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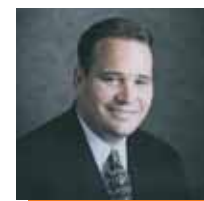
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SBC Advertisers invest in the growth of the structural building components industry!



Editor's Message

Finding Ways to Keep Employees for the Long Haul

by Don Groom

Retaining personnel can be as challenging as finding workers in the first place. What measures have you implemented to keep valuable employees?



The structural building components industry is a great place to work. From the sawyer who starts in the shop and works his way up to plant manager to the entrepreneur who grows his family business, workers can find more than a job in the building components industry; they can find a career and a home.

Nevertheless, the industry continues to face a skilled labor shortage. For more on the causes of this shortage, implications for the industry and ways component manufacturers can address this issue, read the article "Working for your Workers?" on page 52. As the article illustrates, component manufacturers continuously face the challenge of creating a work environment that attracts and retains top personnel. How do we do it? While there's no magic solution when it comes to personnel issues, many component manufacturers have come up with creative ways to find good employees and keep them for the long haul. Sharing success stories with one another is one of the surest ways to further these best practices and spark new ideas. In that spirit, here are a few personnel-related initiatives that Stark Truss Co. has undertaken.

Component manufacturers continuously face the challenge of creating a work environment that attracts and retains top personnel.

Having a reputation for being a good employer can often be your best recruiting tool. We make every effort at Stark to show employees that we care about them and want to help them achieve their goals. Some of our best employees hear about the company from word of mouth. Many employees join the company right out of high school and find numerous opportunities for advancement over the years. While the ability to promote employees is dependent on a number of factors ranging from a company's size to its bottom line, I strongly encourage manufacturers to invest as much time and money in their employees as they can. Whether it's taking the time to train staff on company procedures, putting employees through WTCA's Truss Technician Training program, or offering a worker a formal promotion, employees appreciate the opportunity to learn and improve their skills. Going out and hiring a new employee may be the quick and easy fix to a staffing issue, but investing in your current staff can reap long-term benefits.

At Stark, we believe in—and have had great success with—promoting from within. Most of our plant managers (yours truly included) as well as many sales staff and technicians have been promoted from within the company. When someone with management potential joins the company, they generally start in the shop and go through one or two years of learning the business from the ground up. This hands-on training allows staff to learn the company inside and out, and if they are successful, they earn the right to take the next step and move forward in their career. Employees who take this training route often turn out to be some of our best producers, and giving them the chance to prove themselves instills strong loyalty and an appreciation for the opportunity to advance.

Likewise, our prison technical program has resulted not only in some top-notch truss technicians, but some of Stark's most industrious and loyal employees to

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at a glance

- Having a reputation for being a good employer can often be your best recruiting tool.
- Some of our best employees hear about the company from word of mouth.
- Hiring a new employee may be a quick fix to a staffing problem, but by investing in your current staff, you reap long-term benefits.

...at the heart of any good personnel initiative is the idea that success is a two-way street—it's not just what employees do for the company but also what the company can do for its employees.

Editor's Message

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boot. Started in 1996 with the goal of helping inmates learn a trade and develop life skills so they wouldn't re-offend upon release, many truss technicians have been trained in the program based at the Marion Correctional Institution 40 miles north of Columbus, OH. Admittedly, there were hurdles in the beginning and some reservations when the program was in its infancy, but now it's safe to say the program has developed some great working relationships between the inmates and employees at our partnering truss plants. Our customers have also given us nothing but positive feedback on the program. Several inmates in the program have been released from prison; every technician joined Stark after their release, and many continue with the company to this day. To learn more about Stark's prison technical program, see **SBC's** three-part series, "The Road to Re-entry," that ran from March to May 2005.

No doubt, clear and effective communication in the workplace is a top priority, but component manufacturers can also keep the lines of communication open when employees are off the clock. For example, Stark sends out a monthly newsletter to every employee's home. Now, I know that production and printing costs for a newsletter can add up, but a regular mailing like this is one of the best ways to stay in touch with employees and their families. Along with information on the company's health insurance and 401(k) program, each newsletter features a safety article (to literally drive home the safety message) and highlights employment anniversaries. Each issue also includes a "Success Is What You Make It!" article, spotlighting an employee who's been with Stark for a number of years and worked his or her way up in the company. It's their chance to tell their story.

Also, to show we care about the well-being of our employees, we have a full-time chaplain (credentialed through a workplace chaplaincy program) on staff, available 24/7 for employees who may be going through a tough time. Whether it's marital issues, a death in the family, or any time an employee needs someone to talk to, the chaplain is there to listen. Providing this resource to help employees with non-HR issues is our way of showing that we care and we're here to help.

The above are just a handful of things one component manufacturer does in an effort to address personnel issues. No matter what type of program a manufacturer chooses to implement, at the heart of any good personnel initiative is the idea that success is a two-way street—it's not just what employees do for the company but also what the company can do for its employees. **SBC**

SBC Magazine encourages the participation of its readers in developing content for future issues. Do you have an article idea for a future issue or a topic that you would like to see covered? Email your thoughts and ideas to editor@sbcmag.info.

STRUCTURAL BUILDING Components™ THE FUTURE OF FRAMING

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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 structural building components. Further, *SBC* strives to ensure growth, continuity and increased professionalism in our industry, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. *SBC's* editorial focus is geared toward the entire structural building component industry, which includes the membership of the Wood Truss Council of America (WTCA), the Steel Truss and Component Association (STCA) and the Structural Component Distributors Association (SCDA). These associations make up an industry strategic planning committee called the Structural Building Components Council (SBCC). The opinions expressed in *SBC* are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of the associations listed above.

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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).



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