

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Director's Message



Passionate, Efficient, Effective & Focused...Why Not? by
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We have just finished another election cycle, which is always interesting given the advertising that is on the radio and TV and the things that are said during the campaign process. All of this information obviously has to be viewed very skeptically. It requires hard work to get to the depth of information that one needs to make the best possible voting decision.

This is the case in nearly every aspect of our lives today. There is so much information available to us that the attention span of the public is becoming shorter and shorter. Because of everyone's 10-second sound bites, we are usually only subjected to surface promotional information, which makes it incredibly difficult to get enough facts to make the best choice. Generally, if you want to make a truth-based decision, you are going to have to dig for the meaningful facts or be able to ask some tough questions of a reliable and credible source.

Experience suggests that when one possesses good information and is willing to make an open-minded, fact-based decision, it is really easy to find a consensus position. Here are the typical reasons why a consensus position is often hard to find and conflict seems inevitable:

#1 - Follow the Money. Typically, negative statements are made to discredit and it usually means that someone's or some group's money flow is either being impacted or has the potential to be impacted.

#2 - Follow the Power. As in #1, this is to discredit and it usually means that someone's or some group's power base is either being impacted or has the potential to be impacted.

#3 - Follow the National Enquirer. As Winston Churchill said, "A lie gets half way around the world before truth has a chance to get its pants on."

Some would ask: "Why are you wasting time on this subject, as there is no solution to it!?" My response is that we must deal with it as otherwise we waste far too much time and money. From a purely association perspective, here are two solutions that will remove us from the negativity cycle.

SOLUTION #1:

WORK TOGETHER TO ENHANCE STRENGTHS

WTCA does its best to propose common sense solutions that have business fundamentals and the long term best interest of the industry at the core of the decision-making process. We are very fortunate to have strong business people on our Board who guide the decision-making process,

ask the tough questions and demand detailed answers.

As a pertinent example, there is no question that TPI and WTCA have had conflicts over the years, as both organizations believed that they represented component manufacturers (follow the power). Both also derived the majority of their revenue (follow the money) from component manufacturers through dues, inspection services or publication and tag sales (e.g. HIB versus WTCA's TTBs). Our solution was to define very specific scopes of work for both organizations. This allows both to thrive, to not get in each other's way of achieving their specific mission statements, and to work hand in hand to serve the industry. With this in mind, both organizations could be confident that if the industry is successful, both will be able to grow with that success together. This resulted in the TPI/WTCA litmus test that has been discussed in past issues and again is as follows:

Division of Truss Industry Activities Between TPI and WTCA per Agreement of TPI Board and WTCA Board

- In general, TPI's role is to handle truss plate design, manufacturing and safety; individual truss design and engineering; consensus standards on individual truss design and engineering; building code regulations as they pertain to individual truss design and engineering; and machinery. Specifically:
 - TPI produces truss design documents. TPI used this concept as the framework from which they defined their role. This then includes:
 - All of the design methods and references made on the truss design documents
 - The consensus standards development process.
 - Publication of ANSI consensus design standards as they relate to metal plate connected wood trusses.
 - All building code regulations that impact truss design and software development.
 - Third party quality control.
 - For any projects that fall inside these parameters, TPI will be the lead organization.
- WTCA will take the lead in all other areas as they relate to component manufacturing, the use of trusses by component manufacturer customers and aggressive fulfillment of its mission statement.

What has this done? In a short six months, it has already made our industry associations more economically efficient, effective and focused. From WTCA's point of view, we are continuously looking for ways to enhance TPI's revenue streams inside the context of this litmus test.

We have implemented the litmus test by using it to assess each incoming project/issue/activity individually. If it falls inside TPI's domain, we immediately send the project/issue/activity to TPI to guide or take action on it and return to us the information and/or recommendations we need to meet component manufacturers needs. A recent example involves a question from an Ohio manufacturer on sealed truss design drawings. Since TPI is responsible for all the engineering laws as they pertain to truss design drawings, we sent this request to them. After finding the information required to assist us, we sent the information out to assist our member and the Ohio chapter. The process is working smoothly and everyone wins.

Additionally, we will work with TPI in providing continuing education unit (CEU) educational programs to specifiers, building officials and builders using our Truss Knowledge Online system. Revenue will be shared as we implement these types of programs. There are no losers in this and it is fun.

We will do this in a heartbeat with any other organization out there that wants to build a win-win relationship with us. We want to partner with others who really desire to work with us toward the primary goal of benefiting our component manufacturing industry and our customers in an economically efficient, effective and focused manner. The litmus concept helps everyone focus on their core area of expertise. It is easy to promote each other when core knowledge areas don't overlap and organizations can easily build greater strength and provide exceptional value within their distinct skill areas.

SOLUTION #2: GET THE FACTS & BUILD ON THE POSITIVES

The next question is: "What can you do individually to build on the positives versus buy into the National Enquirer approach?"

- Should a denigrating comment come up, ask the spokesperson for all the documentable facts that they have to support their assertion. If they can provide neither documentation nor credible evidence to support their position, discount it and move on. This is likely a waste of time and energy.
- If it is about WTCA, ask WTCA. If true, it will be confirmed and, if false, data can easily be provided to show that it is false. Assume for a minute some competitor was out in the marketplace indicating your company was having financial trouble, if this was not true, would you not prefer that customers and prospective customers ask you rather than believe an over zealous or perhaps manipulative competitor?
- Help our industry by suggesting more litmus test-like approaches. Let us build on the core mission and expertise of all groups in synergy versus competition. If we do this, our industry will be better off because of it and dues dollars will achieve maximum return on investment.
- Help WTCA and our chapters to be the best structural building component manufacturing industry-focused group it can be. By definition, this should help everyone that has a component manufacturing operation.

To use a time worn cliché, sometimes we are our own worst enemies. In addition, all of us know that we can only control what we do and cannot control anything that anyone else does. Given that, we really need to stay focused on what we can do to help serve our businesses, our industry and anything else on which we desire to have a positive influence.

Our hope must be that we can get far beyond the National Enquirer mentality that sometimes exists in our businesses and our industry and focus on building them up instead. The human condition is unavoidable, so we will always have stumbling blocks in our way, but the more of us that step over or cast aside these stumbling blocks, the more success we will all see, and the less it will pull down positive business and industry progress.

My personal vote is for passionate, efficient, effective and focused business and industry success. Why not?

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