

Association Synergy Puts the “Root” in Grassroots

by SBC Staff

**United we stand:
WTCA and TPI are making
a difference for the industry—
together.**



Nothing says grassroots like two industry associations teaming up to support and advance an industry. The building components industry is fortunate to have WTCA and TPI rooted together behind the scenes to grow and shape the industry’s myriad branches. In fact, since the WTCA/TPI Litmus Test meetings began in April 2002, the scene has been set for synergistic bliss that will carry the industry well into the future.

The Litmus Test has enabled the two groups to divide and conquer: WTCA taking on specific tasks that component manufacturers need accomplished to serve their business development needs, and TPI tackling the engineering, software and machinery needs to support their component manufacturing customers. WTCA Executive Director Kirk Grundahl said, “It was not all that long ago that TPI and WTCA were viewed more as competing than cooperating associations, because both were essentially doing their best to serve the same group: component manufacturers. This often led to confusion among component manufacturers about the role of the two associations, which was ultimately counterproductive to the goal of advancing the component manufacturing industry.”

Since 1994 when Pat McGuire and Bill Turnbull were WTCA and TPI Presidents respectively, all involved have worked relentlessly to build a relationship with a shared vision for the future of the building components industry. The fundamental purpose is to make the maximum use of industry resources and to minimize or altogether prevent duplication of effort and redundancy between the associations. The goal is to focus each organization’s work on its specific mission and keep asking ourselves the question, “How do WE most effectively serve the best interests of the component manufacturing industry?”

The strong synergy of WTCA and TPI has resulted in phenomenal gains for the industry over the years. You may recall the following monumental initiatives, made by WTCA and TPI on behalf of their respective memberships, setting an example of the industry’s true grassroots spirit.

Victory at ICC Hearings

Thanks to a working task group of WTCA and TPI members, the structural building components industry achieved two favorable decisions from the International Code Council (ICC) at the Final Action Hearings in May 2004. Dave Brakeman, Steve Cabler, Charlie Goehring and Kirk Grundahl attended the hearings, rallying—in concert—for the WTCA and TPI memberships. During the week-long session, the general ICC membership considered two code change proposals of critical importance to the building components industry.

Code change proposal, S14-03/04 (International Building Code - Structural) posed the greatest challenge for the WTCA/TPI group, who first submitted the proposal on minimum attic live loads for IBC and IRC consideration during code hearings in January 2003. The proposal had been accepted by the IRC Building/Energy Code Development Committee but defeated by the IBC Structural Committee, on grounds that the wording—not the concept—required further clarification. At the 2004 hearing, the group had to reverse the IBC Structural committee’s original disapproval by majority floor vote and then get a modification to the first code pro-

at a glance

- ❑ WTCA and TPI have proven that the “united we stand, divided we fall” cliché has solid merit.
- ❑ When our collective focus is on serving the best interests of our industry, there are no losers in the process.

posal approved by a two-thirds majority. As a result of their teamwork, the process went as smoothly as the industry could have hoped for. The change proved significant for component manufacturers as it mimics the former BOCA code approach to the application of live loads in truss attic spaces and saves the industry a great deal of money when compared to the existing IBC provision. Also, now the IBC attic loading provisions are consistent with the action taken by the IRC committee.

TPI Technical Advisory Committee's (TAC) Dave Brakeman (Alpine Engineered Products, Inc.) said of the process, "Our industry associations did their homework to write a code provision that everyone could agree to and also worked to assure that there would be broad based supporting testimony at the hearings. The result was that there was no testimony against our proposal and the vote by the ICC members was overwhelmingly for it. The process worked!"

The second proposal, RB151-03/04 (International Residence Code-Building & Energy), would have changed the code to require labeling of trusses through the addition of the following code language: "Each truss shall be labeled on the underside of the bottom chord between the outside bearing point and the center of each truss with the identifying label from the truss design drawings." The industry group's goal was to affirm the IRC Building/Energy Code Development Committee's committee disapproval of this change. TPI TAC's Steve Cabler (MiTek Industries, Inc.) and Grundahl provided testimony that supported the approach that ASNI/TPI 1 already takes regarding this issue. Thanks to their testimony, the outcome at the hearing went in the industry's favor.

Cabler remarked that the united industry effort paid off in the end: "With a coordinated team effort, we were successful in achieving the outcome planned. These hearings can be unpredictable and broad support of a position is critical in getting the votes needed. In the end, lining up industry support put us over the top. Solid relationships with building officials, structural engineers and related industry associations were a huge benefit to us in the hearings and will continue to pay dividends for our industry in the future."

WTCA members voiced their appreciation for the group's work on behalf of the industry. Rip Rogers of Trussway, Ltd.

noted that a united voice for the industry is more influential than that of a single organization: "[The recent ICC code changes] are just one more example of how they are working to protect the members' interests. Our influence and our voice are being recognized through a lot of hard work by people who did their homework and presented our case." ICC code change success: the result of deep-seeded grassroots organization in the industry.

This foundation for success continues today. At the 2005 code change hearing for the 2006 International Fire Code, the fire service proposed F45-04/05 for a new section in the code called "Section 507.4 - Identifying emblems for structures with truss construction." The reason given for this code

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change was: "This will assist the fire department in identifying structures that may pose an inherent danger to early collapse by the failure of truss construction thus saving lives of firefighters." Through the relationships developed in the past and hard work at these hearings, this code change proposal was recommended for disapproval by a 12 to 1 committee vote. The benefit of this work at the code hearing were the discussions and the relationships developed with the proponents of this code change, which are certain to help us as this issue rises again in the future.

"Success in this environment is about providing credible information and developing relationships that can be trusted," said Grundahl, who attended two weeks of code development hearings at the end of February. "Our industry has been very good at this and we continue to develop a solid foundation with the members of the ICC who are working diligently to make changes to the code. We have a great deal of respect for all involved within the ICC. These relationships will last a lifetime and have very positive effect on our industry," he added.

Joint Publications Spell Success in the Marketplace

As Charlie Hoover noted in a June/July 2002 **SBC** article; "A day was added to the Truss Plate Institute's (TPI) spring Board of Directors meeting to include a joint session meeting with WTCA's Executive Committee, a much-anticipated session by each association. It was a great opportunity for the association leaders to discuss issues critical to the metal plate connected truss industry. Both have strong influence and credential credibility in their areas of responsibility,

which emphasizes the importance of working together in the best interests of the industry. We need to use our associations' strengths to better the industry, rather than losing focus when there is a question of which association should be leading a particular charge." This is the essence of why a joint publications agreement between both associations has proven to be so critical to our collective success. It allows us to emphasize the importance of working together. And the results speak for themselves.

Having a single voice in the marketplace has increased BCSI 1-03 sales to a level that was hard to predict—in 2004 we sold 23,295 books, which is roughly double the volume of bracing books sold in any one-year period in the past. This synergy has been felt with every joint product produced. This has also helped

with WTCA membership growth as 110 new members were added in 2004. No longer is there any confusion about who is the component manufacturer association. TPI has also benefited from our collective focus on quality by gaining 12 new TPI Quality Assurance Program accounts.

At a February joint WTCA Chapter meeting (including TTMA, ACMA, GCMA, and WTCA-KY) in Chattanooga, TN, Grundahl spoke about the B-Series, developed and co-produced by the two organizations. The most positive result of the partnership, he said, is that when we are united, it sends a stronger educational message to the marketplace. "We listened to framers' needs in applying bracing in the field and also the needs of the component manufacturing industry in its duty to inform. All of the changes we made in creating BCSI came from the suggestions of a wide variety of participants in our various meetings. The development of BCSI is the essence of all that it means to have an effective association—people committed to the best interests of all involved in our industry. And the true bonus is that there are no longer two approaches to bracing education taking place in the market; there is one and the education affect in the marketplace is being felt in many positive ways," he said.

WTCA Past President Mike Ruede articulated the positive effect of this relationship eloquently. "The shared vision of the TPI and WTCA Board of Directors has led to a renewed focus on serving the best interests of all involved in the component manufacturing industry. Because of this, more positive outcomes like BCSI can be expected in the future," he predicted. A more accurate assessment of what the united associations can accomplish on behalf of the industry could not be made. **SBC**

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