

## Treadwell: Seismic engineers on solid ground

San Francisco Business Times - by [Michelle Dammon Loyalka](#)

As head of one of the Bay Area's premier environmental and geotechnical consulting firms, Phil Tringale doesn't have to worry too much about finding new projects.

After all, the 18-year-old Treadwell & Rollo Inc. works closely with the **Public Utilities Commission**, the City of San Francisco, the Port of Oakland and many big-name area developers. It's been involved in a galaxy of highly visible projects, including Mission Bay, the Exploratorium and the Golden Gate Bridge's seismic retrofit.

Capitalizing on recent growth, the firm just opened an office in Sacramento and is signed up to do seismic work on a massive 5,500-unit project at Treasure Island.

"We have the work," said Tringale, who joined the company in 1992 and took over as president when one of the original founders retired four years ago. "We always have the work."

But it hasn't always been that way. Because the firm's niche -- which includes soil and groundwater assessment, environmental cleanup and seismic engineering -- is largely dependent on the construction industry, new projects dwindled when the dot-com bubble burst.

Realizing that the business was too dependent on both private sector and Bay Area work, Tringale -- who holds a Ph.D. in civil engineering from the University of California, Berkeley -- decided to diversify. He started by bringing in full-time marketing and business development staff to help snatch up more public sector projects while also expanding the company's reach beyond Northern California. He also made an effort to be more responsive to client needs and began taking on more landfill, hospital and school projects.

Those strategies have proven effective. Since then, Treadwell & Rollo has grown its staff and now boasts 82 employees and revenue approaching \$20 million. That makes the company larger in terms of people, income and large-scale projects than ever.

The only limiting factor the company faces now is a persistent shortage of qualified employees with five to 10 years experience.



Najib Joe Hakim

Tringale: "The competition right now is for finding and retaining great people."

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"The competition right now is for finding and retaining great people," said Tringale, who has already hired more than a dozen new employees this year.

To attract top talent, the company is aggressively recruiting. In addition to a comprehensive benefits package, employee wellness programs, sizable bonuses and a profit-sharing program, the firm's new Sacramento office is partly an attempt to bring on board younger employees who might be wary of the Bay Area's high cost of living.

For now, however, Tringale's goal is to stay on course with moderate and controlled growth -- a strategy well suited to the company's focus on developing long-term relationships with clients.

Bill Lightner, owner of Lightner Property Group in San Francisco, has worked with Treadwell & Rollo on four major development projects in past few years. He said the company has been invaluable in helping him navigate through the frantic "fog of war" that often surrounds large-scale property development.

"It's a confusing process and they bring clarity to the confusion," he said. "These guys are top-notch."

*Snapshot:*

Company: Treadwell & Rollo, Inc.

HQ: San Francisco.

Founded: 1988.

2005 Revenue: \$17 million.

Web site: [www.treadwellrollo.com](http://www.treadwellrollo.com)

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