

# Kobza keeps jobs moving to retain big name clients

BY DAVID MILLS

Finish on time. Stay within budget. That's the simple 21st century business philosophy of Dennis Kobza and Associates.

## Architectural Firm of the Year Runner-Up

### Dennis Kobza and Associates

The Mountain View architectural firm isn't large, but its reputation has captured some big name clients ranging from Google Inc. to AMB Property Corp.

Meeting deadlines and containing costs is the twin philosophy Dennis Kobza Sr. has employed since the firm's inception 45 years ago.

"We don't have a lot of projects gathering dust in drawers," said Kobza, the company's founder and president. "Most of them get built."

He said this approach is particularly important in today's economy. Clients are looking to keep costs down while meeting the expectations of high-tech companies, whether they need data centers or biotech facilities.

Kobza Associates has been able to accomplish all this while keeping operations small. The firm has nine employees, only two of them architects.

Dennis "Bud" Kobza Jr., the company's vice president, said he and his father have maintained the size of the architectural firm so they can manage the workload and make sure quality is kept at a high level.

"At times we could have increased the size of the firm," said Bud Kobza, "but we wanted to be sure the clients we had were always happy with our work. Also, that made for a more stable environment for our employees."

So far, the formula has worked. "We are the little engine that could," he said.

Kobza Associates has designed a



VICKI THOMPSON

**SMALL AND MIGHTY:** "We are the little engine that could," said Dennis "Bud" Kobza Jr., second from right.

variety of buildings over the years. Many of them new offices.

The firm recently found a thriving business in refurbishing existing complexes. Many buildings in Silicon Valley are now 30 years old and owners don't want to demolish them and build new structures. They simply want to upgrade them and polish them.

"Most of the buildings are structurally sound," said Dennis Kobza. "They just need a little lipstick."

Kobza Associates has helped design

more than 50 refurbishing projects in Silicon Valley. Fifteen of those remodels have come in the past year.

One of them was the redevelopment of the Tripoint Business Park, a 167,000-square-foot complex in San Jose built in 1980. It is one of numerous projects AMB Property Corp. has hired Kobza Associates to oversee.

Mark Hansen, a senior vice president at AMB, said Kobza knows the "tricks of the trade" and keeps its fee schedule competitive.