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### 32

Radius Trusses Present Unique Challenges in Design, Manufacturing

by Libby Maurer

68-foot trusses for a grand custom home pose design, manufacturing and delivery challenges for a Florida manufacturer.

### 36

The Board Footage Myth Debunked

by Scott Coffman, P.E., Builders FirstSource

The common misconceptions of board footage estimating techniques are examined.

### 42

Reduce Risk & Increase Revenue: Marketing & Sales of Wall Panels (Part 6 of 6)

by Jim Boyle

This final installment of a six-part series covers one strategy for marketing and selling wall panels.

## Columns

Editor's Message • Material Handling	7
Technical Q&A • Trusses with Exposed Bottom Chords	10
Safety Scene • Steel Components & Eye Safety	12
BCMC & Your Business Plan • Your Business Lifeline	16
WTCA Update • Improve Jobsite Safety with Safety Zone	18
Human Faces • Mixing Business with Education	20
Environmental Components • Nine Ways Components Are Already "Green"	24
How to... • Make Special Orders Extraordinarily Profitable	28

## Departments

Chapter Corner	46
Calendar of Events	48
Classified Ads	48
Advertiser Index	48
Parting Shots	50



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# Editor's Message

## Material Handling

by Bob Becht

Get a handle on materials and much more in this issue!

It's the August issue, and that means a spotlight on material handling. I know what some of you are thinking—"we don't have any material to handle!" I've felt the same way a few times this year. But the reality is, as long as we have human beings moving inventory and product around, safe and efficient material handling is very important.

The cover story for this issue presents some interesting handling scenarios due to the use of long-span double-radius trusses. This project, which occurred in my home state of Florida, was uniquely challenging for the folks at Builders FirstSource. Turn to page 32 to read about how individuals from this company combined art and science to supply components for this extravagant custom home.

When was the last time you estimated the cost of a job using price per board foot as a metric? In "The Board Footage Myth Debunked" on page 36, Scott Coffman explains why costing with board footage can be a short-sighted method. With examples as proof, Coffman tells us why we would be wise to consider a more global strategy of costing that includes labor, species, grade and plates.

**As long as we have human beings moving inventory and product around, safe and efficient material handling is very important.**

In this issue's **Environmental Components** column (see page 24), we take a look at nine ways your company and products are (and have always been) "green." It is proof positive that building green doesn't have to mean paying top dollar for possibly inaccessible certified materials or trying to earn a point here or a point there by complying with one of the many wordy green building programs. The building and design community doesn't necessarily focus on the true environmental benefits of component design and building. So it's our job to spread the word: "Structural Building Components: Green since 1952."

I'd like to remind you that the **BCMC Early Bird Deadline is August 25**. Attendance rates go up about 20 percent after this date, so you take advantage of the deal. On page 16 you'll find a complete list of the educational presentations and roundtables that await this year's BCMC attendees. One of the reasons I'm going to BCMC this year is to fine-tune our business plan for 2009. I'm also looking forward to collecting some new ideas from my peers. The show is one of the things that makes our industry so unique, and I am continually fascinated by this forum we create once a year that makes us stronger, smarter and better business people. Most of us are facing the most challenging business environment of our lives, and BCMC promises to be your business lifeline. There's really nothing else like it. I hope to see you there.

Finally, a special reminder that we have permanently moved the Annual SBC Industry Supplier Listing that formerly ran in the August issue of **SBC** to the Supplier Showcase/Buyer's Guide, which is polybagged with the November issue. In the meantime, to find more information about our loyal **SBC** advertisers, visit [www.sbcmag.info/advertisers](http://www.sbcmag.info/advertisers). **SBC**

### at a glance

- ❑ A project featuring long-span radius trusses is on page 32.
- ❑ Environmental Components on page 24 explains nine reasons building components have been green since 1952.
- ❑ Don't miss the BCMC Early Bird deadline on August 25! Check out the main events on page 16.

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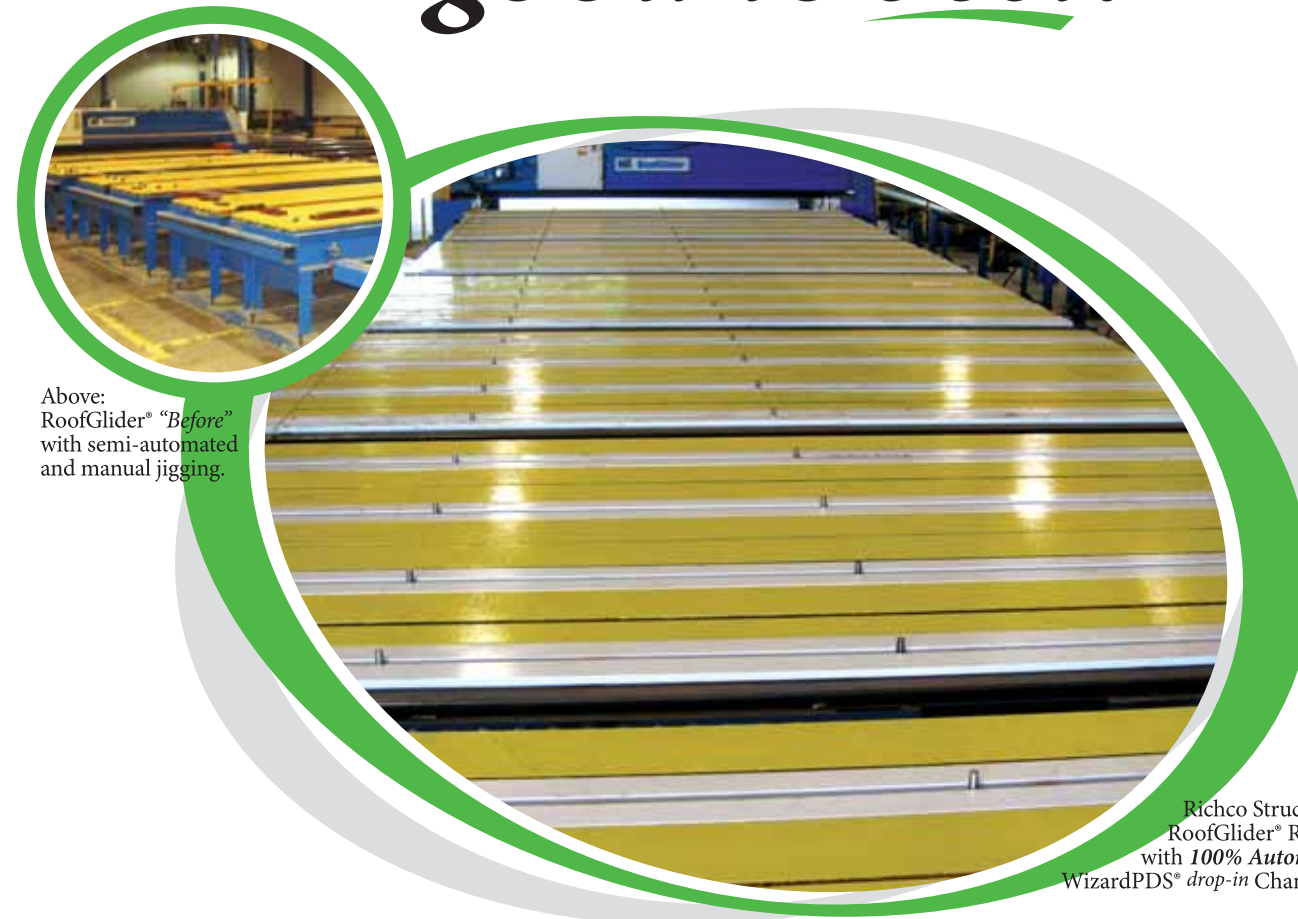
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The mission of *Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC)* is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing structural building components. Further, *SBC* strives to ensure growth, continuity and increased professionalism in our industry, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. *SBC's* editorial focus is geared toward the entire structural building component industry, which includes the membership of WICA – Representing the Structural Building Components Industry. The opinions expressed in *SBC* are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of Truss Publications or WICA.

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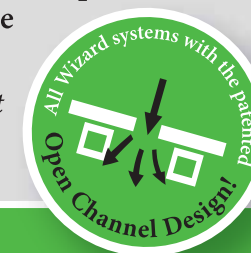
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# Safety Scene

## Steel Components & Eye Safety

by Molly E. Butz

Learn why eye protection is so important when working with steel components.

**W**e've said it many times in *SBC*: We view wood and steel building components on a level playing field. It certainly comes as no surprise that many of the same safety concerns associated with fabricating wood components also apply to steel components. However, with more and more companies adding steel to their line-up, this seems like a crucial time to focus our energy on the specific hazards associated with steel component fabrication, too! So this is the first **Safety Scene** column devoted to the safety hazards inherent in operating steel truss manufacturing plants.

That being said, it's true that manufacturing steel trusses and wall panels brings up safety discussions that easily parallel wood, and it's good to keep in mind that any manufacturing situation merits thorough training and a good bit of common sense. But it's also important to recognize the differences in the hazards associated with each material, wood or steel.

### Wearing the proper PPE is your best bet for avoiding a painful trip to the doctor.

Component manufacturers that have both steel and wood operations should be especially careful about educating employees on the safety issues specific to each product. To begin with, if you plan to or are already sharing employees between your wood and steel manufacturing areas, include time for cross-training. "[Our employees'] muscles need time to acclimate [to different motions and movements], the materials are different and there are different safety issues," says Todd Gilligan, Safety Director for Cascade Mfg Co, which has separate wood and steel component plants. "Cross-training is really important."

One noteworthy cross-training safety issue in steel component manufacturing is the necessity for eye protection. Hand drilling metal screws into metal chords and webs puts a number of employees in close proximity to a common manufacturing by-product: metal shavings, shards or fragments. "Sure, we have some potential for metal shavings," Scott Ward, Southern Components Inc., whose company also manufactures both wood and steel, told *SBC* staff. That's why, in addition to gloves and hearing protection, Southern Components makes safety glasses mandatory.

And, not only are the steel shards a hazard to unprotected eyes during the drilling process, they can be a hazard once the truss is finished, too! Gilligan points out that, during the course of manufacturing, the steel shavings fall down inside of the trusses; consequently, any time a truss is lifted to be worked on, inspected or stacked "the shavings come raining down" on the workers below. Unprotected peepers can mean only one thing at that point: steel in the eye.

Now, as previously mentioned, flying and falling particles are also hazards on the wood side of things. However, metal shards present an additional and rather unpleasant to remedy concern: rust rings. If not treated promptly, metal objects react with our tears and cause rust to form around the foreign body. The resulting rust ring has the potential to cause a scar that can eventually affect a person's vision. And the worst part? (If you're squeamish, skip to the next sentences.) The ensuing drilling and scraping process to remove the object and rust ring can be rather unpleasant and often warrants heavy-duty antibiotics. So preventing a steel shaving from ending up in your eye by

wearing the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) is your best bet for avoiding a painful trip to the doctor.

As is true for any (PPE), selecting the "right" eye protection is key. It's critical that the PPE you choose are right for your employees in your facility working on your tasks. Since there are various kinds of eye protection, from non-prescription and prescription safety glasses to goggles and face shields, choosing a style that works in your plant can take some patience. "We've run the gamut," Gilligan recalls. "It feels like we've been through 40 different pairs of glasses and goggles. We even tried full face shields at one point!"

But Gilligan has taken an appropriate approach and if it takes 40 pairs, it takes 40 pairs. It's important to make sure the eye protection you choose doesn't increase or create new safety hazards and also that it fits comfortably. Let's face it, if the eye protection chosen is uncomfortable, employees are less likely to wear it regularly—if at all.

A little training goes a long way, too. Goggles or safety glasses may seem like fairly simple pieces of PPE, but your employees still need to understand how they should fit and how to take care of them. Most importantly, if you teach your employees to be aware of their environment at all times they are more likely to take caution around all kinds of hazards. Safety first! *SBC*

*Do you have a safety question or topic that pertains to cold-formed steel component manufacturing? Email [mbutz@sbcsmag.info](mailto:mbutz@sbcsmag.info).*



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### at a glance

- For manufacturers sharing shop workers between steel and wood plants, it is prudent to cross-train them on eye protection.
- When drilling metal screws into steel components, employees are exposed to metal shavings and fragments.
- If metal shards get caught in the eye, rust rings can occur.
- Beyond enforcement of PPE, the best thing you can do to encourage the use of eye protection is to find comfortable options for all shop workers.

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# Bcmc & Your Business Plan

## Your Business Lifeline

by Emmy Thorson-Hanson

How to use BCMC as your lifeline to stay current.

**B**CMC is known as the biggest tradeshow in the structural building components industry, and most people could point out the values of attending, such as purchasing options, educational sessions and networking. But have you recognized BCMC for what it really is: a strategic business planning forum? BCMC is your business lifeline: the ideal place for you to strategically plan all aspects of handling, growing and maintaining your business.

As an industry professional you are most likely always looking for ways to break into new markets and products, improve efficiency and communication in your plant, learn effective processes for your design department, and build leaders within your company. This can all be done at BCMC.

It is also likely that you are interested in learning about anything and everything that could potentially affect your business. So if I told you that you could research current and future purchasing decisions and business costs, find out the latest in industry research and testing, and gain knowledge on building codes and key technical issues all in one place, what would you say? I'm here to tell you that all of this can be done at BCMC.

You are probably sensitive to the fact that the market is continuously changing and evolving, which means you must adapt to the changes in order to sustain and grow your business. One such trend in the market is green building, and BCMC is the place to find out how to implement it in order to keep up with your competitors. Viewing live machinery demonstrations and witnessing firsthand the latest and greatest products and services is another great way to keep up with the times. And who doesn't enjoy reconnecting with peers and discussing current issues? Once again, this can all be done at BCMC.

Perhaps the timeliest opportunities that BCMC offers is the chance to discuss the state of the industry with industry professionals, gain perspective on how to endure the market downturns and learn to assess how to gear up when the next market upswing occurs. All of this is critical information that provides a lifeline to your company, and BCMC is the place to arm yourself with the best defense possible: knowledge.

New this year is a special four-hour component manufacturer roundtable on Tuesday afternoon that is centered on the benchmarks and concepts to take into consideration when evaluating the performance of your business. Titled "Planning, Evaluating and Adjusting—Your Business Lifeline," this discussion will provide you with tools and information you can use to analyze your business, market and industry. You are sure to come away with ideas to improve your business planning process. The numerous educational sessions offered on Wednesday and Thursday cover a variety of topics, so you can pick the ones most pertinent to you. BCMC sessions may also count toward required credits for professional certification, which helps advance your position within your company.

Several component manufacturer roundtables will take place Thursday afternoon. The topics this year include: Strategic Business Planning, SCORE, Green Building, and Design. Year after year, the component manufacturer roundtables have proven

Continued on page 19



### BCMC SESSION TOPICS:

- New Codes and Standards: ANSI/TPI 1-2007 and IBC/IRC 2009
- Success without Getting Squashed
- Steel Market Overview?
- Breaking into the Framing Market?
- Your Supply Chain vs. Theirs
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- The What, Why, Where & How of Green Building
- Research and Testing's Influence on Whole Structure Design
- Green Building Rating Systems & Certifications: What You Need to Know
- Managing Your Business in a Volatile Steel Market
- Eliminating Waste, Increasing Value & Saving Money at Your Facility
- Open Forum Discussion: Providing Proper Controls in the Design Department?

### at a glance

- BCMC allows you to keep up to date on industry happenings while strategically planning for your business.
- Discussing the state of the industry with peers at BCMC helps you gain perspective on how to endure the market.
- Attend a new CM roundtable on Tuesday called "Planning, Evaluating and Adjusting—Your Business Lifeline."



# BCMC – Your Business Lifeline

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*"There are three obvious reasons why I attend BCMC every year without fail. Number one is to see the latest in equipment and services that are available to the industry. The second is for the educational sessions that are available and thirdly to re-establish relationships and renew contacts . . . If you want to know what's available as far as how to improve your company equipment, it's the place to go. If you want to learn about how to improve your business through management and education, it's the place to go. If you want to build relationships with other manufacturers and suppliers, it's the place to go. There is no doubt about it that in our industry, BCMC is IT."*

– Clyde Bartlett, Bluegrass Truss, Lexington, KY

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# Wtca Update

## Improve Jobsite Safety with Safety Zone

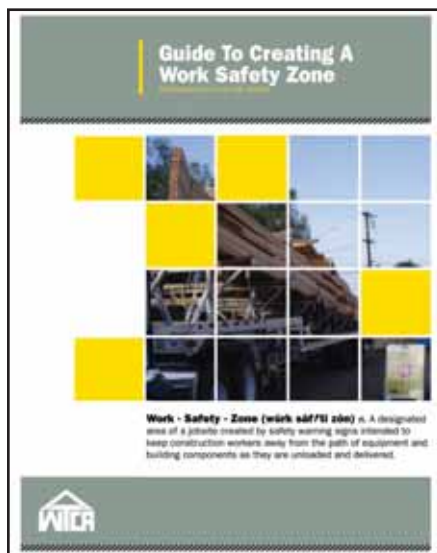
by WTCA Staff

Reduce risk and increase safety on the jobsite with Safety Zone.

**M**aterial handling doesn't end when components leave the shop. Truss and component handling is also a factor on the jobsite—a factor that presents some often overlooked safety and risk issues.

For this reason, WTCA and its California Chapter (CalESCA) have joined forces to address the risks of delivering building components to the jobsite. In fact, it was news of a jobsite accident that compelled the chapter to come up with an idea to reduce accidents and injuries at the delivery site. The Safety Zone concept was created to provide an industry-wide improved approach to designating a safety zone for off-loading trusses at a jobsite.

**The Safety Zone concept was created to provide an industry-wide improved approach to designating a safety zone for off-loading trusses at a jobsite.**



Beginning in June, Safety Zone (SZ) materials became available through WTCA. There are three SZ products for use by delivery drivers. Here is a hypothetical scenario of how a component delivery driver should use them.

1. The component manufacturer's delivery driver pulls into the jobsite. Depending on the type of delivery (roll-off, boom/crane or forklift), the driver reviews and follows the safety steps outlined in **Safety Zone Guide to Creating a Work Safety Zone**, a laminated full-color guide.
2. The driver sets up **Safety Zone Signs** at critical locations on the jobsite, following the diagrams shown in the Safety Zone Guide. The sandwich-board style signs measure 22x26 and are weather-proof. Four to five signs per jobsite is typical.
3. The driver reviews the **Safety Zone Delivery Inspection Report/Off-load Inspection Report**, a single sheet on a 50-sheet pad that serves as a checklist of important, proactive tasks for the driver to complete at each delivery. He/she fills in details of the delivery and job on the top section of the form, communicating with the jobsite foreman and inspecting the load prior to off-loading components.
4. The driver carefully off-loads the material.
5. The driver completes the **Safety Zone Delivery Inspection Report/Off-load Inspection Report**, which includes taking digital photos of the off-loaded components and noting any other pertinent details of the delivery. He/she keeps a log of inspection reports or files them in the manufacturer's office.

CalESCA members have been using the Safety Zone materials for many months, testing the procedures on various jobsites. "When we pull up to a jobsite and set out the Safety Zone signs, the workers on the jobsite are amazed at the amount of room required for unloading our 48' roll-offs. The signs have definitely improved safety at the jobsite and we will continue to use them," said Gary Sartor, CalESCA Chapter President.

If you would like to order the Safety Zone signs and documents, call 608/274-4849 or email [pubs@qualtim.com](mailto:pubs@qualtim.com). Now is the time to implement your jobsite Safety Zone culture and literally create a zone of protection for all involved in jobsite deliveries! **SBC**

### at a glance

- Safe delivery and off-loading practices are an important part of material handling.
- Safety Zone products from WTCA are designed for delivery drivers to use as safety and risk management tools on the jobsite.
- The Safety Zone Delivery & Off-load Inspection Reports help drivers to document critical information about component delivery.



"The signs have definitely improved safety at the jobsite and we will continue to use them."

—Gary Sartor, WTCA's California Chapter President

## New WTCA Members

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Ms. Christina Bauer

**Custom Components of Eagle River Inc.**  
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Eagle River, WI 54521-0997  
715/479-3348  
Mr. Glenn Schiffmann

**Georgia Truss LLC**  
2384 Murphy Blvd  
Gainesville, GA 30503  
770/534-8164  
Mr. Ronald Gipson

**Precision Structural Components**  
PO Box 690385  
Houston, TX 77269  
713/569-9009  
Mr. Ibrahim Elsamahy

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

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Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734/786-5000  
Mr. Edward Tuczak

**Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates**  
330 Pflingsten Rd  
Northbrook, IL 60062-2003  
847/272-7400  
Ms. Penny Sympton

Listing as of 7/9/08.

For more information about WTCA membership, contact Anna (608/345-4983 or [astamm@qualtim.com](mailto:astamm@qualtim.com)) or visit [www.sbcindustry.com](http://www.sbcindustry.com).

## BCMC & Your Business Plan

Continued from page 16

to be a place where CMs can speak freely with one another while comparing notes and sharing strategies, without the "competition" factor coming into play. You are sure to learn a lot from your peers, just as they are sure to learn a lot from you.

"We believe exhibitors and attendees alike will benefit from coming to the show and immersing their teams in a week of connecting with others and building passion for advancing the industry," shared BCMC Education Committee Chair, Steve Stroder. "I can't think of a better way to keep the economy headed in the right direction than to be here investing in our future."

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# Human Faces

## Mixing Business with Education

Members of the Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association educate builders and themselves.

by Marisa Hirsch

It seems like just about every industry has an association, yet many people seem to only be aware of their own. So, when opportunities come along for different associations to work together, it's educational for everyone involved. When WTCA's Wisconsin Chapter, the Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association (WTMA), learned about an opportunity to work with the Madison Area Builders Association (MABA), they saw it for what it was—a chance to show that a local component manufacturer association exists, and has members who are out there working hard.

On April 30, 2008, WTMA put on a presentation for area builders at MABA's request. The chapter presented two live Truss Technology Workshops (TTWs): *Wood Truss Inspection Checklist* and *BCSI*. (See sidebar for information about TTWs.)

"I thought this would be a good opportunity to highlight the chapter," said Steve Johnson, WTMA president. "[A chance] to let these guys know we have an association too, and we're out there supporting the builders."

### Mutually Beneficial

Kaya Freiman, communications director at MABA, contacted WTCA staff in fall 2007 to inquire about the possibility of a WTCA seminar for area builders. Staff then contacted the chapter about sponsoring the event and, over the next few months, a plan came together that the chapter and MABA felt good about. Along with the presentations, each MABA attendee received a certificate and several informational handouts, including the entire **Truss Technology in Building** series, a *BCSI* booklet and a related *SBC* article.

Freiman said that from MABA and the attendees' perspectives, the six-hour seminar was a success. Attendees received six Continuing Education Units (CEUs), the maximum number possible for a six-hour presentation. This is important because the maximum number of CEUs is not always granted by the Department of Commerce. Sometimes the department awards a smaller number of CEUs, depending on a particular seminar's content. For each CEU seminar, MABA is required to send a written application to the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. This form includes background information about the speaker, the speaker's company or association, and an outline of the presentation—including the number of hours it is and the number of CEUs requested for it.

"We try to focus on technical courses to get the most CEUs," said Freiman. "The department can deny [the seminar], or [limit] the number of CEUs you're requesting. Somebody could put on four hours of sales or marketing information and request four CEUs, but only get one. That's why we try to stick with scientific, technical or legal subjects."

Though Johnson was the presenter at this event, he invited all WTMA members to attend and participate. As a chapter event, it was not designed to be a sales pitch for one company, but a forum to highlight WTCA's Wisconsin Chapter and its member companies that supply these builders.

Johnson began the day with introductions. He and the other WTMA members in attendance explained who they were—Joe Michels, P.E., manager at Brunzell Lumber & Millwork, and three members from Automated Products, Inc.: John Bujalski, COO

### What Are Live TTWs?

Live TTWs are PowerPoint® presentations (including slides and scripts) developed by WTCA and presented in person to an audience of construction industry professionals. These face-to-face presentations offer a great opportunity to meet industry professionals and educate them about component construction. Here are some of the basics of live TTWs:

- TTWs cover a wide range of topics. Choose from topics such as:
  - Overview of BCS
  - 4 Steps to Safe Truss Installations
  - Mold
  - Code Issues
- TTW PowerPoint files are available online ([ttw.sbcindustry.com](http://ttw.sbcindustry.com)).
  - WTCA members can buy one-year's access to download TTW PowerPoint files for \$50.
  - Chapters can receive access to PowerPoint files for free.
- WTCA staff is here to help. Whether you need a little help, or assistance developing a new presentation from scratch, WTCA can help with all aspects of your presentation, including:
  - Planning/organizing the event
  - Recommending a course and handouts
  - Providing invitations, sign-in sheets, signs, thank you notes, etc.
  - Qualifying a course for CEU credit

For more information, contact Trish Kutz at WTCA at 608/310-6768 or [tkutz@qualtim.com](mailto:tkutz@qualtim.com).

and vice president; Paul Werner, information technology and senior design engineer; and Jim Perkins, sales manager.

Next, Johnson explained a little bit about WTMA and what it does, as well as how it relates to WTCA. He also talked a little bit about the SBC Research Institute (SBCRI) and the work that's done there. The 11 attendees then introduced themselves. After that, Johnson explained that the seminar would be open-forum style and that everyone should feel free to participate and to ask questions.

The Wood Truss Inspection List TTW took up the first two hours of the day. There was a short break after that, and next was the first part of the BCSI TTW (B1-B3). B4-B11 were presented after lunch, and the day concluded with Doug Oomens of Simpson Strong-Tie Co.

### More to Come

Though the MABA seminar was the first one like this for the chapter so far, Johnson said WTMA is planning to do similar presentations in the future. For example, they are looking to do something comparable with the Milwaukee-area Metropolitan Builders Association, where they'll highlight their members that supply that area of the state.

"With all the credits these builders need, we've got the perfect opportunity to get in front of them," said Johnson.

Throughout the MABA seminar, Johnson called on other WTMA members in attendance to contribute their thoughts and viewpoints about the information being discussed; attendees also asked some questions. This allowed for additional discussion and interaction among chapter members and attendees—which contributed to the attendees' positive reactions. Freiman said this was mentioned in the anonymous surveys she distributed for the attendees to complete.

"Everyone thought the level of teaching was great, liked the speaker, and appreciated the fact that there were other WTMA members there," Freiman said. "They liked getting to hear a few different viewpoints. Overall, it was a very positive response."

Johnson said that participating in and/or sponsoring seminars like this one is an effective way to show that WTMA wants to better the industry and help builders to be informed and prepared. "That's the biggest thing," he said. "There's a risk factor for them if they don't understand the product and how to deal with it. There's a lot of risk that could be eliminated or lessened if they have a little training." Continued on page 22

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John Griffith

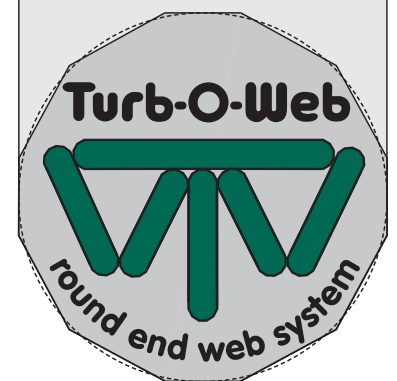
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### at a glance

- ❑ The Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association (WTCA's Wisconsin Chapter) presented two live TTWs to a local homebuilders association.
- ❑ The attendees earned CEUs for attending the day-long presentation.
- ❑ Chapter President Steve Johnson said that in addition to the information presented, the event highlighted the benefits of being a WTMA member.
- ❑ WTMA members held a meeting the following week at WTCA and toured the new SBCRI facility.



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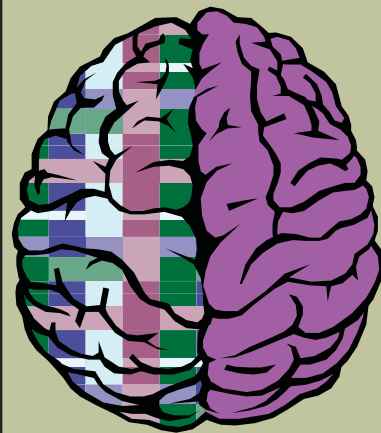
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#### Human Faces • Continued from page 21

MABA and the attendees appreciated WTMA's efforts. "We would like to thank Steve Johnson for presenting, and the association," said Freiman. "He did a fantastic job, and we were really happy to work with the association, and hope that we can continue to have a positive relationship in the future."

#### Relocation for Education

The week following this successful presentation, on May 8, WTMA held its quarterly meeting at the WTCA offices in Madison, WI. Johnson said reason they did so was because they wanted someone from the Wisconsin Safety and Buildings Division to speak at a meeting. Johnson thought that would be more likely to happen if the meeting were in Madison. Larry Swaziek, P.E., program manager at the S&B division, did speak at the meeting about the new Wisconsin Commercial Building Code.

Another reason to have the meeting at WTCA was so that the chapter members could see SBCRI. So, after Swaziek spoke and other business was finished, the group toured the facility. Keith Hershey, WTCA director of R&D and industry projects, guided the tour and fielded questions about the kinds of products being tested in SBCRI, how the data is and will be used, and plans for future industry testing. The group was also able to see some of the equipment in action.

"Many of our members had not had the chance to see the research facility they have donated time and money to," Johnson said. "They were impressed with the facility. I received comments that this quarterly meeting was a really productive, beneficial meeting—one the members like to see from their association." **SBC**

#### A Note about SBCRI & WTCA

The SBC Research Institute offers an extensive list of testing options under a variety of application, attachment and loading conditions. All of this will lead to more accurate and efficient design and improved installation/use of structural building component products. View a talking brochure at [www.sbcrici.info](http://www.sbcrici.info) or contact Keith Hershey at [khershey@qualtim.com](mailto:khershey@qualtim.com) or 608/310-6704 to schedule a tour of the facility.

WTCA is happy to accommodate member meetings, and has done so for both chapters and individual companies. If you're interested in holding a meeting at WTCA headquarters in Madison, WI, please contact Megan Dahl at [mdahl@qualtim.com](mailto:mdahl@qualtim.com) or 608/310-6731.

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# Environmental Components

## Nine Ways Components Are Already "Green"

Structural building components: green since 1952!

by Libby Maurer

**W**e're all hearing a lot about building "green" these days. It might have you wondering if the products you supply are considered green, and how to advance your company's image among the increasingly green-focused building community. Here's some good news: while the pursuit of green building certification may be a logical business decision for you, also keep in mind that there's no need to chase a pricey green building certification (like FSC) just to prove your commitment to supplying environmentally-sound products.

Here are some talking points to use when communicating with customers and prospects about what makes you green. You can market the eco-friendliness of your products without lifting a finger (or spending a dime)!

**Wood is a renewable resource.** There's no getting around it. Whether it comes from a certified or uncertified forest, the wood you purchase comes from one of the Earth's most renewable resources—trees.

**Steel is a recyclable resource.** You've probably heard that steel is the most recyclable material that exists. (That means it is the material that is most able to be made into a different material at the end of its life cycle.) No matter what, the steel you purchase for nails, hangers/connectors, steel chords and webs, banding comes from one of earth's most recyclable resources—steel.

**Components minimize the amount of material use and jobsite waste created.** This is a no brainer, but it's a good point to reinforce with builders and general contractors. And there's data to prove it! The 1996 WTCA *Framing the American Dream*® project reported a more than 25 percent material savings (and labor savings of more than 60 percent!) when components were used to frame a 2600-sq.ft. home. The study is somewhat dated, but if anything, we're saving even more material waste nowadays thanks to better framing techniques and more optimizing options in the design process. Visit [www.sbcindustry.com/pubs/fad-d](http://www.sbcindustry.com/pubs/fad-d) to view a pdf or to order copies of *Framing the American Dream*® for distribution.

**Components are designed to utilize materials most efficiently.** Don't forget that material efficiency is inherent to the process of component design. Modern design software allows the designer or technician to value engineer and optimize virtually any component design. This means material is not used when it isn't needed. Many green building rating systems recognize this benefit of components and award points based on their use. The National Resource Defense Council realized this fact in 1998 when they placed trusses high on their list of great products due to optimum value engineering. View their detailed report at [www.nrdc.org/cities/building/rwoodus.asp](http://www.nrdc.org/cities/building/rwoodus.asp).

**The use of components tightens a building's envelope.** More precision is built into components with the technology available today and also because they're built under controlled conditions. When a good foundation is in place, component construction provides for more precise construction that fosters a tighter building envelope. This means that the consumer—whether homeowner or business owner—will conserve energy while enjoying less draft and heat loss.

**Metal connector plates are made from highly recycled steel.** You may have

never considered it, but galvanized steel truss plates are green too! Depending on your plate vendor, your steel truss plates could contain up to 80 percent recycled content, and a minimum of 25 percent recycled content, as required by EPA standards.

**EWPs are green.** If part of your business is engineered wood product (EWP) distribution, you're in luck. From beams to I-joists to glue-laminated products, most EWPs are considered green. This is due to both the materials and the processes used to manufacture them. For instance, compared to the dimensional lumber you use to build trusses, these products are typically made from smaller, fast-growing species. They may also contain chipped and flaked wood or strands and wood particles that comes from waste created from other wood processing operations. And EWPs are known for their durability and strength characteristics, which means it takes less material to achieve the same result as an alternative building material. For specifics, ask your EWP supplier(s).

**Cold-formed steel trusses are made from highly recycled steel.** Remember the bit about metal connector plates? Same goes for cold-formed steel trusses and wall panels! In fact, cold-formed steel originates from the same steel material as truss plates—galvanized sheet steel. So by definition, cold-formed steel is a highly recycled material. It's also a highly recyclable material, meaning that any post-construction scrap (or trusses at the end of a building's life cycle) can be melted down and used to make new steel (think life cycle again). It is because of these properties that cold-formed steel components are recognized in green building programs as products that contribute to sustainable building design.

**Your office is paperless.** Many of us have abandoned paper systems in the office because it's far easier and more efficient to rely on computers. But don't forget that you're saving a ton of paper, and therefore reducing your footprint on the environment!

You see? Hopefully this information about building components' green nature helps to demystify how your products fit into the complex green building picture. Use these nine marketing tips about the products you already have in your inventory to help to satisfy your builders' desires to build green. **SBC**



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### at a glance

- ❑ You can use a few simple talking points to explain the inherent "green" qualities of building components.
- ❑ The wood you purchase comes from one of the Earth's most renewable resources—trees.
- ❑ Steel is the most recyclable material that exists; this includes everything from nails to connectors to cold-formed steel trusses to connector plates.



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WTCA's website now contains web pages devoted to green building concepts as they relate to the structural building components industry. The goal of the new pages is to educate those involved with the industry on the facts regarding green building and to aid in the interpretation of confusing language and concepts. Visit:

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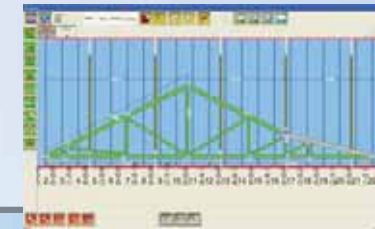
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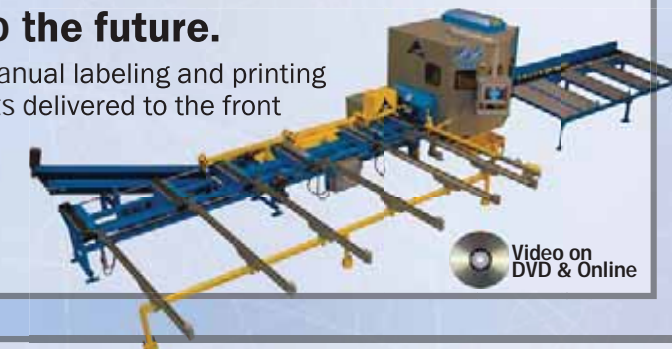
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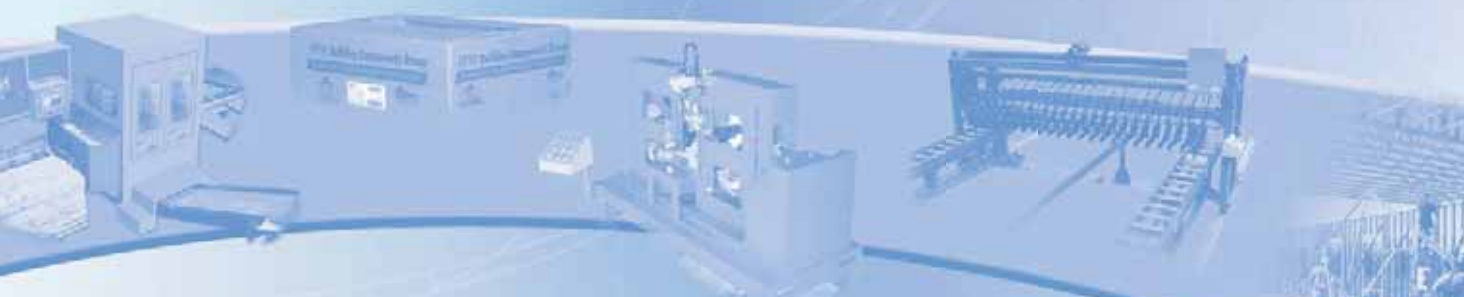
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# How to...

## Make Special Orders Extraordinarily Profitable

An ERP program that makes accounting for special orders profitable and efficient.

by Jay Deakins

**A**s a building component manufacturer, you want to maintain healthy margins and provide customers with a high level of service. One way to boost your bottom line and satisfy customer demand is through the sale of non-stocked items. Properly done, these special orders generally turn faster and carry higher margins than regular sales, and they help your business become a one-stop shop. This idea carries extra weight for mid-sized players trying to up the ante on customer service and product offerings to compete with larger companies and big-boxes.

But merely offering special order service does not guarantee profitability. Connecting the dots between departments can be tricky with special orders, and miscues at any point in the process can cause costly problems for you and for your customers. So the question remains: How can you ensure special orders are not just a part of your business model, but a lucrative part of your business?

To start, you must have the proper tools in place to manage this process efficiently. Integrated accounting and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software that is specifically designed for the building component manufacturing industry should link every aspect of your complex business, including purchasing, inventory, production, accounting, labor tracking, links to your engineering design software, and, of course, sales order entry. Through total business integration, an ERP system should make the special order process a seamless function.

### Expanding your building component business through the supply of non-stocked items requires that you treat special orders with special attention.

In a well-designed ERP system, the special order process begins with sales order entry. For instance, if XYZ Construction calls your salesman with an order for 100 stocked boards and 50 non-stocked moulding strips, the items would be entered into one sales order. The difference is that the boards have established part numbers in the system, and the moulding strips would automatically be assigned a special order part number to complete the sales order. Your salesman would then establish the price and margin (if a specific margin is not already mandated) for the moulding strips, and use the available line notes for a more detailed description of the part or your customer's preferences.

After the sales order is saved, your purchasing department would be automatically notified of the order, and then costing would be finalized and a purchase order (PO) issued. If your ERP system is properly integrated, this data should be updated in real time so all areas of your business can view the most current information. This gives your salesman, for example, the ability to compare his estimated cost of the non-stocked moulding strips versus the actual cost.

The inventory process of handling a special order is just as simple: Once the purchased item is received and verified against its PO, it is shipped to the location designated on the original sales order. Congratulations, XYZ Construction is now a happy customer.

Continued on page 26

### at a glance

- ❑ One way to boost your bottom line and satisfy customer demand is selling non-stocked items.
- ❑ Special orders generally turn faster and carry higher margins than regular sales.
- ❑ An ERP system can help manage special orders and maximize profit.



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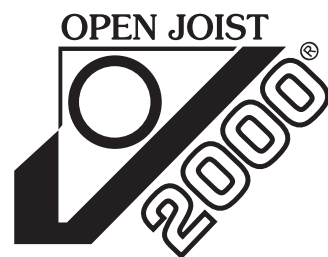
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**How to...**

Continued from page 28

But you still need to determine the profitability of this particular order, as well as the rest of your special orders. The integrated reporting function of an ERP system should allow you to pull specified data from every department to form an unlimited quantity of configured reports. You should be able to report on special order items with, or separately from, stocked items to determine sales profitability by part number, category, salesman, or customer. You can also effectively manage special order POs for items that have not yet entered your inventory stream through a summary report according to PO number, vendor, sales order number, or part number. And, to ensure your special order inventory is moving, an "inventory onhand" report can be generated on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, depending upon your level of volume.

What happens when the process doesn't work as planned? Say XYZ Construction cancels its order for the moulding strips. With user-specific controls in place, an ERP system should allow designated users to disconnect that item from its sales order and also charge back sales commissions. Once the item is disconnected from its sales order, you should be able to run "boneyard" reports to show all cancelled special orders and their ages, quantities and values. With this information, you can efficiently manage and move these items to minimize the cost of unsold merchandise. So congratulations again—XYZ Construction is still a happy customer, and you have maximized your company's profit.

Expanding your building component business through the supply of non-stocked items requires that you treat special orders with special attention. With an ERP system that provides a specific process for special orders, you can manage them not only as one-off problems, but as opportunities to pick up profit, satisfy your customers and fine tune your business processes. **SBC**

*Jay Deakins is the President of Deacom, Inc., the producer of an integrated accounting and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software system for truss, panel, millwork, and modular building manufacturers with hard-to-handle requirements. Contact Jay at [marketing@deacom.net](mailto:marketing@deacom.net) or visit [www.deacom.net](http://www.deacom.net) for more information.*



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— Jerry Dunsmore, General Manager, Truss Plant, Tindell's Inc.

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# RADIUS TRUSSES

## Present Unique Challenges in Design, Manufacturing

by Libby Maurer

Material handling for long-span trusses requires special safety and labor considerations.

For Builders FirstSource (BFS) in Freeport, FL, there's nothing unusual about a complex component order for a custom home. In fact, custom homes—some “good and cut up”—make up 95 percent of the plant's work, said Sam Alford, truss technician for BFS.

However, one job the company had earlier this year, raised the bar to say the least. BFS supplied roof and floor trusses for a 22,000-sq.ft. luxury home in the Fort Walton Beach area of the Florida Panhandle. To achieve an aesthetic that would fit this homeowner's extravagant taste, the massive project called for long-span double radius trusses.



The 68-foot trusses presented some unique design and manufacturing challenges for Alford, who performed the design and layout of the trusses, design manager Eugene Watts and plant manager Allen Valdez. The radius trusses formed the roof of the home's attached gymnasium, complete with full basketball court and a bowling alley. The fact that the trusses were curved on the top and bottom chords, or a “double radius,” made the job particularly challenging. This was the plant's first experience working with a double radius shape.

After the architect defined the specific radius of the trusses, Alford went to work. First, he input mock walls in the shape of a circle into the design software. This formed the perimeter of the gym. Next, he cropped the walls to fit the desired height of each truss. To arrive at the exact radius of each truss, he then broke them into small “panels,” dimensioning each individual panel (length and height) along the top and bottom chords. “I had to break [the roof trusses] up into 4-foot panels in order to design the roof according to the architect's specs,” he said. Finally, he input the panels manually into the engineering software to form the full trusses.

Adding to the complicated and tedious design process, not all of the radius trusses were the same shape. Some of them had a curved top with multiple-step bottom chord, shown at above. Alford explained that the unlike some radius trusses, the arched top chord shape did not require cutting a subtle curve into the wood. “The longer the span, the more gradual the arc...we could get that nice curved shape without cutting the top chord down any,” he said.

Alford said this is the first time he's designed something this complex. “I haven't done anything of this magnitude,” he said. “These things [trusses] were just unreal!” said the ten-year technician.

### at a glance

- A massive custom home in the Florida panhandle called for long-span radius trusses that were designed and built by Builders FirstSource.
- The job was especially challenging because the 68-foot trusses were curved on both the bottom and top chords.
- The BFS team took special precautions when building the trusses to prevent workers' injuries and damage to the trusses.



### Long-Span Handling

As for the shop, said 20-year veteran Valdez, “It wasn't the biggest job we've ever done, but it was definitely the most unique.” Not much had to be rearranged to make room to assemble the radius trusses. “We were already set up perfectly,” he said. A grouping of four tables (totaling 120' in length) was just the right amount of space for the job. However, Valdez had to shuffle three crews around to cover all the bases. Two crews combined to work at the table station and the third were assigned to stacking duty in the yard.

If anything took time, it was setting the jig in place perfectly, Valdez said. “It took an hour to set that jig up, but once we got it up, it went together fine.” He said this was to be expected since it was the shop's first double radius long-span job. To get the long-span set-up in place, Valdez got the measurements for each panel point, and the crew began by laying out the bottom radius in 4-foot sections (the same metric Alford used during

the design phase). When the bottom was complete, the crew started on the top chord. Then they filled in the web members. “Once we got that first truss in place and nailed to the table, they spray painted the outline of the truss,” he said. This outline served as the crew's guideline for the next 120 double radius trusses they would build over the next month.

### The Family Is Everything

Knowing how to “family” a long-span job such as this is as important as anything else. By this Valdez means how to break up the trusses into sections that will make the most efficient use of materials and labor in the shop. “What we do,” he said, “is spend some time looking at the layout of the house, and decide how you're going to batch sections of the roof. We call this a ‘family’ of trusses.” On a large project like this, using a grouping method like this helps to organize the materials, crew and lead times.

Continued on page 34

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### Radius Trusses

Continued from page 33

After they've been familled, sawyers proceed with cutting the pieces for only that grouping. The cut lumber is stacked by size on buggies, which then go directly to the tables for assembly. Valdez knows exactly how many pieces can be safely transported on one buggy. He said in his experience, when you take the time to figure them out on the front end, covering all of these fine details makes a big difference in executing a flawless job.

### Special Considerations for Safe Material Handling

Valdez said for a job requiring so much material on the floor at one time, there are certain safety concerns he pays spe-

cial attention to. For normal jobs, he said, all the truss plates are picked at one time. But for this job, he asked that the number of plates stacked on the tables be kept to a minimum. "When there's a lot of plates laying out, there is more chance of injury especially with more workers in one concentrated area," he said. Instead, plates were picked as needed which minimized unnecessary stacks on the tables. He also noted when there are a lot of cut pieces around, it is important to remind workers not to block the aisles with materials.

Lifting the finished trusses off the table was Valdez's primary safety concern. Because of the trusses' length, two men were required to operate air lifts on either side of the table in perfect coordination. "They had to time it just right so the truss was lifted on both sides at the same time. In this case, utilizing workers' longevity and expertise paid off. Valdez said, "I had to put my two most experienced guys on those air lifts, and they worked it out just right."

Loading the trucks required the careful maneuvering of three forklifts spaced equally among the truss bundles. Bundles were lifted slowly onto the truck bed one at a time.

### Special Delivery

Valdez said the most challenging part of this job by far was the delivery. The location of the jobsite—in an older, built-up neighborhood—didn't help.

First, getting to the site was difficult. "[To get to the site] we had to drive through downtown Fort Walton—a high traffic area," he said. Because of the over-sized load, front and rear escorts were required to accompany the fleet on each trip. Valdez remembered that once the caravan entered

the subdivision, the front escort had to go a couple blocks ahead and stop traffic in order for the truck to make the tight turns. "It was pretty tedious," he said.

The drivers repeated this process six times to deliver loads of the long-span double radiuses. An additional six truckloads carried floor trusses and beams. The jobsite was so small that there was only room for two loads of components at a time.

Watts said the company's close working relationship with the engineer and builder made for few problems or hold-ups. "A coordinated team effort made a job of this size and complexity run smoothly," he said. **SBC**

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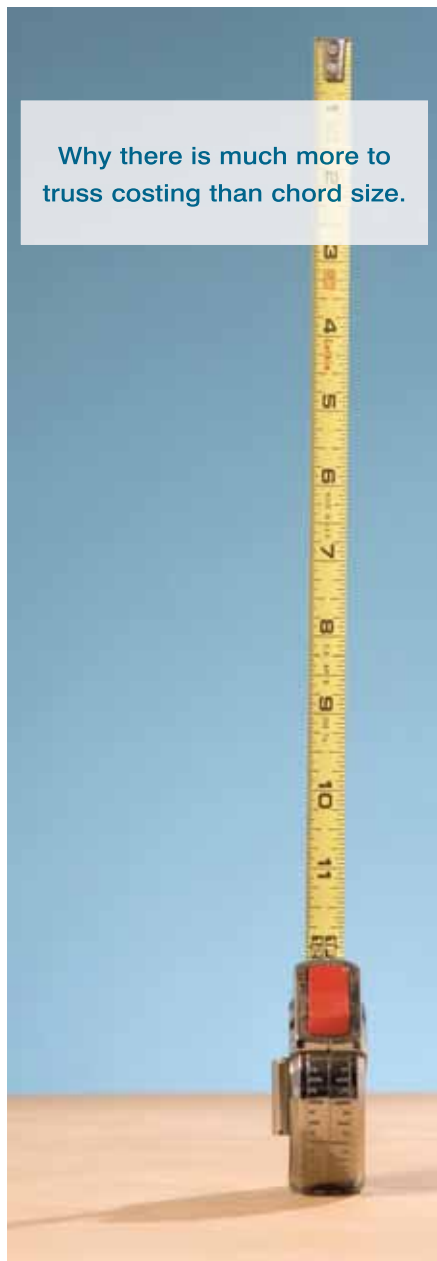
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# THE BOARD FOOTAGE MYTH DEBUNKED

by Scott Coffman, P.E., Builders FirstSource



**T**he answer mirrored one heard many times—the 2x4 truss is more economical because it contains less board footage than the 2x6 truss. Is this true? Are 2x4 truss chords always more economical than a truss with 2x6 chords? Or is it a common misconception that the most cost-effective truss always uses the smallest size chord material? After many years of experience, I believe this is a myth that has been created over time which must be explored to prove or disprove optimal truss cost is more than comparing chord sizes.

I think we can all agree that lumber, plates, and labor are the three main components contributing to finished truss cost. Since material size is the primary basis behind the board footage argument, beginning our search with lumber is appropriate. Relating truss cost to chord size is a presupposition that fails to recognize raw material price differences that occur between different grades and lengths. Typically, low grade lumber can be purchased at a lesser price than a higher grade member of the same size. Price differentials may also occur between different lumber lengths with the same size and grade. When a truss is designed, a higher grade lumber of the same size is required as chord stresses increase. There is a point, however, where the board footage cost of the high grade smaller member equals the cost of a larger, lower grade board.

Comparing two different lumber sizes with different grades requires adjusting the purchase price by the board footage. These two key points are demonstrated in Table 1.

Size	Length	BF	Grade	Price	Cost (BF x Price)
2x4	12'	0.67	SS	375	252
2x6	12'	1	#2	290	290
2x4	14'	0.67	SS	480	322
2x6	14'	1	#2	290	290

Table 1.  
Note: Prices listed are per thousand bd. ft., and are not meant to represent actual prices in all regions of the United States and Canada.

As you can see, there is no cost benefit of replacing a 12' 2x4 SS member with a #2 grade 2x6 of the same length; therefore, the most economical truss likely contains 2x4 lumber. However, if the truss uses 14' members, there is an economical benefit the truss is designing with 2x6 members. Adjusting lumber price by the board footage (as in Table 1) identifies cases where replacing high grade lumber with a larger board of a lower grade is likely to reduce truss cost. This can be proven by comparing two identical 42' trusses, one with a 2x4 Select Structural (SS) bottom chord and one with a 2x6 #2 grade bottom chord (Figures 1 and 2). The lumber cost for each truss is summarized in Table 2 indicating the 2x6 bottom chord is

Continued on page 38

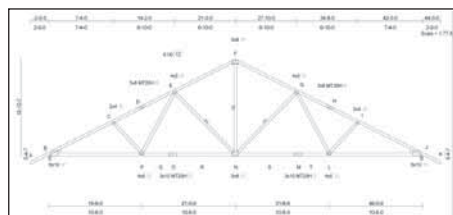


Figure 1

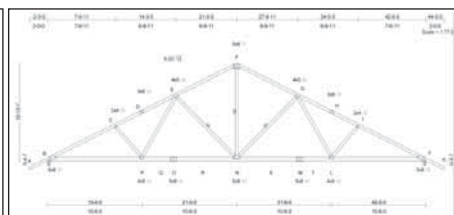


Figure 2

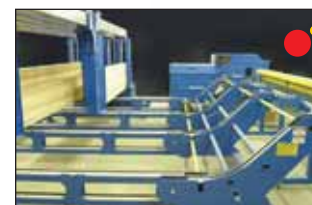
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2	2x4	5	No. 3	6.667	265	1.77
2	2x4	8	No. 3	10.667	260	2.77
2	2x4	10	No. 3	13.333	265	3.53
1	2x4	12	No. 3	8.000	275	2.20
2	2x4	14	No. 2	18.667	320	5.97
1	2x6	1	No. 2	2.000	290	0.58
Total cost						\$35.39

42' Common w/ 14' 2x6 Bottom Chord Lengths (Figure 2)						
Lumber						
Quantity	Size	Length	Grade	BF	Price	Cost (BFxPrice)
3	2x6	14	No. 2	42.000	290	12.18
2	2x4	12	No. 2	16.000	320	5.12
2	2x4	5	No. 3	6.667	265	1.77
2	2x4	8	No. 3	10.667	260	2.77
2	2x4	10	No. 3	13.333	265	3.53
1	2x4	12	No. 3	8.000	275	2.20
2	2x4	14	No. 2	18.667	320	5.97
Total cost						\$33.55

2x6 Cost Savings: 5.48%

Table 2

### The Board Footage Myth...

Continued from page 36

more economical due to lumber price difference between grades and eliminating a wedge block. So, understanding the interdependence of lumber size, grade, and price begins to displace the illusion that smaller truss chords are always the most cost effective.

Insights into the truss design process and fabrication enlighten us to other cost efficiencies obtainable with larger lumber sizes. For example, total truss board footage must also take into account the number of webs required for structural integrity. Structural analysis proves the maximum truss panel is influenced by the chord size. Generally speaking, trusses built with 2x4 chords have top and bottom panels in the 8'-6" to 10' range respectively, whereas maximum panels

for 2x6 chords are in the 10' to 13' neighborhood. Again, a simplistic example helps us to visualize the much larger picture. A 45' common truss using 2x4 grade chords is designed as a 6/6 Howe (Figure 3) with nine webs and 12 panel points. The quantity of webs maintains #2 grade chords and eliminates variance caused by different lumber grades; in essence, an "apples-to-apples" comparison is being made. The same 45' truss span with 2x6 chords can be designed as a 4/4 Howe consisting of five webs and eight panel points (Figure 4). Assuming all other variables are constant, it becomes immediately apparent that the board footage saved by removing webs helps offset the 2x6 chords (Table 3).

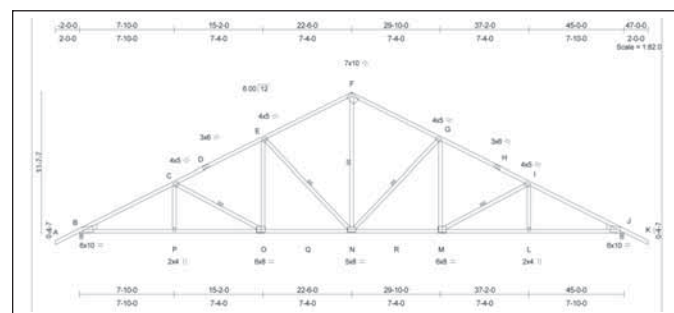


Figure 3

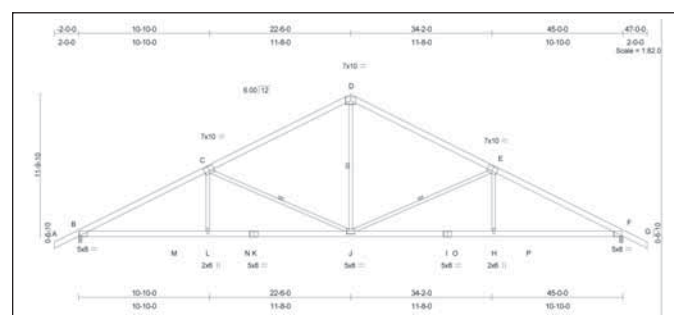


Figure 4

45' Common w/ 2x4 Chords (Figure 3)				
Lumber				
	Quantity	Size	Length	BF
Webs	2	2x4	4	5.333
	4	2x4	8	21.333
	3	2x4	12	24.000
				Total BF

45' Common w/ 2x6 Chords (Figure 4)				
Lumber				
	Quantity	Size	Length	BF
Webs	2	2x4	5	6.667
	1	2x4	12	8.000
	2	2x4	14	18.667
			Total BF	33.33

Table 3

2x6 Material Savings: 34.21%

There appears to be some benefit to relating lumber size and grade and maximizing panels for the chord size. But because eliminating webs and lumber price variation does not make up the entire truss cost picture, we must take into account the other two cost components: labor and plates. Intuitively, increased labor can be associated with the 2x4 chord truss due to the number of webs and installed plate pairs. (Plate pairs are selected because the number of joints to be set up and plated does not account for additional plates that may be required for wedges, sliders, stacked chords, etc.) The smaller chord truss also requires more plates (plate area) for fastening additional webs.

Assuming that the cost of a truss is comprised of 50 percent lumber, 10 percent plates, and 40 percent labor (equally split between number of plate pairs and number of pieces handled and cut), each cost element can be weighed accordingly and investigated. We have learned that one key contribution a truss technician can make during the design process is understanding the benefit larger truss panels offer with 2x6 chords. This principle, long associated with longer span trusses, may be a viable alternative for shorter span too. We can explore board footage and labor while keeping plate area and lumber grade constant in a 12' common truss. The King Post in a 2x4 chord (Figure 5) truss can be removed with a 2x6 bottom chord (Figure 6). Although removing the 2x4 web

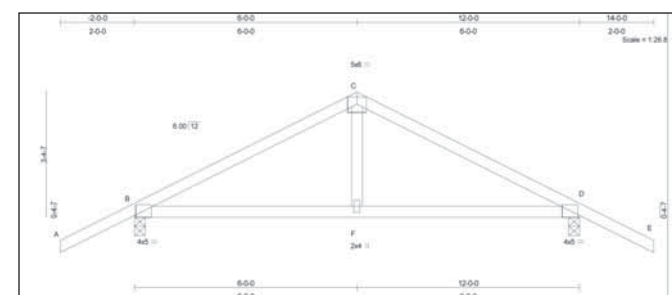


Figure 5

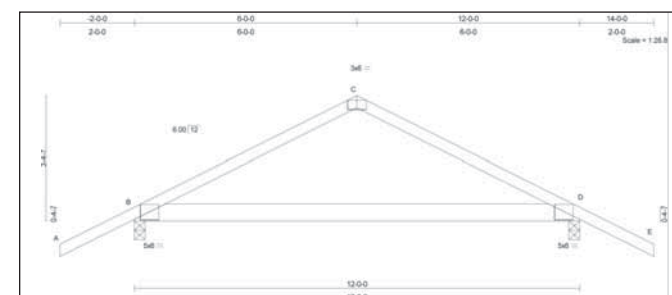


Figure 6

provides some compensation for the 2x6 bottom chord, a majority of the benefit is derived from labor (Table 4).

We can begin to create a total truss cost picture by investigating board footage, plate area, number of webs, and number of joint pairs. Optimizing Figure 3 to create Figure 7 provides a more true comparison to Figure 4. Even when lumber cost adjusted for size, grade and length results in more board footage, it is the labor savings as a result of fewer webs (larger panels) and plate pairs installed that make the 2x6 chord truss more economical. Again, web board footage, labor, and plates all contribute to the economical advantage as summarized in Table 4.

There are advantages to using 2x6 chords in "short" and "intermediate" span trusses. Our final board footage exploration is 60' trusses with 2x4 chords which are requested in some markets. A 2x4 chord and 2x6 chord trusses are shown

Continued on page 40

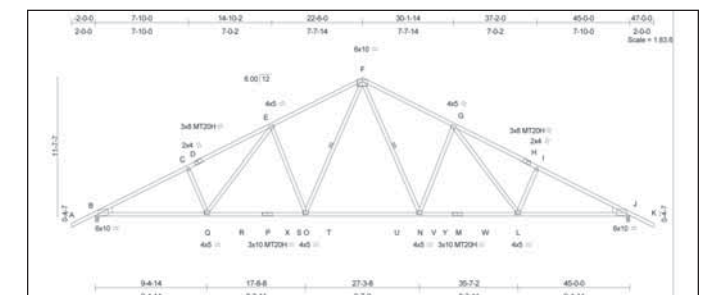


Figure 7

Assumed Factors of Truss Cost	Lumber/BF	Plate Area	Labor	
			Pcs.	Plate Pairs
	50%	10%	20%	20%

12' Common (Figures 5 & 6)				
Chord Size	Lumber/BF	Plate Area	Labor	
			Pcs.	Plate Pairs
2x4	23.333	156	4	4
2x6	25.333	156	3	3
% Diff	8.57%	0.00%	-25.00%	-25.00%
% Cost Diff	4.286%	0.000%	-5.000%	-5.000%
% Save	-5.714%			

45' Common (Figure 7 & 4)				
Chord Size	Lumber/BF	Plate Area	Labor	
			Pcs.	Plate Pairs
2x4	122.000	916	17	15
2x6	141.333	868	12	10
% Diff	15.85%	-5.24%	-29.41%	-33.33%
% Cost Diff	7.923%	-0.524%	-5.882%	-6.667%
% Save	-5.150%			

Table 4

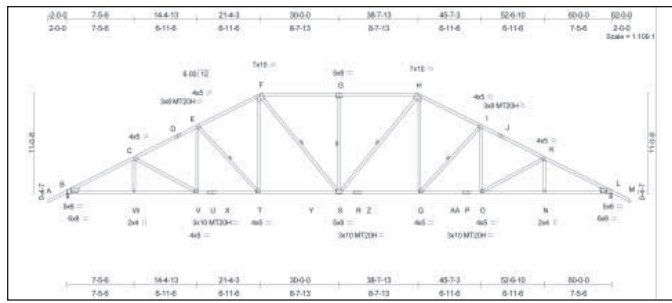


Figure 8

**The Board Footage Myth** • Continued from page 36 in Figures 8 and 9, and the lumber, plates and labor tabulated in Table 5. The “board footage cost” when adjusted for size, grade, and length and plate area are virtually identical! The cost benefit

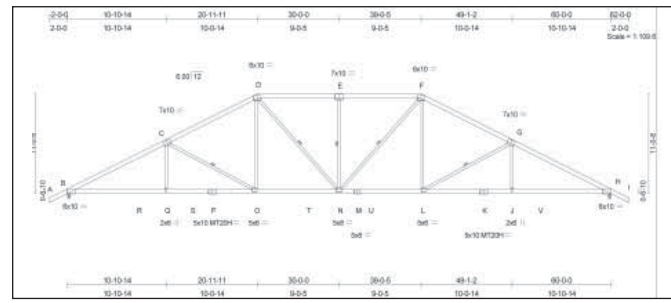


Figure 9

can be found in labor associated with fewer members to cut, handle, and install. This remains true even adjusting the lumber cost factor upward from 50 percent while reducing the labor factor. The overall conclusion is that maximizing panel size to minimize webs and reducing the number of plates installed is critical to truss cost, not chord size.

How can we apply these findings to the “real world” where chords consist of multiple lumber grades, the top chord may be a different lumber size than the bottom chord, and lumber sizes may change within the same chord? Although these concepts apply across all lumber sizes, the typical application is transitioning from 2x4 to 2x6 chords. First and foremost, it is imperative that a truss technician have lumber price knowledge to make chord size and splice decisions. Additional clues include high grade lumber presence with combined stress index (CSI) above 0.8 which can be replaced with a larger size, lower grade member. The existence of wedges or sliders may be eliminated by upsizing a chord. Truss spans in the mid-40’ range are more conducive to 2x6 lumber especially when considering intangibles such as handling, delivery, installation, and perceived quality. Finding the ideal changeover point will vary between component plants based on truss design loads, lumber size, grade, and length inventoried, labor cost, plate inventory, and truss technician design ability.

Board footage does and will continue to have a vital role in the building component industry. The tools available today allow numerous variables to be quickly tested when designing and pricing trusses. Expanding the focus beyond comparing truss chord size, or “board footage,” may create truss designs not previously considered with inherent cost and marketing benefits. **SBC**

*Scott Coffman, PE. works for Builders FirstSource in Sumter, South Carolina and has more than 25 years in the wood design and component industry.*

60' Truss w/ 2x4 Chords (Figure 8)						
Lumber Adjustment for Length and Grade						
Quantity	Size	Length	Grade	BF	Price	Cost (BFxPrice)
2	2x4	12	No. 1	16.000	350	5.60
2	2x4	10	SS	13.333	335	4.47
3	2x4	16	SS	32.000	480	15.36
2	2x4	4	No. 2	5.333	320	1.71
4	2x4	8	No. 2	21.333	290	6.19
2	2x4	10	No. 2	13.333	290	3.87
3	2x4	12	No. 2	24.000	320	7.68
2	2x4	14	No. 2	18.667	320	5.97
2	2x4	16	No. 1	21.333	375	8.00
1	2x4	12	SS	8.000	375	3.00
2	2x6	1	No. 2	2.000	290	0.58
Total BF cost:						\$62.42

Plate Adjustment for Gauge				
Gauge	Plate Area			
Std	1104		1.00	1104
HS*	276		1.10	303.6
Total:				1407.6

Table 5. \*A 10% area increase is assumed for high strength steel.

60' Truss w/ 2x6 Chords (Figure 9)						
Lumber Adjustment for Length and Grade						
Quantity	Size	Length	Grade	BF	Price	Cost (BFxPrice)
2	2x6	12	No. 2	24.000	290	6.96
2	2x6	10	No. 2	20.000	285	5.70
4	2x6	16	No. 2	64.000	305	19.52
2	2x4	6	No. 2	8.000	290	2.32
5	2x4	12	No. 2	40.000	320	12.80
2	2x4	14	No. 2	18.667	320	5.97
2	2x6	14	No. 2	28	290	8.12
Total BF cost:						\$61.39
Plate Adjustment for Gauge						
Gauge	Plate Area					
Std	1228			1.00		1228
HS*	200			1.10		220
Total:						1448

Assumed Factors of Truss Cost	Lumber	Plate	Labor	
			Pcs.	Joint Pairs
50%	10%	20%	20%	
Chord Size	Adj. Lumber	Adj. Plate	Labor	
			Pcs.	Joint Pairs
2x4	62.42	1407.6	25	23
2x6	61.39	1448	19	15
% Diff	-1.65%	2.87%	-24.00%	-34.78%
% Cost Diff	-0.825%	0.287%	-4.800%	-6.957%
Potential % Save	-12.295	(% Cost Diff for Lumber+Plate+Labor)		



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# Reduce Risk & Increase Revenue: Marketing & Sales of Wall Panels

by Jim Boyle

(Part 6 of 6)

The final step in a successful wall panel operation is a detailed plan for marketing and sales.

In the previous installment of this series I talked about the importance of having a detailed and informative computerized pricing program that produces material, labor and final wall panel quotes.

In this final segment, I'll discuss marketing and selling wall panels. Specifically, I'll offer my opinions on the best methods for marketing and selling wall panel products.

## Who & Where Are Your Customers?

To begin, it's important to identify your primary and secondary customers. For most panelizers, the primary customer is the general contractor (or a representative of the GC) who understands the front and back-end benefits to building with wall panels. The secondary customer is the framer who wants to reduce labor costs and increase annual production and framing cycle times. A third market segment might include architects, structural engineers, residential designers, developer/builders, and lumber and building supply outlets. I don't normally spend as much time on this segment, but I find myself doing more seminars to the design community, because I strongly believe that in time they will design more panelized systems.

You've probably heard or experienced that panelizers typically have to "sell" framers who are unfamiliar with wall panels on the product's benefits, even if they are not actually purchasing the panels. (The general contractor they are framing for is purchasing wall panels, and in turn asking his framer to discount his framing price.) It's critical that a framer using wall panels for the first time become a fan of panels! If they don't take to the product and realize its benefits, the job will not run as smoothly as it could. So take the time to educate the framer, and assure that the product will fit (per the plans and specifications).

Defining your market area in geographic terms may come down to how far you can economically ship wall panels. I normally confine my market area to under 300 miles (in one direction). I set this boundary because without it, the delivery charges become too expensive and then I'm not as competitive for the customer. On rare occasions I have shipped panels greater distances, and the customer has made the decision to pay for the extra time and mileage. This has occurred in situations with tight construction scheduling (usually with multi-family and mixed-use commercial jobs).

## at a glance

- ❑ Identify primary and secondary customers, most likely the general and framer.
- ❑ Some framers have the perception that panelizers are taking work from them, when in reality panels give them the ability to do more work because of decreased cycle times.
- ❑ Long-term marketing of wall panel products is best accomplished with comparisons of on-site versus off-site framing cycle times.

## Market Segments

What about market segmentation? For example, if your primary and secondary customers are general contractors and framers, then your primary market segment could be single family builders/framers building more than 100 units per year and multi-family/mixed-use commercial builders with sales over \$25 million per year. If your primary market is too thin to support your yearly production goals, you may have to establish and market to a secondary market with the goal of compensating for the primary market.

It's a good idea to strive for a mix of single family, multi-family, and mixed-use commercial coming through your panel plant. In a slow single family housing economy—like the one we're currently in—it is not unusual for the multi-family and mixed-use commercial market to remain stronger. The reverse is also true: it's not a good idea to run just multi-family and mixed-use commercial without a mix of single-family. Wall

Continued on page 44

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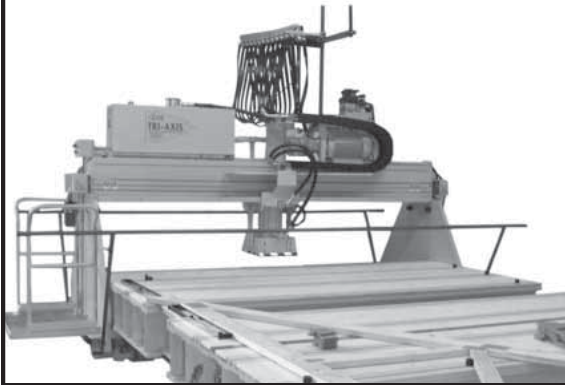
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### Reduce Risk & Increase Revenue

Continued from page 42

panel plants that have made this mistake will tell you that when their builders' schedules slip or their zoning changes, financing or permits are delayed, you could find yourself out of production for days or weeks at a time. Ensuring a balanced mix of single and multi-family work will help avoid lags like this.

### Barriers

Next, let's identify the primary barriers panelizers may have to overcome before selling their wall panel products. Ironically, your biggest barrier may be your potential customer—general contractors and framers. Wow, that seems kind of weird. So why are the primary barriers to wall panel sales also going to be your primary customers? Here's what I've found:

**New product perception.** The GC's perception of an existing product and process (on-site framed walls) is being challenged because they are being produced and delivered in a different way (off-site framed walls). Additionally, sticker shock is commonly a factor when they see the added front-end costs (approximately ten to 12 percent) over the on-site framed cost, and on top of it, they don't yet realize the back-end cost savings/benefits when wall panels are used. On this point, it is crucial that your wall panels don't exceed the cost of on-site framed walls by more than ten to 12 percent. Panels become much more difficult to sell above those percentage levels, regardless of the reduced framing labor, front-end benefits and back-end cost savings.

**Reducing cost.** The framers' acceptance of the product is often further complicated by having to reduce their usual cost per square foot pricing (between \$1–\$1.50/sq.ft. for an entry level home) for installing wall panels instead of site framing. To many of them, lowering the price to account for the efficiency of wall panels seems like a negative. They fail to realize, however,

that this reduction actually signifies more revenue over the long term since they can fit in far more framing cycles than before.

### Taking work away from framers.

Framers using panels for the first time often have the perception that panelizers are taking work from them, while at the same time asking them to trim \$1–\$1.50 from their usual square foot framing price (to install wall panels). Keep in mind, however, that wall framing typically represents 35-45 percent of the total framing package; but we're not suggesting that the on-site framer discount his price by 35-45 percent. At the same time, they are reducing their payroll costs and increasing their yearly production and bottom line!

With most individuals or businesses, when something new or different is introduced, change is slow and painful. So how can

panelizers overcome these customer barriers and gain significant share of the market? This is where educating the general contractor to recognize the front-end benefits and the back-end cost savings becomes critical in your marketing efforts. Listed below are some talking points you can use when marketing to the general contractor.

- Availability of qualified labor
  - Local and national shortages of skilled framers. Labor conditions will continue to worsen; and wall panels require less skilled on-site labor
- Having a plant-wide quality program, such as the new WTCA QC Wall Panel Program
  - Documented plant-wide quality control, and personnel training program (review part 4 "wall panel quality control/assurance" in the May issue of *SBC*)
    - Less warranty costs from the end user
    - Greater end-user satisfaction and referral/endorsements
    - Greater profits and margins
- Safety, fewer accidents and less lost time
  - Substantial savings possible in workers' compensation and liability insurance on the jobsite when wall panels and component assemblies are used
  - Cleaner jobsite, less potential for lost time accidents, more favorable sub-trade and customer perception during construction and walk-throughs
  - Safer, faster framing cycle times and overall production
- Cost savings
  - Project is completed faster
  - Site mobilization costs are reduced (daily cost the builder pays to physically be on-site or located on a particular lot—this is very substantial on multi-family and mixed use commercial building sites)
  - Less waste, loss, theft and debris removal
  - Fewer carrying costs: faster conversion from a construc-

- tion loan to a permanent loan
- Buildings can be leased or sold faster
- Increased cash flow and margins

You should also explore additional ways to demonstrate cost and time savings to potential customers. Through education and historical comparisons, panelizers can now show the on-site framer that when using wall panels and component assemblies, framers will receive specific cost savings and benefits. Here are some of the benefits you can derive from a side by side comparison.

- A guaranteed product and product delivery date with wall panels manufactured to within +/- 1/16" achieved using your own quality control program
- Tighter scheduling and shorter framing cycle times of 25 to 50 percent using wall panels and component assemblies (I have seen some framing crews double their production when framing the same models using wall panels and other component assemblies). Additionally, they will have less payroll costs, increased production, greater cash flow and a better bottom line.
- Framers will see a reduction of on-site management and risk, and less lost time due to accidents
- Fewer requirements for journeymen-level site framing labor (35-45 percent of the framing is completed off-site), typically, one lead framer and two or three helpers (in lieu of two or three journeymen and one apprentice). This translates into less labor payroll costs.
- Design discrepancies in the architectural/structural drawing are found and corrected during the panel plants design review process, thereby not wasting valuable time on-site with the framing crew standing by waiting for dimensional

and design discrepancies/clarifications to be answered by the architect/engineer.

- 80-90 percent fewer back-charges from sub-trades like dry-wall, window and door installers
- Lower workers' comp insurance rates. Factory insurance rates can be considerably lower than on-site insurance rates performing similar framing tasks.

Long-term marketing of wall panel products is best accomplished by personal contact with the general contractor and framing community, using comparisons of on-site framing cycle times versus off-site framing cycle times, presentations/seminars and plant tours. You may not think of it this way, but having a well-managed wall panel manufacturing plant—where plant tours and presentations can be conducted and which highlight the plant's in-process quality control and personnel training program—is also a great marketing tactic.

Having knowledgeable in-plant personnel who completely understand the panel products being offered and all their associated benefits is also essential. Additionally, wall panel sales staff should have a complete understanding of framing practices, and the ability to read and interpret architectural/structural drawings. This puts them in the position to serve as a consultant or partner to the general contractor and on-site framer. Additionally, thoroughly understanding what the general contractors' and framers' concerns and bottlenecks are and how your wall panel products and services will help solve them is critical for the wall panel sale. **SBC**

*Boyle is a wall panel business startup and process improvement consultant. He can be reached at 541/771-7075 or [jmb@jmb-panelman.com](mailto:jmb@jmb-panelman.com).*

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## Chapter Corner

For more information about WTCA Chapters and how to become more involved, contact Anna L. Stamm (608/310-6719 or [astamm@qualtim.com](mailto:astamm@qualtim.com)) or Danielle Bothun (608/310-6735 or [dbothun@qualtim.com](mailto:dbothun@qualtim.com)). Contributions to Chapter Corner, including pictures, are encouraged. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.



### Chapter Spotlight

#### Put on Your Chapter Hat at BCMC

by Anna L. Stamm

Do you need one *more* reason to attend BCMC this year? Well, here are three reasons to put on your chapter hat at BCMC in October.

- 1. Come Meet the Colorado Chapter:** Members of our Colorado Chapter, CTMA, are proud to be hosting BCMC on their home turf of Denver this year and they'll be meeting and greeting attendees at the WTCA booth on the show floor. Come swap chapter stories with your colleagues from the mountain time zone.
- 2. Free Meeting Space for Chapter Meetings:** Every year, we're pleased to be able to offer free meeting space for chapters at BCMC, and we can have your lunch catered in, too. The Iowa Chapter always holds its fall meeting at the show—why not try one for your chapter?
- 3. The BCMC Chapter Contest:** The chapter with the most attendees at the show wins bragging rights as this year's contest winner. All attendees from the winning chapter receive a commemorative pin. The Indiana Chapter won the first contest in 2007, but it's still anyone's game to win in 2008!

We don't really have to tell you ALL of the great reasons to attend BCMC this year, do we? We'll run out of space! Remember BCMC is all about planning, evaluating and adjusting your business lifeline, and in many ways your chapter is, too. **SBC**

### Chapter Highlights

#### Minnesota Truss Manufacturers Association

The Minnesota Chapter held its spring meeting on May 15 in Eagan, MN. Tom Nomeland delivered the President's Report, noting that Steve Schaeffel and Jim Scheible resigned their positions on the Board of Directors. Mark Laiti of Manion Truss and Components was approved to complete Steve's term. A discussion on a replacement for Jim, and the chapter's seat on the WTCA Board of Directors which he held, was tabled until the next meeting.

The Code Committee report was delivered by Bill Theobald. Bill gave an update on the State Energy Code and its effect on increasing the cost of building due to radon protection requirements. As for the ICC code hearings to be held in the Twin Cities in the fall, Bill noted that this would be a great opportunity for members to attend and see how the process works. A discussion ensued on the next Minnesota Building Code cycle and what participation the chapter would have in it.

The Marketing/Education Committee update was given by Chris Torgerson. The North Dakota Building Officials have requested the chapter set up a booth up at its seminar in October. Bob Mochinski will contact United Structural Components and Woody Miller will contact Fargo Truss Systems to get their thoughts on attending this forum. Steve Kloss gave a report on the ICC seminar for which the chapter sponsored a training session in April. He felt it went very well, though less time could have been spent on hand framing since there is little of that in the market. The chapter has been asked to sponsor another seminar in February 2009, but discussion of that was tabled until the chapter's next meeting on August 21 in St. Cloud, MN.

#### Missouri Truss Fabricators Association

The Missouri Chapter, MTFA, held its first chapter meeting online using **SBC Connection** in June. Attending through a teleconference line and internet connection, members from across the state were able to call from their desks to discuss hot topics and make plans for chapter activities.

High on the agenda was the chapter's educational successes in Johnson County. The chapter has been hard at work reaching out to educate the market and it is paying off in a big way. A meeting was held on April 15 with the Johnson County Building Officials (JOCOBO) and MTFA where the JOCOBO committee unanimously recommended that a partnership be formed to conduct a series of training classes. This meeting was a huge success, and JOCOBO is preparing a formal letter for MTFA to use in promoting educational programs in the marketplace.

BCMC 2008 was also central to the chapter's June meeting agenda. The attendees discussed the benefits of attending BCMC including strategic/corporate planning, talking to vendors, researching purchasing decisions, attending educational sessions, and networking with industry peers. All agreed they would try to get together in Denver this October.

#### South Carolina Component Manufacturers Association & Wood Truss Council of North Carolina

In 2008, the North Carolina and South Carolina Chapters continued their process of holding joint meetings. In March, the guest speaker was Danielle Wigley, PE., of MiTek Industries. Promising to help members understand building code changes, her presentation highlighted the changes affecting structural building components and what manufacturers need to know for their businesses. All in attendance agreed it was an afternoon well spent.

Discussed at both the March and June meetings was the South Carolina bill to label buildings with truss construction. The South Carolina Chapter was hard at work for several months educating legislators and the fire service in response to H4432. By May, all indications were that the bill would not move forward in the legislature, but the chapter's outreach efforts continued. In addition to materials distributed in

Charleston, an aggressive series of truss plant tours was lined up for the Columbia Fire Department.

The guest speaker at the chapters' June meeting was Jonathan Whitehead of Cox Industries on the advantages of fire retardant lumber and plywood in component manufacturing. Jonathan covered information to help component manufacturers effectively design with southern yellow pine and provided tips on how to dramatically reduce the cost of commercial and residential building. The members thanked him for his insight on effectively reducing mold during the framing process, too.

A merger of the North Carolina and South Carolina Chapters also gained momentum this spring. Following a favorable discussion at the March meeting and an electronic survey that showed a majority of the chapters' memberships in support of it, a subcommittee to work out details was formed at the June meeting consisting of South Carolina Chapter President Mike Redmon, North Carolina Chapter President Chris Lambert, Mike McIntosh and Glenn Traylor. The committee will recommend a new name, rules for the merger, monies, etc., and seek a vote at the next joint meeting to be held on September 17.

#### Southern Nevada Component Manufacturers Association

At the April meeting, the Southern Nevada Chapter's Code Committee had several updates for the membership. Committee Co-Chair Rich Menge, PE. reported that, per Clark County TG12-06 amendments, one set of wet seals is being accepted for revisions on original submittals and the previous request for two has been abandoned. Committee Co-Chair Bill Bolduc, PE. reported that the City of North Las Vegas interim senior building official is subject to change every 30 days between offi-

cial within the department as the search to fill the position continues. In addition, the City of Las Vegas Building Department further reduced its staff leaving Lillian Beltrans as the sole and senior plans checker; however, the express plan check (project engineer responsibility/no truss calc review) remains in effect for single family structures under 5000 sq. ft., greatly expediting the submittal process. Earl Russell remains the interim senior building official for Las Vegas until his scheduled retirement in August.

The members discussed some marketplace confusion on one hour fire walls and how many various methods are being specified by different architects and engineers. It was noted that IRC 2006 wall detail documents are the governing guides, so following these details assures approval by plans examiners.

A very positive report was given on the turn out and results of the EduCode seminar in February. The chapter's all-day session on understanding trusses from the ground up was well received at this conference held for building officials by the Southern Nevada Chapter of the International Code Committee (SNCCIC).

#### Truss Manufacturers Association of Texas

The Texas Chapter welcomed not one but two guest speakers to its June membership meeting in San Antonio. Ben Hershey, president of Alliance TruTrus, LLC and the current WTCA Secretary/Treasurer, gave a presentation entitled, "FSC, SFI – The Quick ABC's to Using Green Certified Lumber." Members were encouraged to be ahead of the curve and take advantage of this great opportunity to learn more about a topic that is becoming more popular every day. Kent Pagel of Pagel, Davis &

Continued on page 49

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## Calendar of Events

Check out [www.sbcindustry.com/calendar](http://www.sbcindustry.com/calendar) for the most current calendar information and complete event details.

### August

- **20-22:** WTCA Open Quarterly Meeting, Chicago, IL. Call staff for details, 608/274-4849.
- **21:** Minnesota Truss Manufacturers Association (MTMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **26:** California Engineered Structural Components Association (CalESCA) Chapter Meeting.

### September

- **9:** Colorado Truss Manufacturers Association (CTMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **9:** WTCA-Illinois Chapter Meeting.
- **16:** Central Florida Component Manufacturers Association (CFCMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **17:** North Carolina/South Carolina Joint Chapter Meeting.
- **18:** South Florida WTCA (SFWTCA) Chapter Meeting.
- **18:** Truss Manufacturers Association of Texas (TMAT) Golf Outing.
- **19:** Missouri Truss Fabricators Association (MTFA) Golf Outing.

### October

- **1-3:** 2008 Building Component Manufacturers Conference (BCMC), Colorado Convention Center, Denver, CO. Visit [www.bcmcshow.com](http://www.bcmcshow.com).
- **2:** Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association (ITMA) Chapter Meeting at BCMC.
- **2:** Mid South Component Manufacturers Association (MSCMA) Chapter Meeting at BCMC.
- **2:** WTCA Canada Chapter/Chapitre Canadien de la WTCA Meeting at BCMC.
- **7:** Tennessee Truss Manufacturers Association (TTMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **8:** Southwest Florida Truss Manufacturers Association (SWFTMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **9:** Wood Truss Council of Michigan (WTCM) Chapter Meeting.
- **15:** Georgia Component Manufacturers Association (GCMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **15:** WTCA-Arizona Chapter Meeting.
- **15:** WTCA-Northeast Chapter Meeting.
- **16:** Alabama Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **16:** North Florida Component Manufacturers Association (NFCMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **16:** Southern Nevada Component Manufacturers Association (SNCMA) Chapter Meeting.
- **16:** WTCA-Indiana Chapter Meeting.
- **16:** WTCA-New York Chapter Meeting. **SBC**

For more information about chapter meetings contact Anna (608/310-6719, [astamm@quallim.com](mailto:astamm@quallim.com)) or Dani (608/310-6735, [dbothun@quallim.com](mailto:dbothun@quallim.com)).

# Advertiser Index

<b>A-NU-PROSPECT</b> *	11
<b>Building Component Manufacturers Conference (BCMC)</b> *	17
<b>Clark Industries, Inc.</b> *	38, 44
<b>Commercial Machinery Fabricators, Inc.</b> *	35
<b>Deacom, Inc.</b>	34
<b>Eagle Metal Products</b> *	40
<b>Eide Integrated Systems LLC</b> *	9
<b>Finnforest USA</b> *	13
<b>The Hain Company</b> *	21
<b>HOLTEC Corporation</b> *	4
<b>Hundegger USA L.C.</b> *	41
<b>ITW Building Components Group</b> * (Alpine, Truswal, IBS)	26-27, 51
<b>Klaisler Manufacturing Corp.</b> *	47
<b>The Koskovich Company</b> *	37
<b>Lakeside Trailer Manufacturing, Inc.</b> *	33
<b>MiTek Industries, Inc.</b> *	2-3
<b>Monet DeSaw Inc.</b> *	52
<b>MSR Lumber Producers Council</b> *	22
<b>NUCONSTEEL</b> *	14-15, 43
<b>Open Joist 2000 Inc. (Distribution)</b> *	30
<b>PANELS PLUS</b> *	11
<b>Pratt Industries, Inc.</b> *	22
<b>Quallim, Inc.</b> *	22
<b>Sellick Equipment</b>	13
<b>Simpson Strong-Tie Company, Inc.</b> *	31
<b>SL-Laser Systems LP</b> *	25
<b>Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association</b>	30
<b>Stiles/Homag Canada/Weinmann</b> *	29
<b>TCT Manufacturing, Inc.</b> *	49
<b>Turb-O-Web USA, Inc.</b> *	21
<b>Viking Inc</b> *	23
<b>Wood Truss Systems, Inc.</b> *	30
<b>WTCA</b> *	8, 45

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### Chapter Corner

Continued from page 47

Hill, PC. then gave a presentation on the new Texas Contingent Payment Clause Statute and how it applies to every component manufacturer that sells commercial projects. The members appreciated this evening packed with good food and good information.

### WTCA-Illinois

Illinois Chapter members welcomed Don Simon of Nordic Engineered Wood as the guest speaker for their June meeting. With a presentation on engineered wood, sustainability and green building practices, Don focused on several issues that would allow members to: consider practical applications for making sure their engineered wood products are meeting today's green building guidelines; learn how to use their resources more efficiently by using specific building design parameters, better material utilization, panelization and use of certified wood; become more energy efficient by learning advanced framing/optimum value engineering techniques; and discover their global impact and learn about life cycle assessment and the use of environmental management systems at the manufacturing level. The attendees agreed that this was an outstanding presentation that covered very pertinent information, and they wished more members had been able to attend that day. Since this meeting was held in northern Illinois, the chapter is considering having Don return for an upcoming meeting at a location downstate.

At the June meeting, members also discussed the letters that were prepared in response to the regulation in Elmhurst, IL that requires gusset plates to be glued and reinforced with screws over all metal connector

plates for all housing construction. The chapter is distributing Carbeck CDs, brochures, and letters to the mayor, building officials and fire chief to educate them on structural building components.

For more information, about WTCA Chapters, contact Anna L. Stamm (608/310-6719 or [astamm@quallim.com](mailto:astamm@quallim.com)) or Danielle Bothun (608/310-6735 or [dbothun@quallim.com](mailto:dbothun@quallim.com)). Contributions to Chapter Corner, including pictures, are encouraged. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.



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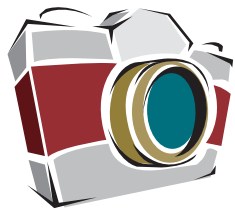


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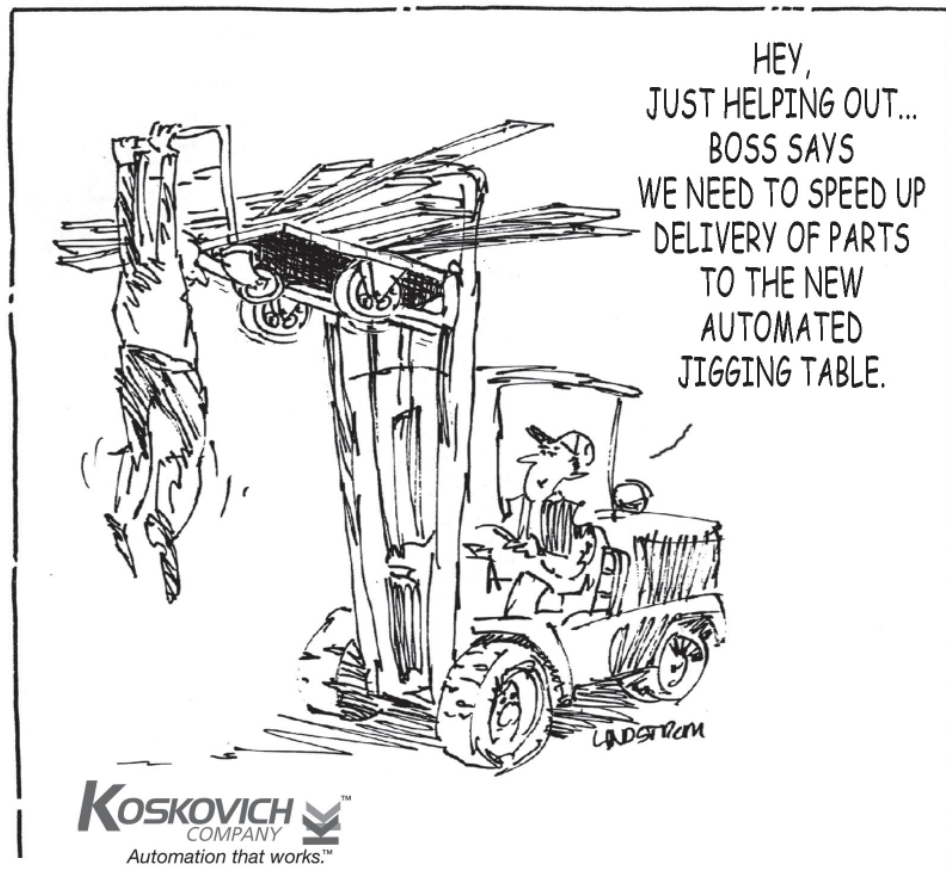
One WTCA member sent in these pictures of cut girder trusses discovered during the remodel of a local restaurant. A contractor who works regularly with this component manufacturer was doing interior remodeling and re-roofing on the restaurant when they noticed a previous contractor had cut some of the girders. The contractor recognized the problem and immediately contacted the component manufacturer.

The CM commented, "We've seen other remodeling jobs with damaged or cut trusses but nothing like this with girder trusses."

What's so remarkable is that the trusses were cut to allow duct work for heating and air conditioning units estimated to weigh approximately 2,000

lbs. sitting directly on the trusses. Despite the incorrect alterations and the snow, ice and rain loads for the last 15 years, the trusses held up without any noticeable problems. The CM, who asked not to be named, was very surprised that the structure lasted this long, especially given it was a clear-span flat roof with no interior walls.

In the end, the CM repaired the damaged trusses by putting in clearspan beams for support. "In the past it was more common to see incorrectly cut or altered trusses," said the contact. "But now with education, building officials and contractors being more aware finding cut trusses is not as frequent." **SBC**



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