



FULLY STOCKED— AND SATISFIED

The grocery game may have changed, but **Lynmar Builders' commitment to customers remains the same** by Jamie Knodel

When most people visit the grocery store, they're focused on picking up bread, milk, eggs and anything else on their shopping lists. But for others, it's a matter of customer service, retail trends and the growing shift toward e-commerce that are top of mind.

The team behind New Jersey's *Lynmar Builders* fits squarely in the second group. For more than three decades, the firm—led by Robert Dunn and Mike Palmieri—has been building, renovating and maintaining grocery stores and supermarkets.

"People always ask me if you can really make a living with just grocery stores," Dunn says. "Well, I've been doing it for 30 years."

And while much has changed in the grocery business in the years since Lynmar started, the company's commitment

and focus on its customers has not. The construction firm, which works in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland, prides itself on providing low-cost, quality and speedy work on commercial projects.

"We want a customer for a lifetime," says Dunn—and his team is willing to do whatever it takes to keep one.

That customer-focused culture has translated into repeat customers, including grocery owners who add stores and turn to Lynmar for each of the new projects. And in fact, Dunn says, most of its customers have more than one store that Lynmar built.

"If you've used us once, you'll always use us," Dunn says. "We don't know any other way of doing business."

Jeff Brown, President and CEO of Brown's Super Stores, says his ShopRite Supermarket business was one of Lynmar's first supermarket clients.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DONNA CRISAFULLI

While constructing this Rastelli Market Fresh in Marlton, N.J., Lynmar Builders was tasked with including a brick-oven pizzeria, a juice bar, a coffee bar, an artisan bakery and a cafe.

RASTELLI MARKET FRESH

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Jeff Brown, President and CEO,
Brown's Super Stores

“I have always counted on Lynmar to deliver for us,” he says. “Quality work, on-time completion and managing the entire development process from design, specs, bidding, construction and maintenance management. Lynmar has been an incredible partner.”

A 24-7 MENTALITY

The Lynmar Builders' way of doing business is providing 24-hour service. “Our project managers answer their phones 24/7,” Dunn says.

Lynmar's 50 employees provide a range of services, including design and construction, building maintenance and repair as well as zoning and permitting.

Dunn calls the commercial builder's trademark attention to customers “cradle-to-grave service.” “We'll expand your store, fix your register ...” he says, citing but a few examples of the type of jobs Lynmar Builders performs.

As with most retail businesses, the internet and e-commerce is reshaping the grocery industry. In a report released early this year, market research leader Nielsen and the Food Marketing Institute estimated that, from 2016-2025, the amount of online grocery spending will bloom from 4.3 percent of total U.S. food and beverage sales to more than 20 percent and exceed \$100 billion. In 2016, online grocery

sales topped \$20 billion, according to Nielsen's “The Digitally Engaged Food Shopper” report.

Since 2014, the number of U.S. households buying at least some groceries online has gone from 19 percent to 25 percent, the report found. And within the next 10 years, that number will grow to more than 70 percent of U.S. households.

The growth is expected to happen much quicker than it has happened in other industries. “Within the next decade, online food shopping will reach maturation in the U.S., far faster than other industries that have come online before,” the report predicts.



The commercial construction firm has been building grocery stores, like this ShopRite in Brookhaven, Pa., for more than 30 years.

The report urges brick-and-mortar grocers to “develop an understanding of their digitally engaged shoppers, build a strategy around that understanding and cost-effectively integrate digital food retail into their banner.”

BUILDING FOR DIGITAL CONSUMERS

So how do the stores do that? What can they do to stay successful?

Dunn knows, because he’s seeing his clients doing their best to keep up now.

The stores are finding space in their existing buildings for shop-at-home operations and a space to fulfill orders, and Lynmar is helping them find the room to do so.

One customer has already more than doubled the area it devotes to its e-commerce operation. It started with 700 square feet for shop-at-home, and now it has 1,500.

“They’re carving out space from the back room,” Dunn says. “Lots of times, they’re taking space from within the store or taking space from a neighboring store that is shrinking.”

Accommodating e-commerce operations for its grocery store clients—most of which are independent owners—may be the latest industry trend Lynmar has been dealing with, but it’s far from the first.

Being an expert on grocery stores means that Lynmar is well-equipped to build a variety of businesses.

“Supermarkets are retail, but they have full-service restaurants, bakeries and more. They’re stores within stores,” Dunn says. “They’ve just put all the mom-and-pop shops inside one store.”

A growing number of grocery stores now feature in-store medical clinics, and Lynmar has overseen those projects, too. “Customers can be seen and get their prescriptions all in one place,” Dunn says.

For a bit, grocery stores were steering clear of the “supermarket” moniker and instead opting for smaller, specialty stores. But Dunn explains that this trend has peaked and owners are once again going big. “We’re building big stores again versus boutique stores,” he says.

Few commercial builders focus almost exclusively on grocery stores, and doing so has put Lynmar in a unique position. “There are so many moving parts to a grocery environment,” Dunn says. “It gives us a niche business.”

Lynmar Builders is looking to branch out some. “We have a specialty, and now we are looking to build different types of businesses,” Dunn says, noting that Lynmar is building its first hotel and medical clinics. “We don’t want to have all our eggs in one basket.” 🐣

NIelsen’s “THE DIGITALLY ENGAGED FOOD SHOPPER” REPORT PREDICTS THAT ONLINE FOOD SHOPPING WILL REACH MATURATION IN THE U.S. WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE—FAR FASTER THAN OTHER INDUSTRIES THAT HAVE COME ONLINE BEFORE.

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