



Publisher's Message

Wall Panels, Etc.—A New Year Begins

by Libby Maurer

There's no better way to ring in the New Year than an issue full of diverse articles.

In this issue, we turn our attention to wall panels. Factory-built walls are still clearly an attractive add-on for many companies involved in building construction, particularly as housing starts strengthen again and skilled construction labor supply will again be builders' biggest challenge. Ask anyone who supplies panels or panel equipment, and they'll pass along this bit of valuable advice: wall panels are completely different than trusses. This goes for what it will take to be successful selling, marketing and producing them. The message is clear for start-ups: do your homework and make sure what you can offer aligns with the markets' need.

That said, the article on page 32 begins a series that will examine six different elements of starting a wall panel plant. New panel manufacturers will want to stay tuned for tips on what to anticipate and expect when starting a new operation.

Unlike any other building component in the industry's repertoire, wall panel manufacturers are made up of a wildly diverse group. Some came from stick framing backgrounds. Others have been making roof and floor trusses very well for years. More and more are builders. The feature on page 36 looks at how this melting pot goes to market, and what makes them successful.

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Our industry is barely 50 years old, but already we have benefitted from the leadership of stellar businesspeople. Two such individuals recently exited the industry; we pay tribute to them on page 44. In their service to the industry, Andy Schwitter (Truswal) and Tom Manenti (MiTek) left footprints on history. Those are some mighty big shoes to fill.

There's a new WTCA Chapter on the map, but it's not a state. It's an entire country! Starting in early 2007, a group of eager Canadian component manufacturers and WTCA staff set the wheels in motion to form a chapter. Since then, officers have been chosen and priorities set. Turn to page 54 for a look at "le Chapitre Canadien de la WTCA."

If asked whether your company's CGL policy has a professional services endorsement, what would you say? Most of you probably don't know for certain. We often get questions from component manufacturers about obtaining this type of insurance—it's clear that it's a point of confusion for many companies. If you've ever been asked by a customer to carry professional liability insurance, you won't want to skip Legal Edge on page 28. Get the low-down on when this insurance might apply to you.

One thing we can all look forward to in 2008 is the new SBC Research Institute. **SBC** is poised to deliver regular updates and findings from the lab as industry testing occurs. In this issue, the testing approach and current projects are revealed on page 42. With no limit on what will be discovered, SBCRI holds powerful information about the industry's future. **SBC**



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at a glance

- This issue focuses on wall panel manufacturing. Turn to pages 20, 32 and 36 for wall panel-related articles.
- Two industry moguls leave the industry in 2008; check out their stories starting on page 44.
- Find out what's going on inside SBCRI on page 42.

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