

Express Lien

Key innovation: a more affordable and efficient way to file construction liens

Where they're based: New Orleans and Seattle

Top executive: Scott Wolfe, founder and CEO

Year introduced: June 2007

SCOTT WOLFE WANTS TO revolutionize the way people file liens.

After devising a way to streamline the process, the New Orleans attorney and entrepreneur launched Express Lien in 2007.

Construction projects involve hundreds of parties. As a result, people don't always get paid for their work.

The person or company can file a lien on the property to prevent it from being sold, transferred or refinanced until all work is paid for.

"It's a big thing and it's been around forever," Wolfe said of liens.

In the past, filing a lien meant hiring a lawyer and paying that person by the hour for their services — an expense that adds up quickly.

Express Lien allows customers to instead pay a flat rate of \$295 to have the lien filed online. If an attorney is needed later, the customer can hire one separately.

Customers say they appreciate Express Lien's affordability and efficiency.

"It only takes a few minutes to do, and it is at a very reasonable cost," said Tiffany Comardelle of St. Rose-based Bottom Line Equipment. "You do it online so you don't have to waste any time, gas and money to drive to an attorney and pay a few hundred dollars to give them paperwork."

That's especially helpful since filing a lien is often more effective than an angry letter, Comardelle said.

"After a customer would hear that a lien was filed, they would drop what they were doing to cut us a check," she said.

Express Lien offers services in Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi, California, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

"The demand was pretty high, so we slowed down (expansion) a bit," Wolfe said. He hopes to expand to all 50 states and is working on offering services in Brazil and Canada.

He also wants to expand into doing all kinds of legal documents for construction cases at a flat fee of \$125 each. •

— Fritz Esker



Express Lien founder and CEO Scott Wolfe has expanded the company's services to Georgia, Mississippi, California, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington, with plans for Brazil and Canada.