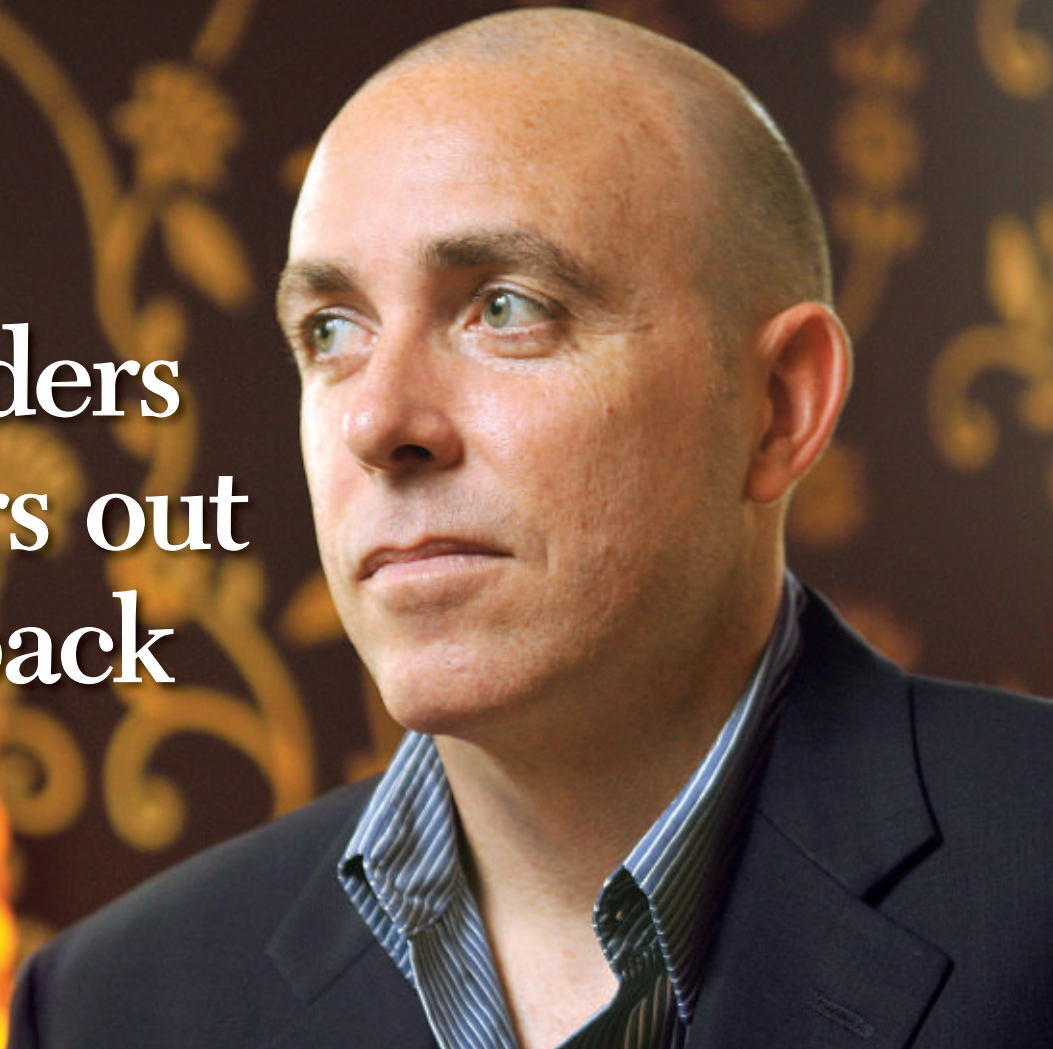




**THINK POSITIVE ■ 22**

Architect Janet Tam finds new opportunities in sustainable design.

## R3 Builders hammers out a comeback



**"We were in a race against time,"** says Rick Dade of the Dosa restaurant rebuild (below).

### SNAPSHOT:

#### R3 Builders

**HQ:** San Francisco.

**What it does:** Construction.

**Founder:** Rick Dade.

**2009 revenue:** \$4.3 million.

**2008 revenue:** \$7.2 million.

**2007 revenue:** \$3.5 million.

**Employees:** 18.

**Founded:** 2001.

**Website:** [www.r3builders.com](http://www.r3builders.com)

PHOTOS / SPENCER BROWN

### S.F. firm builds up its project list again in 2010

BY JESSICA HELLER  
San Francisco Business Times

**R**3 Builders has a knack for turning boring, worn-out spaces into chic restaurants and retail stores. Now, after the recession, the San Francisco construction firm is focusing on rebuilding itself.

The 18-employee company posted its best year ever in 2008, doubling revenue to \$7.2 million. But it fell nearly as fast in 2009, back to \$4.3 million.

"Towards the end of 2008 people had no ability to get financing, so in 2009 we weren't doing that much work at all," said Dade. "It wasn't until the end of 2009 that people started calling again and having us look at projects."

The market turned for R3 just as it was completing the build out of South Indian restaurant Dosa in 2008. In just under five months, R3 Builders had transformed an old Goodwill store on Fillmore Street into a upscale restaurant with a full bar and a new loft area with additional seating.

"We were in a race against time to try and get Dosa open before (the economy) went to complete hell," said Rick Dade, the owner and president.

Over the years, R3 has done projects for a diverse list of San Francisco clients, including Haute Bride Bridal Salon, Croll Sport, Bin 38 Wine Bar, Dosa, Pisco Latin Lounge,



Patxti's Chicago Pizza and The Parlor.

"R3 Builders came up with creative solutions for every aspect of our project, and pulled it off under a near-impossible deadline," said John Gordon of Healdsburg restaurant Affronti on R3 Builders' website.

Immersing R3 Builders in the restaurant community is starting to pay off, Dade said.

"We've always had the reputation to get the work, but not enough people knew who we were," Dade said. "It's just been a matter of meeting more people and getting our message out about what we can do to help them open a restaurant."

To attract new business, R3 Builders hired a publicist, created a Facebook page and revamped its website this year. It sponsored SF Chefs 2010, which tented Union Square and attracted foodies from around the country.

This month Dade looked at 11 new projects — more

than he looked at during all of 2009, he said

"People are raising money for new spaces," he said. "They are interested in looking at new spaces and starting new projects."

Dade has a family history in construction. Both his father and grandfather worked in the business, and growing up Dade worked for his father's construction company.

In 2000, he moved from Southern California to manage a construction firm in San Francisco. But the business quickly faltered, and in 2001 Dade started his own business in the same space, hiring the former business' staff and taking over its projects.

Dade borrowed money from family and put what little savings he had into starting the business. He made deals with the subcontractors he knew to get some flexibility on their payment schedules.

"I had one big luxury that most people don't have (when they start a business)," said Dade. "I had a client and work already going when I started."

The business grew steadily until 2004 with only one client, Dade said, but he learned that was a big mistake. When that client's business slowed, R3 Builders had to diversify quickly. It now builds restaurants, retail and commercial spaces. Dade also added a cabinetry division in 2005.

"The fact that we do have our own mill shop that we have control over gives us control over the costs and schedule, and gives us the ability to perform better than a lot of our competitors," said Dade.

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