



## Strong Relationships, Stronger Results

By Robert Trice



We have a phrase we say at Batson-Cook that resonates with everyone who works here, “The first thing we build is the relationship.” It’s more than a phrase, it’s a way of doing business. More than 80 percent of the company’s business comes from repeat clients, a testament to the strong relationships we develop on every project.

Our clients have come to expect a high level of craftsmanship from us, which we consistently deliver. By understanding their needs and the nuances of each project, we create successful deliverables that benefit both us and our partners. This symbiotic relationship is the cornerstone of our success, and it all goes back to first developing that relationship with the client before a shovel hits the ground.

Our relationship with Benton House perfectly encapsulates this thinking. Benton House, a leading provider of elder care, operates facilities with approximately 50 beds and 12 memory care units on each property. Each of these projects features amenities like a full-service kitchen, hair salon, media room, living room, dining room, staff support areas, and a home activities kitchen. Over the past 12 years, we have proudly developed 20 projects at 17 properties with Benton House across three states, earning multiple awards for our approach building senior living facilities.

Our relationship began in 2008 when Batson-Cook was hired as a consultant for Benton House on two projects. At the time, the client was working with another contractor on two metal-framed facilities. Constructing with a metal building frame is considerably more expensive and complicated. The project team decided to transition the buildings back to wood frame structures, which would be less costly to build, quicker to construct, and provide the same quality of build.

Building on their trust, we further explored ways to help streamline our client’s goals. We thought outside of the box by panelizing, or prefabricating, our first project with them. With walls being built in an offsite factory and brought to the jobsite by truck, we were able to complete the structure in less than two weeks.

Another way we facilitated trust and further enhanced our relationship was by offering our expertise when it came to site selection. For the Benton House of Florence project, we helped them identify a more cost-effective location that required minimal earthwork. The first site required an excess of a million dollars of work to get the property above the flood plain elevation. We helped them identify an alternate site less than 500 yards away that only required a minimal amount of work before vertical construction could begin. This saved nearly half of their projected earthwork budget, and the land cost was significantly less than the original site.

As our relationship deepened, our responsibilities expanded. Throughout this journey, our commitment to their success remained unwavering and I was fully committed to their success. If we saw something that was in the drawings that did not work, was too costly, or was a maintenance issue, we would work with our client and change it to something that was more cost effective or durable. When we saw there were maintenance and use issues with their current pocket door frames, we changed them to a more commercial style pocket door frame that could save the client on long-term maintenance costs and improve their clients' impressions of the facility.

We recognized the balance between client satisfaction and resident experience. While cost-saving measures were important, we ensured they did not compromise comfort. For example, the first few buildings were constructed in a way that did not allow for an expansion of the building without considerably impacting the existing and occupied facility. When expanding a facility, we need to run utility services from the existing structure to the new area and need these tie-in points located as close as possible. We were able to stub all future utility services and relocate services to the back of the building to minimize any impact to the residents and staff.



Maintaining our relationship is also very important; the Benton House team had my mobile number and knew I would make myself available when they needed our assistance. On one occasion, the Metro Atlanta area was unexpectedly hit by severe storms that knocked out power at two of their properties for an extended period. Within an hour of receiving this call, I arranged to have generators placed at their properties and temporarily wired them into their systems to provide power for the facilities. It's that personal touch that can help maintain a relationship and show their success matters greatly to us.

Finally, the practice of building relationships extends beyond the scope of our clients. Our success can also be attributed to the success of our trade partners and employees. We invest in our team through comprehensive training, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills needed to excel. This proactive approach empowers them to contribute effectively to the project's success and keeps them safe on a jobsite. Additionally, we maintain open communication with our trade partners, actively listening to their needs and incorporating their valuable feedback into our planning, budgeting, and project execution. This collaborative approach benefits everyone involved on a jobsite.

Batson-Cook's century-long success is rooted in the strong relationships we've developed along the way. These relationships are the foundation of the company's achievements, and they fuel my enthusiasm for each new project, as I look forward to collaborating with our valued clients once again.

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