

Executive Director's Message



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"WTCA Chapters -- Putting a Human Face on the Component Industry" by Kirk Grundahl, WTCA Executive Director

It is interesting to reflect on the first year of WTCA Chapters—1994. It seems longer than that, doesn't it? Regardless, we are still in the infant stage of chapter development, and still before us we have a tremendous opportunity to make a significant difference on behalf of our industry.

IN 1994 I WROTE THE FOLLOWING:

"I recently was traveling visiting both member and non-member truss plants. Everyone that I spoke with was in agreement that we must unify our industry's voice, resources and the priorities for the work we undertake if we are truly going to have an impact for our industry. From this the discussion often turned to the development of WTCA Chapters. There was some confusion as to WTCA's intent with Chapters. Our intent is as follows:

- We desire to gain as much information from local truss manufacturer groups as possible. As is well known, two or three or four thoughts allow for the creation of the best possible thought. We feel it is very important to have chapters involved in the decision making process of WTCA. That is why we feel it is important for the Chapter to be involved on the Board of Directors of WTCA. If we are not working on projects that the membership wants accomplished, then we are failing. We also desire that as the Chapter becomes involved in WTCA affairs, there is communication to the Chapter members what is happening within WTCA.
- We do not seek to control the local associations or Chapters. We seek for the local group or Chapter to control what WTCA does to the best interest of the industry, the Chapter and WTCA. The last thing we want is a power struggle because egos and protection of turf quickly divide us rather than unify us and take a great deal of energy away from our industry's ultimate goal—to be the future of all framing.
- There is no separate cost to becoming a Chapter of WTCA. We do not intend to control Chapter funds and how they are used. Hopefully, the converse is true that we will someday be providing the Chapters with funds to work on worthy projects,...etc.
- The way the local association functions will not change from the way it has in the past, if it becomes a chapter. It is imperative that the local group stays abreast of key issues locally and lets WTCA know if it needs assistance. WTCA can't possibly keep up with all local issues and certainly can't respond to every one of them, but we can be very helpful when help is needed.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS:

- It is our desire for Chapters to significantly influence what WTCA is and becomes in the future.
- The more diverse the thoughts are that we receive the better our final strategies and actions will be.
- Only through a unified effort can we truly accomplish big projects and the grand aspirations we have for our industry.
- WTCA and its chapters are the only groups that represent exclusively the interests of truss manufacturers."

These sentiments remain in place today. Now we need to create a plan for building on the foundation of the 30 chapters we have in place. Here are some current thoughts on how we can take chapters to the next level of impact:

- Be upbeat. Rather than being discouraged if there is lack of participation, recognize that even one person in the chapter doing work for the industry will reap benefits for his/her company and our industry. All it takes is one committed person to develop a passion and start a revolution. We have seen this happen over and over.
- Remember that this is YOUR association and YOUR chapter. WTCA staff alone cannot create passion for having a vibrant chapter but we are very willing and able to provide support and assistance in anything you want to do. We have developed numerous support tools over the years and have a great deal of institutional information to provide the most effective help possible. For instance, we have created the "Chapter Presidents Guide for 2001." This document provides ideas for chapter meetings, information about what WTCA-National provides to chapters and general tips focused on helping chapters become as effective as possible.
- Ideally, each chapter would have a full-time staff person assigned to help the chapter flourish by supporting and undertaking activities. WTCA and our Chapters have not grown to the economic level where this is possible, but we do devote more of our budget every year to this type of support.
- Please help us help you by interacting with our staff. You'll discover the many kinds of support we have to help you become more successful than you are today. We believe that there is already a great deal to offer.
- To help Chapters be more effective and focused on key priorities, WTCA's Board of Directors has encouraged WTCA staff to provide Chapters administrative services at a reasonable cost. This includes tasks such as assisting with finding speakers for meetings, setting up meetings, sending out meeting notices, making follow-up calls, invoicing and maintaining the checkbook. We now have experienced staff involved so that this service is more efficient and effective.
- We have a great group of suppliers. Show your support of our suppliers at the local level. In turn, your suppliers will certainly help with their support. Clearly there could be no stronger alliance. If we succeed as an industry and grow our business, they grow with us. Their salespeople are great resources who can quickly enhance our ability to have a positive impact on the market.
- We need to develop strong coalitions with local, state and regional customer associations like the Home Builders, the Associated General Contractors, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Institute of Architects, building officials and the Fire Service.

Relationships with these groups will help us to fully develop the education and information that they need about our industry. And should adverse local legislation be proposed by either an uninformed or misguided group, we can work together to provide a united front.

- WTCA Chapters and WTCA-National can work together effectively to create industry documents. For example, there may be an issue that occurs on a regular basis in a particular area. The local Chapter can convene and discuss the issue, develop a proposed response and send the details of this response to WTCA-National. In turn, WTCA-National may be able to create a formal document, brochure or pamphlet that can be distributed to customers either in local or regional areas or across the country. WTCA's Truss Technology in Building Series was developed with this in mind. It was contemplated that members of local Chapters would work with WTCA-National to develop straightforward, helpful, graphical documents that would provide information to the marketplace about common component related issues.
- It is amazing and wonderful to me to see how friendships in our industry deepen over time. There is a common bond that supersedes the competitive nature of our businesses. This networking may be the most powerful function of WTCA and its Chapters.
- Finally, we have made a commitment to "Put a Human Face" on our industry. For too long we have taken for granted that we have a great product and a great industry. These key sales attributes make tremendous sense so the product sells very well. However, as our industry matures, we become far more visible and will increasingly come under attack from a variety of groups with different agendas and goals than ours. To that end, it is increasingly important for each member company to have a person in its organization whose job includes public relations (a "human faces" job). This public relations person will help our industry be known through facts and accuracy and not innuendo. No job could be more important as it will ensure that our industry reaches its maximum potential and lives to an old age to be passed on, in better shape, for future generations.

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