jokingly say we like to hire people who are much smarter than us,” said Justin Hamilton, who co-owns the Pittsford construction management company with Christopher Stern. “We focus on doing the right thing and hiring the right people.”

### Hamilton Stern Construction LLC

Construction management firm

**Year founded:** 2010

**2015 ranking:** 81

**Top executives:** Justin Hamilton, Christopher Stern, co-owners

**Current employment:** 33

**Headquarters:** Pittsford

**Website:** hamiltonstern.com

The business leaders say they have created a team that is second to none. They put a priority on giving employees flexibility and encouraging them to use their talents.

“We let people do what they are good at,” Hamilton said. “The performance of the company speaks for itself.”

Hamilton Stern had a 160 percent increase in its annual sales in 2015 compared to 2014, Hamilton said.

Driving that growth were renovations on two buildings in Rochester into 59 affordable workforce rental apartments for the Urban League of Rochester, N.Y. Inc.

The buildings, M+M Rochester at the Michelsen Building at 182 Avenue D and the former Rochester Plumbing Supply Co. Inc. building at 281 Mills St., are listed on



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

**Justin Hamilton and Christopher Stern say they have created a team that is second to none, but one of their firm's biggest challenges is the lack of construction engineers.**

the National Register of Historic Places.

The additional work has led to an increase in employment. Hamilton Stern has 33 employees, up from 30 in 2015 and 23 in 2014.

Hamilton and Stern launched the company in 2010. The two civil engineers met as students at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Their styles complement each other. Hamilton excels at creative approaches to construction and engineering issues, while Stern has direct client responsibilities and, in addition, takes on financial management

and administrative duties for the firm.

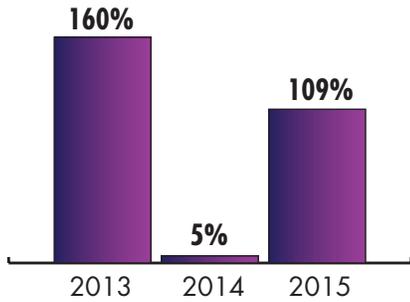
They have said the company has succeeded because of word-of-mouth marketing, several repeat customers and the chemistry between its co-founders as well as the experience of its leaders and staff.

At the start of the business, one of the hardest things was getting people to trust them to do the job, Hamilton said. Now, the company has earned the respect of its clients and has built a good reputation.

“We have a team in place that rivals the biggest and the best contractors in this area,” Hamilton said. “The word is out that

## By the numbers

The company registered triple-digit percentage growth in revenue in two of the last three years.



we're here to stay and will continue to do great things."

Hamilton Stern Construction works on commercial, health care, industrial and residential projects. Most of the firm's projects have been in Upstate New York, but others have been in North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida.

The company expects sales to grow 5 percent in 2016.

Upcoming projects include work on DHD Ventures LLC's mixed-use venture

at the Terminal Building at 65 W. Broad St. downtown.

They are also gearing up for work on the new Clover Lanes, which is to be called Radio Social, in the North Winton Village neighborhood. The site will include bowling, dining, cocktails and games, as well as use of an outdoor space, the owners of the planned facility say.

Hamilton Stern recently wrapped up an expansion project at the Scott Miller Beauty Salon Inc. in Pittsford and is working on improvements at Miller's salon in Webster.

Both projects played on one of Hamilton Stern's strengths: occupied facility renovations, Hamilton noted.

Scott and Helen Miller said Hamilton Stern provides top-shelf, white-glove service.

The couple praised the firm's ability to do such a large construction job in Pittsford while allowing the salon to remain open for business.

"Every step of the way they were hospitable and respectful to our employees and clients," Helen Miller said. "That says a lot."

Hamilton Stern was able to complete a complicated job that included a number of custom items, from cabinetry to lighting,

Scott Miller added.

"I don't think too many other (companies) here would be able to pull it off the way they did," he said.

One of the biggest industry challenges Hamilton Stern faces is the lack of construction engineers, Hamilton said.

He believes the field would be appealing for those who like to work with their hands and see buildings they have helped construct come to fruition.

"You can make a good living working in this trade," Hamilton said. "It's hard work, but very satisfying."

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*The Rochester Chamber Top 100 program is presented by the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce and KPMG LLP. Launched in 1987, it recognizes the fastest-growing private companies in Greater Rochester. The 2016 Rochester Top 100 event will be held Nov. 3. For more information, go to [greaterrochesterchamber.com](http://greaterrochesterchamber.com).*