



Keeping a Big Operation On Top

C&C Logging focusses on efficiency, safety and productivity

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When the opportunity presented itself for Frank Chandler Sr. to move from timber faller to contract logger, C&C Logging was born, in Vernonia, Ore. That was 46 years ago and since then, the Chandlers have grown C&C from a small two-man operation into one of the largest, most highly respected contract logging operations in the Pacific Northwest, with over one hundred employees and enough machinery to run more than 12-14 sides at a time.

Management

C&C Logging is a family run business, owned by Frank Sr., his wife Lee, and their son and daughter Frank Jr. and Leanne. Frank Sr., Frank Jr., and 22-year C&C veteran Rob McDonald manage daily operations while Lee and Leanne keep the books and manage the office.

Although C&C's origins are in Oregon, the Chandlers moved the company to Longview, Wash., in 1974 in order to be situated closer to the best contracting opportunities.

Growing a company from two people to more than one hundred never happens without organization and effort. With dedication to safety, efficiency, and profitability, it has always been the policy of C&C to use the correct machine for the job. If a contract can be performed more efficiently with equipment they do not have, C&C is willing to expand their mechanical inventory to get the job done right. This also allows C&C to be more competitive the next time a similar contract is up for bid.

Handling a Large Lineup

Over time, and as C&C's inventory of equipment grew, the need to manage and maintain equipment grew as well. With multiple towers, yarders, track skidders, shovels, tong throwers, grapples, processors, harvesters, skidders, feller bunchers, short loggers, pole trucks, lowboys, and other machinery, their needs had grown beyond what local equipment and repair companies could handle.

In 2004 the decision was made to lease and maintain a shop facility in nearby Kelso, Wash. More space was needed for equipment repairs and also for the increase in office staff just to accommodate the increased paper workload.

Yui Soetamin, the office manager of 18 years, maintains the software for both the accounting and parts system and sets up each job among her numerous other tasks. C&C utilizes a state-of-the art accounting software program that tracks loads by ticket numbers, assuring that every load is properly accounted for. Lee says the reason is, "Log trucks hauling for C&C are paid within three days after receivables from the landowners."

Their modern shop consists of two large attached buildings and one detached. Six shop mechanics and three full-time field mechanics keep their vast fleet of equipment maintained and repaired.



One of the keys to success, says Frank Jr., is “C&C Logging has a computerized parts facility to keep track of what we have on hand. This gives us greater consistency and less downtime — an important part of profitability for us.”

Staffing and Experience

Another challenge to maintaining a large logging firm, says Frank Jr., is proper staffing. In 2007 C&C added Safety and Human Resource Manager Merrill Berger to monitor their safety program and find the right people for the job. This has been a big success for C&C.

“It’s key that we hire the right people in the first place,” says Frank Jr. “It’s costly to spend a year training a new operator only to have them leave for another job afterward, especially with the variety of equipment we have.”

An example, Frank says, is their pole logging side. Pole logging, while potentially profitable, is also more difficult than ordinary harvests and, with the wrong crew, can be risky financially. This is because poles require a more mature stand of select trees in the 65 to 70 years age bracket. Pole trees cannot be damaged by machines when harvest takes place so the harvesting crew must be experienced enough to properly handle stems that can be worth \$2,500 each.

“They have to be gentle with those unwieldy poles and not damage any of the trees left to grow. It takes a lot of training for those guys who work on the pole side,” says Frank Jr.

With a company this large, customers have come to depend on C&C for consistent, quality service. The company typically harvests between 160 and 180 loads per day and dedicates at least 4 sides to each of their customers. This means bids must be worked up carefully because an error in the bidding process can turn a profitable job into a loss quickly. This is where having a variety of sides is helpful. For example, C&C utilizes a clambunk, with a 25-ton capacity, which they can efficiently move logs to an existing road, and reduce road construction costs considerably.

Better Safety, Lower Insurance Costs

Asked about changes in the market and current challenges, Frank Jr. says there are a few things they are tracking. First is keeping their workforce at the proper level to keep costs reasonable but also be ready for when the market picks up. With their varied equipment, finding potentially productive operators and training them to the level required for their jobs can be difficult. At the same time, it’s important for C&C to be ready for the future. “When the market is slow, thinning always gets dropped first. Because of the length of time training takes, it is difficult to have guys ready,” says Frank Jr.

Another challenge Frank Jr. sees coming is the ever-increasing insurance costs with a State run insurance monopoly. The Labor & Industries current rate for “5001 employees” is currently \$19.61 per hour if your experience factor is 1.0 and the current industry average is .9568.

The 5001 employee rate applies to all timber fallers and rigging crews under the towers. One can easily see the importance of keeping your experience factor as low as possible with a comprehensive safety program. This is why C&C has worked hard to find ways to lower their insurance costs.



For example, jobs on steep slopes require a developed skill set, have a higher risk factor, and potential to lose seasoned workers if an injury does occur. This has resulted in steep-slope logging becoming less profitable for many companies. In order to keep their tower sides profitable, C&C has developed a specialized two-man grapple and cable operation with a tower radioman in a safe location to keep their employees safe and the ever-rising L&I costs as low as possible.

C&C Logging is one of the largest private logging companies in Washington State because of the Chandlers' dedication to their employees and customers. Innovative harvest techniques and an unparalleled dedication to safety have helped C&C Logging remain profitable for more than four decades in an industry that has seen a variety of ups and downs.

A Frank Talk about Thinning

Frank Chandler Jr., considers thinning to be a partnership with the landowner built on respect and trust. C&C Logging currently has four cut-to-length sides dedicated to thinning work. Frank notes that thinning is cutting edge for the industry, but historically, the concept of thinning has at times received a bad rap. In part because often the parties involved did not share the same vision for the end result.

Franks says, "Thinning is so subjective that in the short term it's not easy for the landowner to justify the costs or quantify the value of the work that we perform. Everyone involved has to consider the financial and silviculture aspects of the resource. You can't be in it for yourself or it's just not going to work. You have to approach it from a long term perspective."

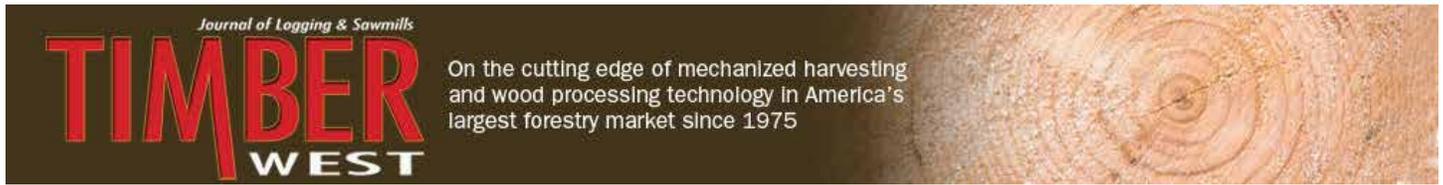
C&C Logging is fortunate to be working with customers that share their vision and commitment to the resource. Franks says, "You have to understand trees and how they grow. Plus, you have to understand markets because our thinning customers are sort of betting on the future.

"Landowners are banking on the value of what they're doing today when the stand is 20 to 25 years old. The science behind that has proven the effort will pay off when the trees mature. However, that is still a leap of faith because nobody knows what the markets will be in 25 years," says Frank.

"As a contractor, I've got to do my part to be as efficient as possible so the landowner can get the return they're after. Thinning requires experienced operators with a unique skill set. It takes a great deal of focus to do things the right way every day. If I didn't have really good operators it probably wouldn't make economic sense for the landowner, especially when pulp prices are in the tank."

Frank adds, "We're fortunate to be working in a time when the industry is evolving with manufacturers building machines and technologies that help us do a better job. The new Scandinavian harvesters are really something else. Those guys have figured out the creature comforts and ergonomics. They've been at that longer than us (thinning) and have focused on the finer details and techniques that lead to increased production."

C&C Logging uses the latest GIS software like Komatsu's MaxiNavigator to help setup its jobs more efficiently and track production. The company is also experimenting with work statistics programs to help operators understand and refine techniques and practices that help them improve productivity.



Frank says, “My harvester operators are highly skilled. They are go-getters that take a lot of pride in what they do. I want to provide the tools they need to stay “in the zone” because avoiding distractions and focusing on efficient work habits is what keeps our thinning sides going.”

Frank concludes, “If we continue do things that keep us on the cutting edge it makes C&C Logging better, that in turn allows our customers to stay competitive in a global marketplace. At the end of the day that is good everybody’s long term interests.”