



Sweet New (and Renovated) Digs for Two GC's

Ascent's office in Farmington and Wadman's recently renovated HQ in Ogden show that GC's are indeed image conscious.

By Brad Fullmer

Image is everything.

It's a phrase uttered, repeated, and made popular by many. Tennis legend Andre Agassi – back when he was a brash 19-year-old rising star sporting a raging mullet and cocksure attitude – made those three simple words so memorable in a 1989 Canon Rebel TV ad. But popular Japanese contemporary writer Haruki Murakami expands every so gracefully beyond that short, yet powerful, phrase.

"Image is everything – you don't spare

any expense to create the right image," writes Murakami. "And word of mouth is critical. Once you get a good reputation, momentum will carry you."

Two prominent local general contractors took that message to heart recently with sizeable investments in their own headquarters. Earlier this year, Ascent Construction moved from Centerville into a brand new \$6 million office in Farmington (a stone's throw north of Lagoon), while Wadman Corporation completed a

lavish renovation of its existing Ogden headquarters late last year.

Ascent's building was designed by Scott P. Evans Architect & Assoc. of Bountiful, with a goal of implementing the best, most impactful 'green design' features with an eye towards LEED certification. This was achieved with a VRF HVAC system, efficient LED lighting, the use of renewable materials, and expansive daylighting

Tall cedar ceilings (17 ft. at peak) and

long windows offer spacious views of the mountains to the east. The natural stone façade wall – which juts out dramatically on the building's west side entrance, continues into the main, two-level lobby. A beautiful ceremonial staircase with wood stair treads, glass sides and lit handrails highlights the space.

"This is a showpiece for us – it represents what we do," said Ascent President Brad Knowlton, who founded the company in 2000 after 15-plus years working for two other local firms. "It's part of our growth and takes us to another level. Our prior building was holding us back, but when we built it we weren't the company we are today."

Ascent has indeed made great strides in its relatively short existence and currently ranks as the tenth-largest GC in Utah with \$156.7 million in 2016 revenues, a number which Knowlton said will be exceeded in 2017 by a sizeable margin, perhaps pushing \$200 million.

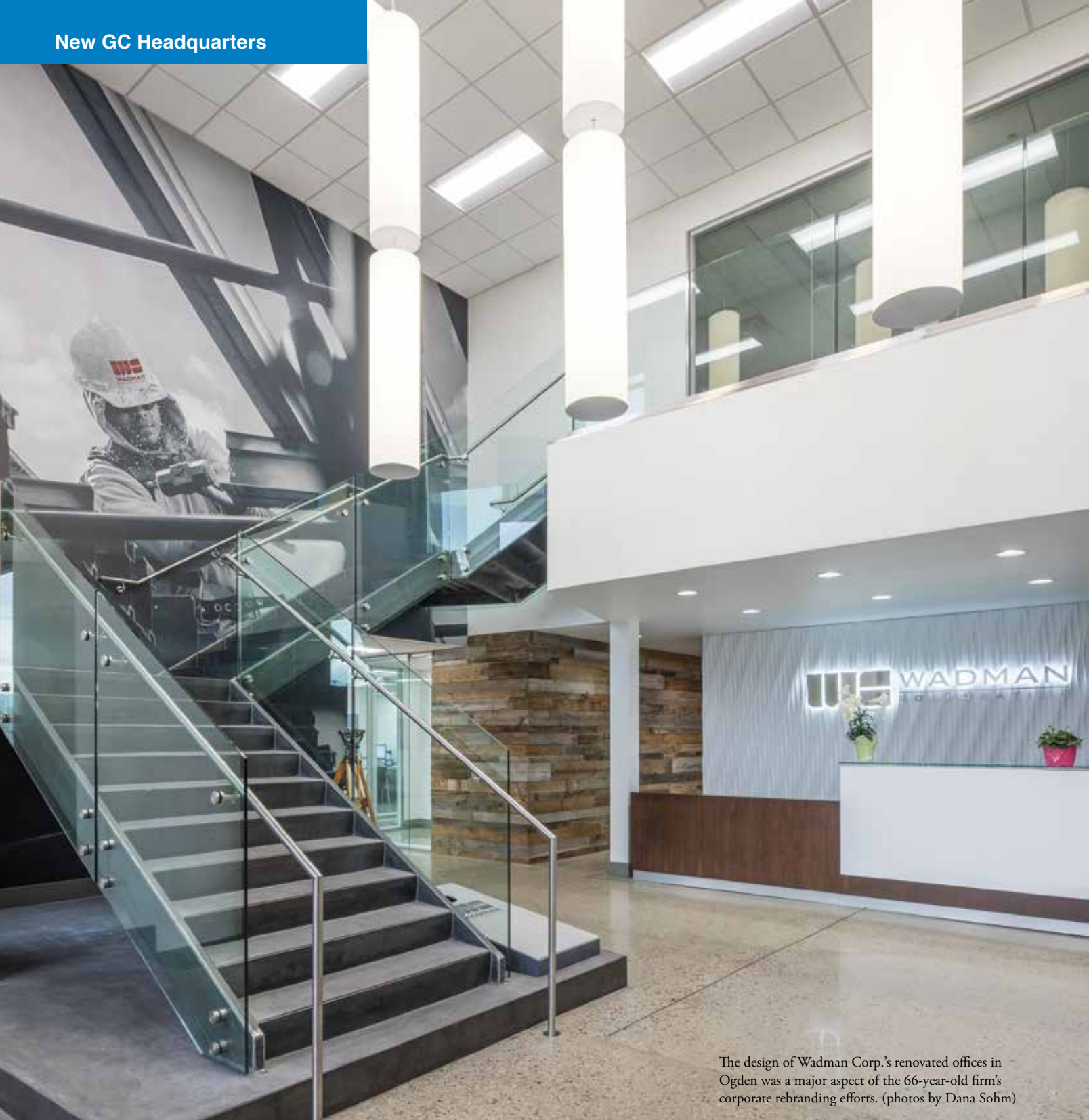
"I always thought I'd do my own thing," said Knowlton, 61, who graduated with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from the University of Utah in 1984. He started Ascent in the basement of his Farmington home and quickly found success. He's now come full-circle in the best way imaginable.

"We've been very blessed, very fortunate," he says. "We doubled our investment our first year, and overall our growth has been dramatic. We don't want to be the biggest, we just want to be the best. We've had years when 85%-90% of business was repeat or referrals. We build a variety of projects and I really want that in our firm. I don't ever want to be thought of as a contractor that is one-dimensional."

"This building is timeless, it's modern, it's high-tech...it's a culmination of great design and construction," said Bob Murri, VP of Business Development/Marketing for Ascent. "We want clients, architects to be impressed, to see that this is who we are and what we love to do." >>



Design elements in Ascent's new Farmington headquarters include beautiful stonework, large windows, exposed structural elements and a modern glass-and-steel stairway in the two-story lobby. (photos courtesy Ascent Construction)



The design of Wadman Corp.'s renovated offices in Ogden was a major aspect of the 66-year-old firm's corporate rebranding efforts. (photos by Dana Sohm)

Wadman Keeps Sharp Eye on Future

Founded in 1951 by V. Jay Wadman, Ogden-based Wadman Corporation underwent a major remodel of its headquarters, completed last November. The 66-year-old firm has consistently ranked among Utah's top revenue-generating contractors, and last year was no exception as Wadman reported 2016 revenues of \$158

million, ninth best among Utah GC's.

Keith Buswell, VP of Corporate Relations at Wadman, said the remodel of the 30,000 SF, 18-year-old building was a strategic part of the firm's recent rebranding and marketing efforts. Architectural Nexus of Salt Lake found unique ways to incorporate past projects and ideals into design elements, with

vintage photography of construction workers on walls and images of construction documents etched into glass. The main conference room includes a timeless image of its founder, a humble surveyor who ultimately built an eventual industry heavyweight.

"This was a big step for us - there had been some discussions about it for



a couple of years," said Buswell, a 15-year veteran of the firm who said the renovation was part of an overall rebranding effort in the past couple of years. "We wanted to make sure our building was consistent with our brand, not only to the community but to our own people."

A beautiful two-story lobby is inviting and warm, with rustic barnwood timber helping create a three-dimensional, tactile environment. The lobby's winding metal and glass stairway is a stunning architectural feature, with some of Wadman's old survey equipment at the base of the stairs.

Despite the inconvenience of having to shuffle employee workspaces, it was business as usual for the firm during the six-month construction process.

"Some of use moved a couple of times to accommodate it," said Buswell. "A good percentage of our (tenant improvement) work for our national clients is in occupies space, so we're used to it." ■



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