

## New South's Jeff Brown Happy to Not be Stuck in an Office

Jeff Brown drives to work as the day is getting just light enough to avoid a wandering horse or cow. There are lots of them out here in Cobb County near Kennesaw.

"I didn't want an office job. I like to be outside. I like to build things," Brown said as he was checking on the progress of work at the construction site of West Cobb Middle School. "When we came here, this was just a big field with some falling down chicken houses. Now, one year later, we're almost dried in. One more year and kids will be attending class in a building I built. That's a wonderful feeling of accomplishment."



Jeff Brown, left, plans the day's work with grading contractor Tommy Hunt. "I really enjoy working with the subs to make sure everyone is doing what needs to be done. I work closely with the Superintendent, John Cullum, to see that everything on the job site flows smoothly. At New South Construction, our first priority is to build relationships by doing top quality work and treating people right – every job, every time," Brown said.

Brown, 27, is a Project Manager for New South Construction, the general contractor for the new school. "The schedule, the costs, the performance of the subcontractors – those are the things I manage. My job is to work with the superintendent to see we get the job done on time and within budget. But at New South, we also focus on building relationships. We want to be invited to do repeat business," he said forcefully.



Jeff Brown checks the project schedule for a school building project he manages in a picturesque part of Cobb County. "I control the costs of everything from the paper cups for the water cooler to the cost of our subcontractors. I schedule things so people don't get in each other's way and waste time and money. You have to see the big picture of where you are and where you're headed. I depend on everyone on the team to get it done."

So how does a man just ten years out of South Gwinnett High School get to be a project manager over a big job like this? "My dad started his own company when I was 11 years old. I worked with him doing residential building and remodeling. I found that I enjoyed working with my hands and having a finished product. I had an offer to play football for a small Ivy League school, but they were just liberal arts. I couldn't study construction. So I went to Georgia Tech to study Building Construction Management," Brown explained.

Mr. Mark Collins, one of Brown's instructors in the Building Construction Program at Georgia Tech, remembers how well Brown got along with the other faculty and students. "Jeff is one of those people who seem to be sincerely interested in other people – their needs, their feelings. He was voted the best communicator of his class. I think that's because he really likes people, so he listens to them," Collins said. "Everyone knew he was going to rise to the top of whatever he chose to do."

During his college summers, Brown worked for construction companies. He started as a laborer. It was hard work – digging ditches, sweeping up trash, hauling supplies. But Brown found that you can learn about construction in whatever job you're doing. "The man I worked with as a laborer was over 60 years old, yet he could work circles around me and anyone else on the job, sunup to sundown, day after day. He taught me how to stay on task and get things done right. I'll never forget him," Brown recalled fondly. "That's true of everything in construction – you can always learn something new."

A summer internship even earned Brown three college credit hours, plus some good money.

What does the future hold for Jeff Brown? He and his wife of five and one-half years are expecting their first child soon. Brown figures he's making as much money as most - and more than some - of his friends his age. He says 60 hour work weeks are common. But Jeff is happy with his prospects.

"With New South, there's no place to go but up. We're a young, growing company. My boss gives me as much responsibility as I want to handle. We are building trust with our customers on every job," Brown said. "The future of our company is assured as long as we keep our customer focus, because the construction industry is growing fast. This is just a super place to be!"

As long as there are buildings to be built, Jeff Brown is not going to have to be stuck in any office. Better stay off those Cobb County back roads, you horses and cows. Jeff Brown is moving on through to bigger jobs and even bigger responsibilities.