

An aerial view of Atlantic Bolt's production facility and warehouse in Charlotte, North Carolina. The company can furnish any bolt or fastener for the commercial construction and manufacturing industries.

KEEPING IT ALL TOGETHER

**Atlantic Bolt isn't the glue holding
Charlotte together, it's the nuts and bolts**

by Dave Dondoneau

There is a certain satisfaction JR Boyles gets when he passes by much of the infrastructure around his hometown of Charlotte, North Carolina.

"I grew up here and it's kind of cool to look at the office buildings, parking lots and other structures and know our company was a part of building them," JR says. "I can point out buildings to my daughter and say, 'Our stuff is holding that up.' The only negative is it is *in* the building. You can't see most of our work."

That's because JR's company, *Atlantic Bolt Inc.*, provides the nuts and bolts that keep much of Charlotte's infrastructure together. Atlantic Bolt is a family-owned wholesale distributor of construction fasteners and bolts. It also does

standard and custom manufacturing of anchor bolts and support rods, and specializes in fasteners for the commercial construction and manufacturing industries. Based in Charlotte, the company primarily serves the southeastern U.S., has several customers in the Northeast as well, and has shipped product as far as Hawaii.

JR, named after his father Jim, who co-founded the company in 1987, started part time with Atlantic Bolt while in high school and by age 21 was a full-time employee. In January of 2007, he became a full partner of Atlantic Bolt when his father retired. In 2015, JR bought out his father's original partner and became President and full owner. At the same time, his younger sister, Trish Boyles, returned home to join the family business as the company's Vice President and General Manager.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM MANGINI



Jim Boyles and partner Ernie Lambert were the original owners of Atlantic Bolt Inc. This photo was taken in January 1987 when they opened the business.

Atlantic Bolt Inc. owners JR Boyles (right) and his sister, Trish Boyles, have worked together to build a more efficient company since taking over ownership. They say working together as siblings may sound challenging, but having clearly defined roles helps the operation run smoothly. JR has been with the business since the beginning, and Trish returned to Charlotte in 2015 to help the family business on the office operations side.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BOYLES FAMILY (TOP) AND TIM MANGINI (RIGHT)

The dynamics of a sibling-run company can be interesting.

“I was the firstborn and stayed put,” JR, now 52, says. “Trish left to see what else is out there, and in a way, I envy her for that. She has a formal business education and a lot of experience in different types of businesses.”

A FRESH SET OF EYES AND IDEAS

In many ways, the siblings couldn't be more different, and JR says that is helping the company become more profitable.

Where JR knows the products, customers and warehouse, Trish has streamlined processes, upgraded the

computer system, and made other office changes to reduce costs and increase production.

“It's nice to have someone around who hasn't been doing this a long time so they can take a fresh look,” JR says. “It's hard to think out of the box when you've been in the box for so long.”

For example, Trish has reduced service costs. Her brother appreciates her attention to details and her desire to make changes.

“I've always been a guy who is resistant to change, so having her here is very good,” JR says. “She came in and has been able to say, ‘Here are some things we can do differently and more efficiently,’ and it has worked.”



In many ways, siblings JR and Trish Boyles couldn't be more different. JR says this actually has helped their company become more profitable.

The Atlantic Bolt Inc. staff is more like family to owners Trish and JR Boyles.

Trish, who returned home after more than 20 years to be closer to family, says she is enjoying the family business and hometown more than expected.

"Growing up here, in the 80s the city was dead after 5 p.m. Now, it is a nationally recognized city with great job opportunities, a vibrant social scene and a thriving uptown residential community," she says. "The growth has been incredible, and that's great for business."

While she was away, Trish held many jobs, the longest held being a professor of business strategy and management at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania. She is enjoying putting her expertise to practice at Atlantic Bolt.

"JR and I have had really different paths to here," Trish says. "Usually after three or four years, I like to move on and try something different to challenge myself. JR started with the company right out of high school and never left. He knows our products and operations inside and out, and I think that experience and product

knowledge is a huge part of our success. One of our sales reps has been with us since the first day over 30 years ago, and another has more than 28 years of experience. You can't beat that kind of product knowledge."

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENCE

Dwane Burkhardt, Vice President of Purchasing for SteelFab in Charlotte, says Atlantic Bolt's experienced and knowledgeable staff is precisely why his company relies heavily on them.

SteelFab is one of the nation's largest suppliers of fabricated structural steel and does more than \$750 million in business annually across much of the United States. Atlantic Bolt supplies four of its locations in the Charlotte area and in the southeastern U.S.

"They are a local company and they get it done. Ease of use and competitive pricing are two major reasons we use them," Burkhardt notes. "We have a good working relationship. Our company has a lot of major projects, and I can't afford to waste time waiting around or answering

questions. With Atlantic Bolt, there is no handholding. I appreciate that. Most of our business is done through an email with JR or a phone call. Quick and easy. No headaches."

GROWING UP BOYLES

JR breaks into a bit of a laugh when asked about growing up with his sister.

"We've always had a good relationship, even when we've been apart," he says. "The only thing I think I ever tried to do to her was try to see if she would fit in the dryer when we were really young. I promised her I wouldn't turn it on, but she got out real quick when she saw me about to shut the door," he recalls, laughing.

A better memory for both is how Trish introduced him to his wife.

"She was always bold," JR says of Trish. "Being four years younger, she was playing high school basketball and got to know Robin, who was a teacher and the cheerleading coach at the time. Trish told her, 'You have to meet my brother.' I showed up at a

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Trish Boyles, Vice President,
Atlantic Bolt Inc.

few games, but it took a few weeks to get to meet and talk to her because everyone was watching us.”

They’ve been married 22 years and have an 18-year-old daughter named Lauren.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: THE NUTS & BOLTS OF SUCCESS

Outside of his sister’s wanderlust, both say they share many of the same business beliefs.

“We both have a big focus on customer service,” Trish says. “It stems from when our father started the business. He saw poor service in this industry when he started and said we’d be different. That means getting orders out on time and accurately. That has allowed us to keep going for 30 years. The customer comes first with us.”

Sometimes, JR says, that means turning away business if they feel they can’t meet delivery demands.

“It’s all about honesty and integrity,” JR says. “We would rather beat what we say we can do than come up short of expectations.” 🐼

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Atlantic Bolt Inc. staff can custom make anchor bolts and sag rods for any construction project.