

# Estrella Engineering

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS

After a decade and a half of respectable performance, Estrella Engineering wanted to dramatically increase its revenue and profits. To get started, AXIA conducted primary research among current and former clients, vendors and competitors. This allowed AXIA to identify Estrella's key strengths and market position.

Then, AXIA's marketing experts developed Estrella Engineering's "dream list" of prospects. A targeted direct-response program was used throughout the southeast United States. In addition, AXIA enhanced Estrella's Web site to match the new campaign. Further, by positioning the professionals at Estrella as "subject-matter experts," AXIA earned media coverage, including a half-page, four-color profile of Larry Estrella in *The Florida Times-Union*. Today, the firm has increased revenue and exposure. Of the 10 companies on the "dream list," AXIA helped opened meetings with more than half to identify project partnership and bid opportunities.

Years later the firm still benefits from its 18 month marketing campaign.

"We are quite satisfied with AXIA. They are pleasant, professional and accommodating to our needs and budget."

Larry Estrella, PE  
Estrella Engineering

## Estrella to work on two local high schools

**YOU SHOULD KNOW: LARRY ESTRELLA**

### He's a pro at keeping things cool

By **CHRISTOPHER CALNAM**  
*The Times-Union*

For years, Estrella Engineering worked to keep things cool. The Orange Park firm is now looking to heat things up by expanding its business with more services and larger projects.

Established in 1988 by Bronx, N.Y.-native Larry Estrella, the building systems engineering firm now has nine employees. But Estrella said he wants to add electrical engineering to the company and vie for more major projects in the Jacksonville area.

"It's time to move up and become more of the businessman and organize our firm to become more of a full-service engineering firm," he said. "We have all the credentials; we're ready to move into that market."

Those credentials include regional award honors this year from the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning for Estrella's design of a \$3.3 million air-conditioning system for Fleming Island High School.

Estrella, 59, said his work involves much more than designing air-conditioning systems, and air-conditioning involves much more than just keeping rooms cool.

"The creative process, innovation and creativity drive me," he said. "Every system and every owner has different needs. Every building has different physical constraints."

Sometimes, the constraints are attitudinal. Estrella is a strong advocate for energy conservation. But that typically requires persuading clients to

make the larger initial investment (up to 5 percent more) energy efficiency requires, he said.

An energy recovery system he employs uses exhaust air that's already been cooled to dehumidify the outside air being drawn into the air-conditioning unit. The system costs more initially, but it reduces the amount of energy required to do the job by 25 percent, Estrella said.

The problem is convincing clients that they'll reap the rewards in the long run. It's also frustrating that more firms don't advocate as strongly for energy-saving measures, Estrella said.

"It's so simple that it annoys me that it's not done commonly," he said. "I've been turned down on these designs, but I've never had one that didn't work. But I think the tide is changing."

Last year, Estrella Engineering received the Professional Service Firm of the Year award by the First Coast Business Alliance.

Estrella attributes much of the company's success to the attitude that it does more than just design work, it provides a service.

"Part of that is acting on behalf of your client and advocating for what's right," he said. "We have a responsibility to do that and the better engineering firms recognize that. And we strive to be some of the better engineers around."

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**Write Larry**  
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At both schools Skanska will replace existing air systems with new equipment in two-story buildings. The 12 million projects are scheduled for completion in October 2006.

Skanska is doing pre-construction work on the jobs.

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electricity demand is less on the utility company, and the user rate for electricity is reduced by 10%.

Estrella says the chilled water is piped to the buildings from the tank when occupancy requires cooling. The chilled water is returned to the tank at about 52 degrees F from the top of the tank as warmer water. The tank holds enough cold water to last most of a typical school day without opening the chiller plant.

The really neat thing is the cooler chilled water stays on the bottom as the warmer water slowly enters the tranquil tank on top. A natural phenomenon (thermosiphon) of separation forms in the tank between the returning 52 F water and the 42 F water being supplied to the buildings. It is a very basic and yet very cost-effective system that saves the owner operational costs and reduces the peak demand to the utility company," said Estrella.

For Fleming Island High School, Estrella and company designed another, simple, yet energy conscious system.

Estrella has been in business in Orange Park for 18 years. He is married to Elise and has a son, Larry Joseph, known as "JJ" and his daughter Elise Maria. Sons, Raymond Anthony, is working on his master's in architecture in Austin, Tex. — and Richard is employed locally in computer aided electrical design for buildings. Larry Estrella proudly notes that the support and efforts of his wife and children, especially during the early years of the company, were instrumental in the success of the Estrella Engineering. "Had the opportunity to teach each of my children work skills, and share time and experiences with them, in a way that most fathers never get.

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**Estrella Engineering wins Regional award for school air-conditioning design**

By Jim Kelly, Staff

**ORANGE PARK:** Estrella Engineering recently won a prestigious second award for the engineering of Fleming Island High School's innovative air conditioning system.

To win the award, they bested competitors in Florida, Puerto Rico and South America and are now competing for the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning (ASHRAE) international award.

"The firm won this award for designing a \$3.3 million air-conditioning system at Fleming Island High School," said Larry Estrella, president and principal engineer of Estrella Engineering Inc. of Orange Park. "But I would be remiss not to acknowledge the Clay County School System and their ability to accept new ideas and to be forward thinking in accepting innovation with the goal of being cost effective for the future. The facilities and maintenance staff of the school system has many dedicated and progressive thinking people over there. They were very instrumental in making this design a viable option."

Estrella said his goal is always to consider the most cost effective as well as energy conscious design for saving energy in the air conditioning of large buildings.

"Most designers, builders, and owners only consider first when approaching the design and cost to build the system," said

Estrella. "And energy savings are not always a big concern. It is up to the engineer to sell it, and to sell it means to show that the system is a proven method that will work."

As an example, he cited the system installed several years ago at Allen D. Nease High School in Bayard (St. Johns County).

"If you've ever been by there, you've noticed a huge holding tank near the school — it looks like an oil tank but it is filled with chilled water at 42 degrees F, and is part of the school's multi-building chilled water system," said Estrella. Chilled water is generated and stored in the tank at night when

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Media Coverage



Web



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