

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

January/February 2002

BCMC 2002

www.bcmshow.com

Making BCMC the Best It Can Be: An Exhibitor's Perspective by Carl Schoening, 2002 BCMC Committee Chair

BCMC 2001 came to a close with a lot of positive comments from exhibitors and attendees alike. Along with the positive comments about this year's show were a number of questions that need our attention. The most unusual one that came up at this year's show began as a single query and then grew until everyone was faced with having to answer the question, "Do we need to have the BCMC show every year?"

I guess I was one of the last exhibitors to be asked this question directly. It didn't take me long to answer, having been at BCMC as a component manufacturer in the past and now as an exhibitor for the last two years. As a component manufacturer attendee, I was excited each year as I burst through the doors to the show floor! I couldn't wait to see the equipment on display. Though I may not have been buying at that particular show, viewing the equipment affected my buying decisions. I had the chance to watch each piece of equipment operate and listen to a description of the features from knowledgeable, passionate people. It made it easy to put together a list of pros and cons to ensure that the equipment that I purchased met my company's needs. Furthermore, I was able to see new products that would be available in the future, in addition to the direction that industry software would be taking. Being kind of a "techno-geek," I sat for hours at software demonstrations. I would try to "break" the software, performing the tasks that I performed on a daily basis. When shopping for software at BCMC, you get the chance to see demonstrations from the very best users in the business, which in many cases gives you the full impact of the software better than when a regional salesperson visits your plant.

As an exhibitor, my perspective had to be a little different. I was planning our booth while trying to keep in mind what I loved so much about attending the show. I tried to make sure that our new product development schedule matched the timing of every BCMC show. My employer asked me why that was so important and I explained that BCMC is the one show each year that draws truss manufacturers into one place for a concentrated period of time. I told him that we could have the biggest impact on new product acceptance during these three days each year. My challenge was to have the right products on display and the right people staffing our booth. Having the right products was easy. Our company is committed to the new product process and identified the truss industry as one of its top priorities. We focus on having at least one new product on display and several others near completion so that we can discuss the concepts behind them. This gives us the chance to make modifications based on the input from attendees. The value of having so many knowledgeable "truss people" in one place is a huge benefit to all exhibitors. We not only come away with ways to improve our products, but with new product ideas as well. This year I walked away with ideas for two brand new products that have the potential to have great impact on our industry, and an offer from one manufacturer to provide a

testimonial for an existing product. That alone should answer the question, "Why have the show every year?"

From an exhibitor's perspective, this is my one chance each year. Some, however, suggest that BCMC should be held every other year. Yikes! What about those exhibitors who rely on BCMC to launch new marketing? What if new product development provides you with a new, ground-shaking improvement on an off year? You would be a full year behind on your best marketing opportunity. What happens if some truss manufacturers' equipment buying cycle is during an off year? They won't be able to see all the equipment available. They'll choose from the equipment that they've seen at past shows, rely on word-of-mouth to make their decision, or take the path of least resistance and buy from their current suppliers without considering new possibilities. Potential suppliers lose big in these scenario.

With such rapid changes in the area of software, how can we possibly say that there would be nothing new to offer in this category? Every year software companies come to BCMC to show the enhancements that they have made and how they will benefit truss manufacturers. Not only changes in truss design software, but also improvements in management software that can significantly affect the profitability of a truss manufacturer's business. Radio frequency technology, which links the yard to the office recently became available but was exhibited at BCMC a couple of years ago. If I hadn't seen this technology at BCMC, I wouldn't know its capabilities or that it was available.

The 2001 show was no different; I heard that a few times in conversations. Attendees got to see the latest offerings from 108 exhibitors, including 23 that were exhibiting for first time. They also had the opportunity to participate in live demonstrations and make important decisions based on direct comparisons. More than once I heard about purchase decisions that were changed because of discussions with exhibitors and even more downstream purchase decisions were influenced by the exhibitor's presence at the show.

When I was a truss manufacturer I looked forward to the educational sessions. There was never a time that I have attended these that I was not able to bring back to my business several ideas that I could implement immediately. I spoke with attendees who said that this year's sessions continued to provide business-building ideas and new manufacturing and problem solving techniques.

As an exhibitor, on the other hand, we had an audience filled with hundreds of truss professionals all in one place and the mood and sales activity was very strong. Exhibitors came because they didn't have to travel the country making individual sales calls. We found that while attendance may have been down slightly due to the tragedies of September 11, those in attendance were decision-makers or key people who influence their company's decisions. We had constant traffic in our booth. We had the opportunity to show the truss industry that we support them and that we are working hard to provide products that will improve their profit opportunity.

Is it the same old show? Absolutely! It is a great show providing the very best value of any trade show that I attend! I hope BCMC remains the same old show. In my book, it remains the standard by which all others are judged. I look forward to BCMC 2002 in Columbus, Ohio and know that it

will be the same GREAT show.

Carl Schoening is National Manager, Plated Truss Products for Simpson Strong-Tie.

[SBC HOME PAGE](#)

Copyright © 2002 by Truss Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint materials from SBC Magazine, call 608/310-6706 or email editor@sbcmag.info.

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 of structural building components to ensure growth and continuity, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. SBC will take a leadership role on behalf of the component industry in disseminating technical and marketplace information, and will maintain advisory committees consisting of the most knowledgeable professionals in the industry. The opinions expressed in SBC are those of the authors and those quoted solely, and are not necessarily the opinions of any of the affiliated associations (SBCC, WTCA, SCDA & STCA).