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A South Carolina Lowcountry Grassroots Event: Razor Component Systems Plant Tour Gives D.R. Horton Staff New Tools for Sales & Service by Connie King, Executive Assistant, Razor Component Systems, Inc.

A WTCA member and component manufacturer plays host to an area homebuilder in a stunning display of southern hospitality—grassroots style.



There was a real grassroots level “meeting of the minds” in South Carolina recently, when representatives from the South Carolina offices of the prominent home builder, D.R. Horton got a first hand look at the structural components that would become a D.R. Horton home.

Approximately 30 members of D.R. Horton’s sales staff, customer service representatives and field personnel traveled to the Ridgeland, South Carolina offices of one of Horton’s contractors, Razor Enterprises, Inc. and affiliated component manufacturer, Razor Component Systems, Inc. (RCS), for a grand tour of their 17-acre facility. The tour, which focused on the production of roof trusses, floor trusses and wall panels used in the construction of D.R. Horton homes in Bluffton and Charleston, was followed by a lunch of South Carolina Lowcountry cuisine at Jasper’s Porch, a popular local restaurant located near a scenic lake.

“We [D.R. Horton] are always conveying to our customers and vendors the importance of partnering up and working together in a mutual cause to bring the consumer a quality product in an efficient manner,” said M. Scott Ward, Operations Manager at D.R. Horton’s Hilton Head, SC, Division. “Our recent tour to the Razor truss plant was informative and fun. It allowed our people to get knowledge that they would not normally have been able to obtain. Both companies benefited from the recent tour,” he added, “and ensured a working relationship that will ultimately help the customer.”

The joint event was the brainchild of D.R. Horton's Glenn Gault, Vice President of Construction, who made the arrangements through Razor owner Mike Cahoon. Because of Horton's long-term business relationship with Razor, Gault thought it would be advantageous to expose selected members of Horton's sales team, customer service and others who work with Horton customers, to the entire construction process. The goal, according to Gault, was to help key Horton personnel gain a better understanding of the combined effort that goes into every D.R. Horton home, starting with the customer's order, through the delivery of plans to Razor's Construction Department, the design of the building components for each specific home, and finally to the production of the floor trusses, roof trusses and wall panels that make up the finished product.

"Although we are separate companies, Razor Components is a big part of our building process," Gault stated. "When we cross train our staff from operations to sales, our whole team gains knowledge of the way each player fits in the game. Matching a face with the voice on the phone brings our daily relations to a much better level, and the tour of the RCS plant covered both of these bases."

Mike Cahoon, part owner and CEO of Razor, personally greeted the D.R. Horton guests upon their arrival to the RCS facilities and invited them into the Sales office, where a "Welcome" banner featuring the D.R. Horton logo was prominently displayed. After introductions all around, the visitors separated into smaller groups led by Peter Cahoon, brother and partner of Mike Cahoon; RCS Plant Manager Dan Hinkle; and RCS Regional Sales Manager Katie Frank.

From the Sales office, the RCS hosts accompanied their guests to the Razor Construction Office. There, Razor Vice President of Operations Kevin Cox gave a brief overview of the construction/manufacturing process, and introduced the visitors to the behind-the-scenes Razor designers and the project coordinator assigned to D.R. Horton projects. Since everything starts with the required paperwork, the guests were shown a typical job folder, and heard a presentation on how all the paperwork, including the various component layouts, are placed into a special file for each Horton house being built.

They were also given both an explanation and a demonstration of the way RCS designs its component and connection systems. When properly installed, these systems produce a home that is engineered against high wind and seismic forces, a very desirable structural feature for D.R. Horton customers in this area.

A more detailed explanation of the RCS software technology employed by RCS was provided during the tour of the RCS Design Department by RCS Design Manager, Roger Wagner, who gave a brief presentation on how all the individual functions are hooked together through servers routed through fiber optic to each plant.

The group then proceeded to the RCS Wall Panel Plant, where they were taken through each series of Horton homes constructed by Razor. They saw how the walls were designed and manufactured on multiple wall panel lines and observed a D.R. Horton home actually going through the manufacturing process.

At the RCS Floor Truss Plant, the visitors saw the multiple floor truss assembly lines with auto-

stackers and the various cuts required. They were briefed on how the process is all tied together with RCS proprietary vertically integrated software. As an example, they saw how Horton's paperwork and scheduling moves through the various RCS component plants via fiber-optic connections.

During the final stop on the tour, which ended at the RCS Roof Truss Plant, the Horton group saw how material flows onto the RCS robotic saws to the computerized jiggling where the roof trusses are assembled. An explanation of the plating process was highlighted by a demonstration provided by one of the Horton Sales Representatives, who was invited onto an RCS press table to press some plates himself.

At the conclusion of the tour, a group photo of the D.R. Horton representatives was taken with their Razor hosts. Mike Cahoon said he was very gratified by the response to the tour by the D.R. Horton visitors.

"Almost to a person, the Horton folks thanked me personally," Cahoon said. "All seemed to agree that they had been educated by the tour and had experienced a paradigm shift by seeing the end product from the construction/manufacturing point of view. Some of them told me they had a new appreciation for the built-in quality of the engineered walls and trusses that make up a D.R. Horton home, particularly in the 130 mph wind zone codes in this area. They knew Horton's reputation for excellence and style," he said, "but now they know how much care and attention goes into the structural aspect that the customer never sees. I think the new knowledge they gained will help them in dealing with D.R. Horton customers, both as Sales and Customer Service Representatives," Cahoon added. "That was the goal Glenn Gault expressed to me when he arranged the tour, and I hope he'll be pleased with the end result."

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