



Publisher's Message

Another Look at Wall Panels

by Libby Maurer

SBC is ringing in the New Year with a hearty issue.

Happy New Year! As we launch into the year, not all of us are beginning on the same page, as the business climate and quantity of order files are extremely varied right now. Those of you whose sales and production have been affected by slowdowns in construction can look forward to 2007's improvement over the last half of 2006 (so the analysts predict). Be sure to take advantage of this time to dig into improving operations, catching up on training, re-branding your image and re-crafting your business plan. Others of you have sustained typical business activity or have been downright busy through the fall, and were thankful for the holiday break. No matter what side of the fence you fall, **SBC** pledges to bring you leading-edge information and ideas to help you improve your business in 2007.



In the January/February 2005 debut wall panel issue, I visited two start-up wall panel shops to learn about the product and the business side of the trade. Comparing the two companies, it was clear to me that R-Squared Construction Co. had sound business principles in place that would help them be successful over the long-term. Two years later they are going strong, so they must be doing something right. Turn to page 38 for a follow-up on the company with the framer-friendly attitude.

Compared to roof trusses, wall panels are certainly a different breed. Many manufacturers even consider them a moving target in terms of how to anticipate sales and prepare for possible growth.

The moving target concept is a good reason to consider a model for wall panel manufacturing that allows flexibility, says Ed Heil, author of "A Hybrid Approach to Wall Panel Manufacturing" on page 48. By combining affordability, flexibility and forward-looking software technology, Heil thinks hybrid is the solution for manufacturers to maximize their returns on investment.

The journey of the industry toward becoming a world class industry will undoubtedly necessitate forging new relationships with everyone around us. This includes building inspectors, community colleges, volunteer and career firefighters, builders and general contractors, state and local lawmakers, and even our competitors. That's why we've created a new column in 2007 called **Build Strong Relationships**. We'll use it to bring you the stories of component manufacturers who are reaching beyond their limits to educate the professionals who, with a little education about the industry, can make a monumental difference in their businesses. On page 24, we explain why this is an ideal time of year to meet with your elected officials during a tour of your facility. We hope you agree that once you connect with

someone who has an influence on your business and employees, there are boundless possibilities.

Continuing with our special series on plant tours, this time we recount the October truss plant tour and live burn demonstration requested by the New York State Building Officials Conference and hosted by WTCA's New York chapter (page 52). WTCA-NY put together an amazing day-long event to build relationships and provide education about our industry, how our products are designed and manufactured, and the performance of components in fire conditions. Admittedly, one tour does not change the world, but it does set the stage for very important educational work as the series title, *One Tour at a Time*, suggests.

Component manufacturers are at it again; a new season of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* on ABC started in fall 2006 with one episode being filmed in each state. We caught up with two CMs that recently participated in the show for suggestions about what you should consider if and when you are approached to assist in a project like this. They've passed along some helpful tips that you can peruse on page 62.

Look for some exciting new things from **SBC** in 2007! And best wishes for a successful year. **SBC**

Let us know about your experiences with wall panel manufacturing. Email your questions and comments to Imaurer@sbcmag.info.

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at a glance

- Look forward to improving economic conditions for the construction industry in 2007.
- Don't miss wall panel manufacturing articles on pages 38 and 48.
- A new column, **Build Strong Relationships**, spotlights manufacturers forging new relationships with various professionals in the marketplace.
- WTCA-NY put together a productive day-long event to build relationships and provide education.

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