Wall Panels

Your Customers’ (and Your Business’) Ticket to Added Value

Follow-up on R-Squared

A Hybrid Approach to Wall Panel Manufacturing


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Follow-up on R-Squared: “We’re Preparing for Growth” by Libby Maurer

Being framer friendly and conservative in the first years of business increases the chance of success.

Special Series: One Tour at a Time Fire Demonstration & Plant Tour Show off Truss Industry for NY Building Officials Conference by Libby Maurer with Will Warlick & Melanie Birkeleand Find out about the truss plant tour put on by WTCA-NY, and how they helped educate local officials.

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Wall Panels—Your Customers’ (and Your Business’) Ticket to Added Value

This issue of SBC focuses on wall panels, and the timing couldn’t be better. This is the perfect opportunity to talk to your customers about wall components. Builders are looking to find savings in their direct costs, and wall panels just may be the answer, not to mention providing a chance to grow your business.

We all know that components save time in labor and produce less waste in building materials. WTCA’s collaboration with the Building Systems Council of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) on the Framing the American Dream® (FAD) project clearly shows the benefits that wall panel framing bring to the construction process. This 1996 FAD project (see photo below) compared two identical houses side by side—one stick built and one with component construction—and trusses and wall panels emerged as the clear winners in terms of time and waste savings. While wall panels qualify as components, it’s important to understand that the similarities end there. The wall panel industry has unique issues and challenges that manufacturers need to address before launching a wall panel business. Many factors need to be taken into consideration, including entry level manufacturing, installation services and value engineering.

Speaking from personal experience, launching a wall panel line and supplying the full exterior and interior wall panel package can be a little overwhelming. In light of this, I recommend that you build up demand for wall panels by accumulating small successes along the way. First you may want to see if there is a market for subcomponents like corners, Ts, Ls and pre-cut headers. There are a number of advantages to this approach. For starters, it allows you to add a new product line with little capital investment. Offering subcomponents also enables you to develop lines of communication with framers and contractors without overwhelming the builder’s team—which can include contractors, subcontractors, framers, architects and others—with a complete wall panel package. From this starting point, you might want to advance to window and door components, then load bearing walls without sheathing. A logical next step would be to add partition walls and then begin to sheath exterior walls. By taking this “learn to walk before you run” approach...

Editor’s Message

Wall Panels—Your Customers’ (and Your Business’) Ticket to Added Value

by Barry Dixon

The popularity of wall components is growing; make sure you don’t miss out on the benefits they hold for your business!

❑ Start small—before launching a wall panel line, consider adding subcomponent product lines as a low-cost way to feel out the market demand.
❑ Increase your chances for success by turning framing contractors and builders into wall component advocates.
❑ Value engineering your walls may help you find the competitive advantage needed to create a niche in your market.

at a glance

Continued on page 8

Continued on page 8

Structural Building Components Magazine
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January/February 2007

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approach, you will be able to identify problem areas early, develop a system that is beneficial to everyone, and turn framing contractors and builders into wall component advocates, whose word of mouth advertising alone will grow your business.

Installation is one of the biggest hurdles to overcome when trying to break into the wall panel market. Developing a plan to work with framing contractors is critical if you are going to be successful manufacturing wall panels. Framing contractors are used to assembling walls, and they have set up their labor force to build walls on site. By using components for framing, contractors can make better use of their labor because component construction requires fewer workers on the jobsite. Contractors' production volume will increase with the reallocation of their labor force as long as they believe that this reallocation has value to their business. Otherwise, the contractor will be your biggest detractor.

If the contractor is not an advocate, another route is to add field installation of your products as an additional service for your customer. This type of “turnkey” framing includes supplying all of the components for the project, the loose lumber necessary to tie them together, and the labor as well. However you choose to handle field labor, by componentizing more of the house you will definitely discover new ways to increase savings and quality for your builder.

Finally, value engineering your walls (putting in place a systematic method to improve the value of what you are providing) may also help you find the competitive advantage needed to create a niche in your market. You can easily differentiate your business from traditional framing by value engineering your products—optimizing the use of materials and incorporating that analysis into the manufacturing process and the final structure. This provides that the flow of loads through the structure have the optimal resistance provided, which will allow the best use of framing and connection materials. Properly performed, the cost savings provided will be greater than those found in the FAD project mentioned above, since that component structure was not optimized. Value engineering will also assure proper consideration of issues such as building codes; regional applications like high wind and earthquakes; critical serviceability or climate issues, etc. With value engineering, you can incorporate new technologies and materials to help lower costs for the builder and make wall components provide a very real competitive advantage over field framing.

Given all this, I believe the time has arrived for wall panels. Offering framing contractors is critical if you are going to be successful manufacturing wall panels. Framing contractors are used to assembling walls, and they have set up their labor force to build walls on site. By using components for framing, contractors can make better use of their labor because component construction requires fewer workers on the jobsite. Contractors' production volume will increase with the reallocation of their labor force as long as they believe that this reallocation has value to their business. Otherwise, the contractor will be your biggest detractor.

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The mission of Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC) is to increase the knowledge of its audience 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 inform the public about the products and services we offer.

SBC’s editorial focus is geared toward the entire structural building component industry, which includes the membership of ATCA—Representing the Structural Building Components Industry. The opinions expressed in SBC are those of the author and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of Truss Publications or ATCA.

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Publisher’s Message

Happy New Year! As we launch into the year, not all of us are beginning on the same page, as the business climate and quantity of order files are extremely varied right now. Those of you whose sales and production have been affected by slowdowns in construction can look forward to 2007’s improvement over the last half of 2006 (so the analysts predict). Be sure to take advantage of this time to dig into improving operations, catching up on training, re-branding your image and re-crafting your business plan. Others of you have sustained typical business activity or have been downright busy through the fall, and were thankful for the holiday break. No matter what side of the fence you fall, SBC pledges to bring you leading-edge information and ideas to help you improve your business in 2007.

Another Look at Wall Panels

by Libby Maurer

SBC is ringing in the New Year with a hearty issue.

In the January/February 2005 debut wall panel issue, I visited two start-up wall panel shops to learn about the product and the business side of the trade. Comparing the two companies, it was clear to me that R-Squared Construction Co. had sound business principles in place that would help them be successful over the long-term. Two years later they are going strong, so they must be doing something right. Turn to page 38 for a follow-up on the company with the framer-friendly attitude.

Compared to roof trusses, wall panels are certainly a different breed. Many manufacturers even consider them a moving target in terms of how to anticipate sales and prepare for possible growth. The moving target concept is a good reason to consider a model for wall panel manufacturing that allows flexibility, says Ed Heil, author of “A Hybrid Approach to Wall Panel Manufacturing” on page 48. By combining affordability, flexibility and forward-looking software technology, Heil thinks hybrid is the solution for manufacturers to maximize their returns on investment.

The journey of the industry toward becoming a world class industry will undoubtedly necessitate forging new relationships with everyone around us. This includes building inspectors, community colleges, volunteer and career firefighters, builders and general contractors, state and local lawmakers, and even our competitors. That’s why we’ve created a new column in 2007 called Build Strong Relationships. We’ll use it to bring you the stories of component manufacturers who are reaching beyond their limits to educate the professionals who, with a little education, can make a monumental difference in their businesses. On page 24, we explain why this is an ideal time of year to meet with your elected officials during a tour of your facility. We hope you agree that once you connect with someone who has an influence on your business and employees, there are boundless possibilities.

Continuing with our special series on plant tours, this time we recount the October truss plant tour and live burn demonstration requested by the New York State Building Officials Conference and hosted by WTCA’s New York chapter (page 52). WTCA-NY put together an amazing day-long event to build relationships and provide education about our industry, how our products are designed and manufactured, and the performance of components in fire conditions. Admittedly, one tour does not change the world, but it does set the stage for very important educational work as the series title, One Tour at a Time, suggests.

Component manufacturers are at it again; a new season of Extreme Makeover: Home Edition on ABC started in fall 2006 with one episode being filmed in each state. We caught up with two CMS that recently participated in the show for suggestions about what you should consider if and when you are approached to assist in a project like this. They’ve passed along some helpful tips that you can peruse on page 62.

Look for some exciting new things from SBC in 2007! And best wishes for a successful year, SBC.

Let us know about your experiences with wall panel manufacturing. Email your questions and comments to lmaurer@sbcmag.info.

at a glance

❑ Look forward to improving economic conditions for the construction industry in 2007.
❑ Don’t miss wall panel manufacturing articles on pages 38 and 48.
❑ A new column, Build Strong Relationships, spotlights manufacturers forging new relationships with various professionals in the marketplace.
❑ WTCA-NY put together a productive day-long event to build relationships and provide education.

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Learn what is necessary to ensure that nailed connections can resist uplift requirements.

Toe-nailed connections are a common means of attaching wood joists, rafters and trusses to the top of a supporting wood wall or beam. Depending on the application, these connections must often provide resistance to uplift from wind and/or certain multi-span gravity load conditions, as well as resistance to lateral loads from wind and seismic forces. The building codes provide minimum fastening requirements for various connection scenarios that meet the “Conventional Light-Frame Construction” provisions of the code. There are many applications, however, in which toe-nailed connections are used in wood construction that are beyond the scope of the Conventional Light-Frame Construction provisions of the code. For these instances, a basic understanding of the factors affecting the withdrawal and lateral resistance of fasteners can be helpful in determining whether or not this type of connection is viable.

**Question**
I’m looking for information that will help me understand the load resisting capacity of a nailed connection. We typically attach the truss heel to the top plate of the walls with a toe-nailed connection. What do we need to keep in mind to ensure that these nailed connections can resist the uplift requirements provided on the Truss Design Drawing?

**Answer**
The resistance provided by a toe-nailed connection is governed by several factors including proper installation, lumber species, length of penetration, and type of nail.

**Proper Installation:**
To get the most out of a toe-nailed connection, it is important to toe-nail correctly. Figure 1 illustrates proper toe-nailing of a truss to the top plate of a bearing wall. The dimensions shown are only meant to serve as an approximate guide. Note: Toe-nailing through a metal connector plate of a truss does not stand the load resisting capacity of a nailed connection. In addition, B8 of the 2006 edition of BCSI provides the uplift and lateral load capacities for toe-nailed connections consisting of three, four or five nails for various types and species of wood.

**Type of Nail:**
The type of nail used in a toe-nailed connection also influences capacity. The larger the diameter of the nail shank, the greater the resistance to withdrawal and lateral loads. For this reason, common wire nails provide greater resistance than the same size (i.e., penny-weight) of box or sinker nails. The type of nail shank will also influence nail holding capacity. Deformed shanks (i.e., ring- or screw-shank) typically provide greater withdrawal resistance than smooth shank nails.

When installing toe-nails, use care to avoid splitting the wood. The Building Designer typically provides nail spacing and minimum end and edge distances. In lieu of such guidance, a well accepted rule is to limit the total number of toe-nails to three (total, including both sides) for full bearing on a 2x4 top plate (i.e., 3-1/2”) and five (total, including both sides) for full bearing on a 2x6 top plate (i.e., 5-1/2”). (See Figure 1.)

When using toe-nails to attach the top or bottom chord of a truss to the side of a gird truss or wood beam, the number of nails used is generally limited to a maximum of three toe-nails for 2x4 chords and four toe-nails for 2x6 chords.

The National Design Specification® (NDS®) for Wood Construction, published by the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) provides the engineering basis for toe-nail and slant-nail connections when used to resist withdrawal and lateral loads. In addition to the factors mentioned above, the load carrying capacity of a toe-nailed connection is also affected by the duration that the load is applied to the connection, the moisture content of the wood (at the time the connection is made as well as in-service), the sustained temperature of the wood and whether or not the nails are driven into the end-grain of the supporting member. The NDS provides a detailed review of the affect each of these factors has on the allowable withdrawal and lateral resistance capacity of a nailed connection. In addition, B8 of the 2006 edition of Building Component Safety Information (BCSI) provides the uplift and lateral load capacities for toe-nailed connections consisting of three, four or five nails for various types and species of wood (see Support Docs at www.sbcmag.info for Chapter 8 of BCSI). The information provided in each of these documents can be used to determine if a toe-nailed connection has adequate capacity to resist the applied loads. SB C

**Species of Lumber:**
The species of wood that the nail is driven into also affects the amount of resistance provided by a toe-nailed connection. More specifically, nail resistance to withdrawal and lateral forces is directly related to the specific gravity (SG) of the wood. For example, a toe-nailed connection into Southern Pine (SG = 0.55) will provide greater resistance than the same connection into Spruce-Pine-Fir (SG = 0.42).

**Length of Penetration:**
The withdrawal and lateral resistance provided by a nail depends, in part, on the length of penetration into the wood member. The greater the penetration, the greater the resistance.

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Fire Safety in a Component Manufacturing Facility: Part 1

by Molly E. Butz

Component manufacturers have many things to think about every day, from production numbers to delivery schedules. With so many details to manage, it’s possible that fire safety isn’t on the list of priorities most of the time. However, a facility full of fire-friendly fuel means that component manufacturers should always keep fire safety in mind.

Fire safety in the plant can be broken down into two main topics—causes and prevention. For a manufacturer, the causes are very straightforward, as both fuel and ignition sources for a fire are abundant. It’s no secret that component manufacturing operations contain large quantities of lumber and other wood products, sawdust, loose papers and flammable materials such as cleaning agents, lubricants, solvents and liquid propane (used for forklifts). Unfortunately, all of these materials make excellent fuel. Most plants also often contain one or more ignition sources including potentially faulty electrical wiring, welding and cutting sparks, propellant actuated tools (such as nail guns) and employee tobacco smoking (Source: OSHA Wood Products eTools: Fire and Explosion). Other ignition sources may include static electrical discharges and lightning.

A facility full of fire-friendly fuel means that component manufacturers should always keep fire safety in mind.

Prevention

Eliminating the obvious fire hazards is simple enough for any component manufacturer to accomplish. Each of the following fire hazards is accompanied by an easy, inexpensive solution.

- **Sawdust build-up:** Good housekeeping is the easiest way for your facility to keep this fire hazard swept away. Using a good broom, be sure your area is clear from sawdust and scraps after your shift everyday, or in between shifts if it gets messy.
- **Loose cut sheets and paperwork:** Here again, housekeeping is your best line of defense. Keeping track of all of your paperwork will ensure you don’t end up with dangerous piles of paperwork kindling for a fire.
- **Lit cigarettes/smoldering cigarette butts:** Designate a specific smoking area for your employees and strictly enforce your “smoking in designated areas only” policy. One careless toss could devastate your business.
- **Flammable liquids and gels:** Assign an area away from possible ignition sources to store flammable materials, such as cleaning agents, lubricants, solvents and liquid propane. In addition, train your employees to understand the hazards associated with each flammable material.
- **Welding sparks:** Physically separate job tasks that may cause a fire, such as welding operations and sawdust. If this is impossible—for instance you need to have someone repair a saw—consider dousing the area with water and then appointing a “fire watcher” to stand by with a fire extinguisher in case of an emergency. In addition, be sure each of your employees designated as mainte-
Safety Scene
Continued from page 16

nance have all of the proper personal protective equipment
they need to avoid injury (see sidebar).

- Potentially faulty electrical wiring: Ensure your electric-
tical systems are rated for the purposes they will be used
for and protected by appropriate circuit breakers, ground-
ing all equipment prone to accumulating static electrical
charges (Source: OSHA Wood Products eTools: Fire and
Explosion).

Prevention
With the basics out of the way, now is an appropriate time
to turn our attention to the other more sophisticated and
necessary ways that you can protect your facility from a dev-
astating fire. However, flushing out the details of fire resist-
ant materials, emergency exits, emergency alarms, sprinkler
systems and in-plant fire extinguishers is a lot to cover. Stay
tuned for Fire Safety in a Component Manufacturing Facility:
Part 2 in the next issue of SBC. “One spark is all it takes to
put you out of business!” (Source: Loss Control Services from
CNA Insurance). Safety First!

To pose a question for this column or to learn more about WTCA’s
Operation Safety Program, contact WTCA Staff at 608/274-4849, email
wtca@sbcindustry.com, or view the Operation Safety demonstration
online at www.wtcatko.com.

One component
manufacturer relayed
the following story
about fire prevention.
Don’t let this happen
at your facility!

“AS a member of our maintenance staff, I often used various lubri-
cants, solvents and other chemicals throughout the day to fix our
machinery. On one particular day, one or possibly more of these
chemicals had leaked onto the cuff of my work shirt. At the time I
didn’t think anything of it and continued about my business. Later
in the day I began a repair project that required me to do some
welding and in haste, I didn’t put on a protective welding jacket.
The project required me to weld over my head while standing on
a ladder. One of the sparks from the welding hit my unprotected
shirt cuff and the combination of the chemical and the spark set
my shirt on fire. Before the ordeal was over, all that was left was
the collar and shoulders of my shirt. Luckily, that time, the fire was
easily extinguished and I wasn’t badly burned. However, a simple
spark resistant jacket could have prevented the entire incident.”

One component
manufacturer relayed
the following story
about fire prevention.
Don’t let this happen
at your facility!

For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/klaisler.htm.

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beats their two pair!

Equipment IN STOCK and READY TO SHIP
CALL KLAISLER FIRST!
When you think of the benefits of exhibiting at BCMC you probably think of new sales leads, strengthening relationships with existing customers and increasing the recognition of your product in the marketplace. But there is one HUGE opportunity that exhibitors often overlook...market research!

Don’t assume that market research involves complicated procedures that take time away from the “important stuff.” Philip Kotler in Marketing Management (1999) defines market research as “systematic problem analysis, model-building and fact-finding for the purpose of improved decision-making and control in the marketing of goods and services.” Market research is the “scientific” approach to building value in the eyes of an organization’s target market.

Most companies in our industry aren’t able to afford a separate market research department to gather and monitor information and make decisions based on that information. However, all successful businesses must know their markets, competitors, customer wants and needs, and “what it takes to be competitive.” It is not enough to know the answers to the what, where, when, and how questions about our businesses. We also need to know why people buy (or don’t buy) our products and services.

Market research is an effective means of learning about your customer and is not complicated. In fact, you may be surprised to know that you conduct market research unconsciously. While there are formal approaches, market research can be as informal as having a conversation with your customer. A good example of a barebones level market research campaign is something many of you already do. If you have ever held a meeting before BCMC to outline the company’s goals with regard to collecting information and then regrouped after the show to compare and analyze feedback, you may not have called it market research but that is what you have done. Next year, try adding another layer of depth to advance your research goals; make a list of things you’d like to find out from your customers at BCMC and work those questions into your conversations during the show. Then plan on asking all staff members to share their findings when you regroup after the show. If you make this as systematic as possible, your chances of finding jewels of information among the chaos of BCMC will increase dramatically.

Because BCMC attracts component manufacturers from across the world to one place for an action packed two and one-half days, it is the perfect venue to learn about current market conditions, have a few conversations with your competitors, and most importantly learn more about your customers’ wants and needs, and what it takes for you to be most competitive.

Continued on page 22

at a glance

- Market research is systematic problem analysis, model-building and fact-finding for the purpose of improved decision-making and control in the marketing of goods and services.
- You can increase your chances of finding jewels of information at BCMC by using a systematic approach to ask all your staff members to share their findings when you regroup after the show.
- According to one Loyal Attendee, “it doesn’t matter how long you’ve been in the business, you can always learn something and pick up something new at BCMC.”
New Semi-Automated Wall Panel Cutting & Assembly System: $113,655
Includes:
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• Materials Handling Equipment
• Wall Panel Assembly Machinery
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BCMC 2007
Continued from page 20
What you learn from your customers will not only reveal what is driving their decisions, but you can also develop new marketing strategies as well as shape new product development based on your findings. Let’s explore some more formal yet simple ways that you can learn as much as possible and draw more value from the BCMC experience.

Establish an Objective
The first thing to determine is your knowledge objective for BCMC. Do you need to test a new product concept? Create a strategy to strengthen your full range of product line sales? Identify market trends? Whatever the case, first define your goal and then choose a means for obtaining the information you need.

Quantity vs. Quality
There are two main approaches that you can take. The first is quantitative—numbers-based—and draws conclusions about a group based on the most common answers. The results are used for evaluation and can measure product satisfaction and performance as well as customer attitudes and behaviors. The results are proportional to the total population, so it can be used to decide if one product or concept is better than another.

The most popular means of quantitative research is a survey. The best surveys are brief and ask questions that are targeted to deliver the specific responses you seek to improve your business or product.

Surveys can be conducted on paper, a laptop computer or with a “lead retrieval system” available for rental at the show. This scanner makes it effortless to follow up with contacts by organizing and delivering the contact information of leads, prospects and customers who stopped by your booth.

The second kind of market research that you might conduct is qualitative, which involves in-depth discussions with prospects in your booth. Questions build on previous responses, providing in-depth insight to your customers’ viewpoints. Qualitative research can generate new ideas, help with decision making and aid in initial learning about a new concept/product. Stan Axsmith of Panels Plus says, “Our best ideas for new products come from this show because customers give us information on what they need to accomplish their goals.”

This can also be as simple as engaging attendees who stop by your booth in a conversation where detailed responses on their satisfaction, expectations and interests are given. “[BCMC] allows us to hear exactly what the customers’ new needs and concerns are,” said Blake Bailey, BOSS Tiedowns & Strapping. The feedback you receive can help you to better understand your customer and exactly they are looking for.

Conclusion
When there is something you want to know about your market, or if there is input that could help you in making a decision, don’t forget to consider focused market research at BCMC as a useful tool to help you achieve your objectives. Whether you are looking to measure product awareness, establish customer profiles, determine market share or generate new ideas, knowledge gained at this show will help you reach better conclusions.

The BCMC Loyal Attendee Program rewards attendees and their companies for supporting the show. Here’s how to qualify.

To qualify for the Company Program:
• Your company has to have sent at least one person to BCMC for each of the last five years (2002 – 2006) and must be a component manufacturer member of WTCA.
• One pin will be given to the owner, president or other representative from your company.

To qualify for the Individual Program:
• You must have attended BCMC five out of the last seven years (2000 – 2006) and BCMC 2006. Your company must be a component manufacturer member of WTCA.
• Companies and individuals who qualify as Loyal Attendees will receive perks at BCMC 2007 in Columbus. Perks include extra tickets for prize drawings, discounts on WTCA publications and a commemorative pin.

For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/pratt.htm

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For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/pratt.htm
Build Strong Relationships
Getting the Worm

The General Election of 2006 brought us 50 brand new members of Congress. That’s a lot of new people to bring into an organization all at once. Just imagine if more than ten percent of your workforce was hired yesterday. It would be a challenge to maintain production, wouldn’t it? Each of those employees need training, a chance to practice the skills required to do their job, and time to build relationships with those around them who will support them in accomplishing their work.

Congress is no different. There are 50 lawmakers in Washington, DC that go through that same process. “Freshmen” lawmakers are excellent individuals to reach out to because they are just now starting to develop a relationship with their constituency (that’s you) in an effort to do their jobs well. There are at least 50 individuals who need an introduction to the building components industry, and you’re a perfect person to give them that introduction. If you live in a district where the incumbent lost, or didn’t run, call your new member of Congress today and invite them on a tour of your facility.

Be an Early Bird
It is an excellent time to roll up your sleeves and capitalize on this situation. In the early part of 2007, Congress is just getting started, and lawmakers generally do a lot of traveling back to their home districts for extended weekends. In these early winter months it’s also likely your production capacity isn’t maxed out, so you probably have some time to devote to a guided tour.

Look at January through March as “lawmaker season.” Armed with safety goggles and a thorough knowledge of your business, you can concentrate on showing your elected officials how a bunk of 2x4s quickly becomes a stack of ordered trusses ready to be delivered to a jobsite. Simply put, plant tours are the most effective way to cement your company, and this industry, into their minds. And these winter months are the best time to host such a tour.

Why? Because while new members of Congress already have some good connections in your community (otherwise they never would have been elected), they don’t have nearly the network most established lawmakers have. The best way to become part of that network is to build a relationship with them in the beginning. Think of yourself as an early bird. We all know what the early bird gets!

Follow the Leaders
Herb Hildebrand from Casmin answered that question when he took the time to arrange a meeting at the office of his Senator, Mel Martinez (R-FL), last year. After the meeting, Herb said, “I could see the light bulb go on as I shared how these issues affected our company.” More importantly, he felt he was able to make a good connection with everyone at the meeting: “If I called them, they’d take my call. This was very valuable from a networking perspective.” Senator Martinez is now the newly-elected Chairman of the Republican Caucus, a very powerful position. The entire industry will have the opportunity to benefit from the relationships Herb established through that meeting.
Building Strong Relationships
Continued from page 24

There’s also another opportunity you could capitalize on. There are a number of new committee Chairs to begin building relationships with now that the Democratic party controls both chambers of Congress. In the Senate, Max Baucus (Montana) is the new Chair of the Finance Committee; Patrick Leahy (Vermont) is the Chair of the Judiciary Committee; and John Kerry (Massachusetts) is Chair of the Small Business Committee. In the House, John Conyers (Michigan) is Chair of the Judiciary Committee; George Miller (California) is Chair of the Education & Workforce Committee; and Nydia Velazquez (New York) is Chair of the Small Business Committee. If you live in the state or Congressional District of one of these lawmakers, your active participation will have a positive impact on behalf of the industry.

Speaking of new leaders, Glenn McClendon, Sun State Components, and Mike Murray, A.C. Houston Lumber, met with their Senator, Harry Reid (D-NV), in 2006. Having never visited with a member of Congress before, Mike said, “I felt really good about this meeting. I felt we were able to establish a good relationship with him; he was very accessible. I also learned which methods to use to make sure our views are heard in the future.” That’s especially valuable information to have now that Senator Reid is the Majority Leader of the Senate.

Focus on Core Issues
Jobs. Economic Growth. Affordable Housing. These things are the foundation of a vibrant community, and are priorities of most lawmakers. And this means you have a built-in common link with any lawmaker. Fortunately, they are all made possible through you and your company, a fact that should not be lost on any elected official. Your voice has power in Congress, as long as you use it and talk about the issues affecting your company. For instance, it is clear there are some things in this country that are broken: our immigration laws and our health care system are two examples of areas in need of overhaul, which affect our industry significantly.

Building a relationship with your lawmaker now, through phone calls or plant tours, will enable you to share your important perspective on these issues once Congress starts debating potential solutions.

Get More Worms
Knowing your lawmaker and his or her staff can be beneficial beyond influencing legislation. Your lawmaker’s office is also a powerful contact to have when you need help interacting with OSHA or other regulatory agencies. They can also help you find grants to pay for training your employees on new technology or production techniques. Uncle Sam has a lot of money available for such things, and many times the best person to put you in contact with it is your Congressperson.

In this regard, being an early bird in building a relationship with your lawmaker now, not only will help you “get the worm,” it might help you get more than one! Time is precious, and many times the best person to put you in contact with a workers’ compensation claim, or find a solution to dealing with an overzealous transportation enforcement official.

In addition, your lawmaker can help you get to the bottom of a permitting issue that threatens to hold up your production for days.

As you may have read in last month’s issue (see “Plant Tour of Duty,” December 2006), WTCA staff is ready and willing to help you schedule a plant tour or office meeting with your lawmaker. SBC

Contact Sean Shields at sshields@qualtim.com or 608/310-6728 for more information about scheduling a plant tour or office meeting with your lawmaker.

Isn’t It About Time?

Look To Viking To Improve Your Productivity.

No Automation Manufacturer Drives More Nails. Contact Us Today For Details!
There was a period of time in WTCA’s history where we were relying on other industry organizations to monitor and provide code changes affecting our industry. It was not until the 2003 IBC and IRC came out that it became clear that this was a strategic mistake and we needed to get actively engaged in this process. We did so by stepping in, working hard with Dave Brakeman (Alpine Engineered Products), Steve Cabler (MI Tek Industries), Dave Gromala (Weyerhaeuser), Dave Tyree (American Forest & Paper Association) and Ed Huston (Smith & Huston Inc. and the National Council of Structural Engineers Association) to correct an error in the way bottom chord live loads were to be interpreted. The work we did turned into a successful code change at the final action hearings in May 2004. This was just the beginning.

We then applied for committee membership within the code development cycle and were selected to become part of the IBC Structural Committee. Having participated on the committee for nearly two years, I can say that the code change and hearing process is a pretty straightforward concept, yet it has a significant degree of complexity when you consider all the varied interests involved. As such, it is vitally important for our industry to be involved. There is a new edition of all the model codes adopted every three years, with code supplements produced between editions. The first edition was in 2000 with the following schedule taking place subsequently:

1. 2003 Edition
2. 2004 Supplement—developed during the 2003/2004 Cycle
4. 2007 Supplement—to be developed during the 2006/2007 Cycle
5. 2009 Edition—to be developed during the 2008/2009 Cycle
6. The edition and supplement cycles continue

Each cycle is for a period of 18 months and the following generally occurs within a cycle:

1. A deadline for proposed code changes is published. An announcement is posted on the ICC website and other media. Anyone can submit a code change.
2. The ICC staff review all proposed code changes and ensure that they are in a standardized legislative format. All proposals must be based on current code text.
3. The proposed changes are published on the ICC website approximately 90 days prior to hearing and in print form approximately 60 days prior to hearing.
4. Approximately six months after the proposed code change deadline, the first public hearing is held. This hearing is where code change proponents advocate before each of the ICC code change committees (i.e., the IBC Structural Committee). The committee listens to testimony and then votes on the code change.
5. Once that hearing is completed, the results are tabulated and published approximately 60 days later and 45 days after that any public comments on the code changes that were made are due.
6. These comments are published approximately 60 days prior to the final action hearing.

DISCOVER THE COST SAVINGS when using Southern Pine, offering superior strength, stiffness, and plate-holding ability. The Southern Pine Council’s new brochure Southern Pine for Structural Components details these savings using a direct design comparison between lumber species for a typical project. Request or download your free copy at www.southernpine.com, your source for the latest Southern Pine lumber information.
The Big Picture
Continued from page 28

7. The final action hearings, which are before the ICC member assembly, are held approximately six to eight months after the committee hearings.

In the 2007 supplement cycle, the committee hearings were held from September 20 through October 1, 2006, and the final action hearings will be held May 21-26, 2007, in Rochester, NY.

A Day in the Life
So what is it like to be an IBC Structural Committee member? It takes an amazing amount of work. With respect to the 2006 Edition, the IBC Structural Committee alone listened to roughly 260 change proposals. At the most recent hearings this was reduced to roughly 160. Prior to the hearings we review all the code changes that we will vote on so we have the background needed to make a wise assessment. To put a hearing day in perspective here is how it works:

1. Proponents of the change each have two minutes to advocate for the change. There is no limit to the number of people permitted to state their opinion on the change.
2. Then opponents of the change each have two minutes to define why they believe the change is not ready for prime time.
3. Then the proponents each have one minute to rebut the opponent’s arguments.
4. Then the opponents each have one minute to rebut the opponent’s rebuttal.
5. Then the committee makes a motion to approve the change as submitted, provided there is not a floor modification or a committee modification (in this case, the motion may be to approve the change as modified). Or the motion may be to disapprove everything.

Anyone who desires to have a voice in the process can testify, and there is no cost to attend. The final vote on all code changes rests with the “Active” Governmental Members at the final action hearing. These are the people who enforce the code and are charged with protecting the public’s safety.

By being much more intimately involved in the process, one of the things you learn quickly is that it is best to have a united message in front of the committee and at the final action hearings.

We have been very fortunate to establish very good relationships within this code change process. These include:

1. Ed Huston, John Hooper, Jim Robinson, Stephanie Young, Norm Scheel, Phil Brazil and John Grenier, structural engineers who are very involved with the National Council of Structural Engineers Association.
2. Dave Gromala, Sam Francis, Phil Line, Dave Tynee, Dennis Pitts, and Ed Keith, who are involved representing the forest products industry, which is a very important supplier group.
3. Jonathan Humble, Jay Larson, Hank Martin, Mark Miller and Robert Hackworth who are involved representing the steel industry, another key supplier group.
4. Ray Kothe, Ed Sutton, Jeff Links and Gary Ehrlich who are involved representing the home building industry, a critical customer group.
5. Randy Shackleford, Steve Pryor and Shane Vilasinsekul who represent Simpson Strong-Tie.
6. Jay Crandall, Greg Bergtold and Lorraine Ross who represent the foam sheathing producers.
7. Jonathan Humble, Jay Larson, Hank Martin, Mark Miller and Robert Hackworth who are involved representing the forest products industry, which is a very important supplier group.
8. Dave Gromala, Sam Francis, Phil Line, Dave Tynee, Dennis Pitts, and Ed Keith, who are involved representing the forest products industry, which is a very important supplier group.
9. Building officials Joe Hill (State of New York), Wayne Jewell (State of Michigan), Dan Kelsey (State of Minnesota), Bob Boyer, Mo Madani and Tom Allen (State of Florida), and Don LeBrun (State of Indiana).

It is very clear to us that the more we work in concert with anyone interested in the same code provisions and changes, the more positive progress we are going to make, because all points of view are taken into account as the code change is developed. Over the next few years our code involvement process will become much more robust as we continue to work inside our industry’s technical groups—TPI TAC and WTCA’s Engineering and Technology Committee and integrate the voices of all of our relationships on key issues that affect us all.

We have found that immersing ourselves in the building code process is an extremely important industry activity because the code touches multiple aspects of our business in both overt and very subtle ways. Having a pulse on the changes that are taking place within the regulatory and technical environments helps us navigate forward much more quickly and effectively.

Kirk Grundahl is WTCA’s Executive Director. If you have questions or comments regarding the issues discussed in this new column, email kgrundahl@qualtim.com.

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Cold Formed Steel Council

For many years members were asking us to expand our area of activity. WTCA’s Executive Committee made the decision to implement a council concept inside the Structural Building Components Industry. This led to the formation of the Cold Formed Steel Council (CFSC) comprised of steel component manufacturer members of the WTCA. One of our beta councils. The goal of CFSC is to focus on advancing the structural building component industry through an emphasis on steel component manufacturing issues.

Cold Formed Steel Council was formed in 2006 to support the technical and marketing needs of cold formed steel manufacturers.

By WTCA Staff

With the start of a new year, we thought it might be helpful to reflect on two major changes that took place in 2006: WTCA’s natural evolution and the formation of the Cold Formed Steel Council (CFSC). Let’s take a look back at these landmark transformations.

Name Change

In April, WTCA’s Board of Directors unanimously approved the resolution that evolved the Wood Truss Council of America’s name to WTCA - Representing the Structural Building Components Industry. 2006 WTCA President Don Groom of Stark Truss Company, Canton, OH stated, “I believe embracing this change will help our association and industry continue to focus properly on the aggressive advancement of components as the future of framing for all building construction.”

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WTCA Executive Director Kirk Grundahl commented, “The WTCA membership has reached an incomparable level of diversity. Based on customer demand, our members are rapidly becoming full service suppliers of a wide variety of structural framing solutions. The best economic solution will prevail in the market, and WTCA is committed to supporting its members through solid industry programs that help our members provide a wide range of solutions.

As a result of the change, WTCA’s website domain also changed from www.woodtruss.com to www.sbcindustry.com. As a result of the change, WTCA’s website domain also changed from www.woodtruss.com to www.sbcindustry.com.

**Safety Information (BCSI) publication and related B-series Summary Sheets, Technical Assessment Tests Online (TATO), Truss Technician Training updates and an In-Plant CFSC Quality Control program. More information can be found at www.cfs.industry.**

“**The time is right to implement CFSC,” said Odgers. “The market has matured over the past few years, and the cold formed steel business is here to stay. Being a wood and steel component manufacturer, we know intimately that our business is not a wood versus steel business; it is truly a component manufacturing business. Wood components and steel components are very complementary product lines for us—we’re really all simply in the building component business.”** SBC

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**Technician Notes** by WTCA Staff

-_Margaret Mead_
Getting a Handle on Wall Panels

The start of a new year is an appropriate time to revisit your company’s marketing strategy and educational efforts in the marketplace. As the membership of WTCA becomes more diverse each year, we’ve developed resources to suit the varying needs of all component manufacturers, including those that produce wall panels.

Now you can find wall panel marketing tools, technical information, SBC Magazine articles, and other resources all in one place. WTCA has created a new web page specifically to meet the needs of wall panel manufacturers. Find these resources and more when you visit www.sbcindustry.com/wallpanels.php.

Marketing & Education
Use these tools to demonstrate the cost efficiency, time savings and other benefits of using wall panels along with other building components.

• Framing the American Dream® brochure and CD-ROM
• The Future of Framing brochure
• Updated Wall Panel TTB - Coming in 2007!
• A list of articles about wall panel manufacturing published in SBC Magazine

Technical
Need technical assistance? Wall panel design and building code resources are at your disposal with these resources.

• WTCA Tech Notes
• The Load Guide for wall panels - Coming in 2007!

Manufacturing
In addition to the marketing and technical information on the new web page, keep your ears open for news from WTCA about the development of new training programs for wall panel manufacturers in 2007. For instance:

• Wall panel production training modules are currently being developed.
• A quality control program for wall panel manufacturers will be created.

What are you waiting for? Visit www.sbcindustry.com/wallpanels.php today for all the information you need to operate a successful wall panel operation. SBC
WHO CAN YOU TRUST WITH YOUR WALL PANEL NEEDS?

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THE FIRST TO OFFER THE TOTAL WALL PANEL SOLUTION.

We are the FIRST to offer the total wall panel solution. It provides a paperless process from design to production utilizing computer terminals at each work station interfacing with optional equipment such as Auto Stops, Light Bar and other automated equipment such as the IntelliSheather and IntelliFramer.

The on-screen graphics provide a powerful visual aid for easy assembly but also helps train unskilled labor in minimal time. It greatly reduces lead time between design and production and offers intuitive scheduling solutions to keep your operation moving and productive.

Plant Net is a unique, state of the art solution for the panel manufacturing industry. It provides a paperless process from design to production utilizing computer terminals at each work station interfacing with optional equipment such as Auto Stops, Light Bar and other automated equipment such as the IntelliSheather and IntelliFramer.

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IBS Plant Net
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IBS Component Table/Auto Stop/Plant Net
This split-table design with a raised grate allows workers easy access to every part of a component. Heavy-duty air-actuated rollers make component handling easy, while the squaring lips and color-coded table stripes make cripple layout easy and accurate. Add the optional Auto Stop for automatic cripple location and the table becomes a virtually mistake-free operation. The IBS Auto Stop eliminates human error by automatically adjusting to the start of each component and verifies its position for accuracy.

IBS Framing Table/Light Bar/Auto Stop/Plant Net
This open design framing table has a clamp and align system that aids in flushing studs with plates, assists with squaring panels and assures tighter stud joints. Combined with the optional Auto Stop, which repositions the panel for those special first stud starts, and Light Bar, which eliminates the need for manual plate marking, expensive laser systems or ink marking systems and most human error, the IBS framing table offers fast production and provides better quality control.

IBS IntelliSheather
This software driven sheather indexes the panel under the guns while straightening the studs and then securing the sheathing at the studs and plates. Its rugged gun mounts tilt to prevent shiners, and the heavy-duty plate stitcher has designer-selectable stitch spacing and is adjustable for the very top plate.

IBS IntelliStacker
The IntelliStacker builds bundles of panels exactly as designed by the designer and can stack two lines simultaneously.

IBS SubComponent Nailer
The Component Nailer handles a variety of subcomponents such as nailing tees, posts, beam pockets, corners or headers and is fast to set up and easy to use. The simple-to-adjust fasteners and a wide variety of nailing patterns make subcomponent building easy. The lumber is clamped both horizontally and vertically with a combined force of more than 1800 pounds. This one-man operation with its flow-through design produces straight and flush subcomponents fast enough to feed two framing lines.

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It’s been nearly two years to the day since SBC first met with Robbie and Dean Rood at their Freeport, IL wall panel shop. After chatting with them in between educational sessions at BCMC 2006 in Houston, we decided to check in on the brothers to find out what has changed. Here, they talk about knowing when to take risks, what it takes to sell panels, and why wall panel manufacturers need to focus on educating the marketplace.

The Roods came from a framing background where wall panels were never used. They decided to go into business together in 1995 and by 2001 their framing company R-Squared started a very small but profitable wall panel shop. “We decided to try it because [wall panels] seemed so much more efficient than stick framing on the jobsite,” said Robbie.

Turns out they were right; R-Squared’s business has more than doubled since late 2004, and they are planning for steady growth into the future. Although they’ve seen healthy increases on the balance sheet, the Roods still believe in running their business conservatively. They believe what they’ve learned along their journey is an important lesson for start-ups, small businesses and long-established companies to take to heart. Here are just a few things they’ve done right.

Setting Goals & Benchmarking
Dean and Robbie say that for their first few years in business, they didn’t set many

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Follow-up on R-Squared: “We’re Preparing for Growth”

by Libby Maurer

Being framer friendly and conservative in the first years of business increases the chance of success.

at a glance
- R-Squared, a framing company, started a small wall panel shop in 2001 to increase efficiency on the jobsite.
- After several years of gradual growth, the company is preparing for more dramatic growth in the next few years.
- The Roods have been successful by learning about smart marketing, launching their own version of turnkey framing services, and focusing on personnel development.

Continued on page 40

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WHAT MAKES A WALL PANEL OPERATION TRULY ROCK-SOLID?

FLEXIBILITY.

When you want greater efficiency for your wall panel operation, automation is the right place to start, especially in a challenging economy. The problem is, most equipment-driven automation solutions are too rigid, too expensive, and too limited to serve the changing needs of a growing shop.

That’s why we developed the MiTek approach to wall panel manufacturing. Starting with our industry-leading MiTek® ShopNet™ Virtual Panel Plant software, we can help you build a flexible, performance-enhancing solution for your needs, whether you have an existing shop with manual layout tables or a fully automated operation. ShopNet provides your business with an expandable, affordable and paperless platform that reduces production delays while increasing accuracy, consistency and vastly improving communication efficiency in your shop. And the best part is ShopNet is flexible enough to work with the equipment you have now, as well as the equipment you want to have tomorrow.

The MiTek approach - featuring ShopNet.
Another way MiTek brings your business the Power to Perform™
Follow-up on R-Squared...
Continued from page 38

long-term goals for the company. “Our sights were set on making it,” they said, adding that growth was so incremental that it didn’t seem to make sense to make big plans. “Smaller businesses with people who have little business experience don’t know that setting business or revenue goals is important,” Dean said.

Now that R-Squared is more established, they’ve started to track their progress and set realistic revenue goals. “This has helped with benchmarking. If we don’t set goals and hit certain marks, we can’t tell where or when we’ve grown, when to invest in new equipment, or even when we need to hire,” said Dean.

Conversely, knowing when not to grow is also important from a goal-setting perspective. “You have to be very careful not to expense yourself out,” he added.

Smart Marketing
Their new focus on benchmarking has made it easier for R-Squared to pay more attention to their marketing efforts. The brothers say despite coming from a framing background, knowing how to effectively market their product is a learned skill. Robbie and Dean believe the acceptance of wall panels has been slower than they’d like partly because manufacturers haven’t fully mastered how to market them.

One mistake, they say, is viewing general contractors as competitors instead of business partners. “We’re trying to partner with them, not compete. If you encourage this type of relationship, eventually they will stop feeling threatened,” Robbie said. On the other hand, Dean says it is wise to expect general contractors to react skeptically about using panels at first. “My priority—in the beginning—is to get them to keep an open mind,” he said. He thinks hesitancy in the marketplace to specify panels can be remedied with increased education of the product.

“They’ve also taken seriously their commitment to market the product after making the sale. Dean, who does most of the company’s design work, encourages working intimately with roof truss manufacturers throughout this stage. From his perspective, it’s important to be in close communication because architects’ prints are often short on the details necessary to make sure the wall panels and trusses work perfectly together on the jobsite. “Discussing the architectural drawings with the truss manufacturer saves time and money for everyone in this process. If we’re not reviewing each other’s designs, each party leaves a lot to interpretation.”

But why do they view this as a marketing tool? “Because it makes our product look and perform better in the field,” they say. “The way I look at it, a customer who has a bad experience is a lost customer for everyone, not just me,” Dean said. “You’ve got a one-time chance to impress who you are working for. Word of mouth makes or breaks your reputation in this industry,” Robbie said.

Refining the Business Plan: Provide “Niche” Turnkey Solutions
A gradual evolution in their business model contributed to the Roods’ success since our visit in 2005. Their decision to provide their own brand of turnkey framing services to their builder customers was a natural progression. “Our goal is for [builders] to find us irreplaceable, so we developed our own version of the turnkey model,” they explained.

Coming from a framing background, R-Squared has always supplied framing labor for their customers. Their “niche” turnkey service involves supplying and coordinating any wood products needed for the job, including roof and floor truss packages built by local component manufacturers and loose framing lumber from lumberyards.

R-Squared says its turnkey services have become popular partially because of the volatility of lumber. “Working so closely with vendors, we’ve been able to lock in prices for longer. It not only benefits the customer, but it also works to our advantage,” Dean explained. They’ve established partner-...
ships with lumberyards to provide turnkey, which has taken some of the competitive edge away. “Everyone is partnering with each other in a way that is win-win,” said Robbie. “It obviously increases our wall panel sales, and it increases the lumberyards’ sales on the other products.”

Their customers appreciate not having to do the ordering and scheduling of all the jobsite materials. “Customers like it because it’s convenient and takes a lot of pressure off,” Dean said, estimating that 30 percent of their business is now turnkey.

Roof Trusses & Wall Panels Are Like Night & Day

It’s been said that wall panels are a very different product from roof trusses in terms of how to market and sell them. Dean advises that roof truss manufacturers looking to start a wall panel division adopt a framer’s attitude to succeed. “Wall panels are not as much of a moving target if you think like a framer,” he commented.

He also said it helps to realize that panels can be a tougher sell than roofs, and that they generally have a lower margin. “The tendency is to have to provide the labor and a lot more materials if you want to make the sale on panels,” he said. This includes turnkey framing products like plates, studs, different sheathing types (depending on the contractor), header styles, and various dimensions of lumber. With all these variables, Robbie said providing trusses is far easier and more efficient because there are fewer materials. But he reminded it is important to keep your eye on the prize. “We know panels make us more efficient and productive than stick framing. Which is why we ventured into walls in the first place.”

In the shop, Robbie says the differences continue: “You might build the same truss several times,” he said, adding that nearly every wall set-up is different from the next. This is a good reason to evaluate efficiency on a continuing basis.

Make Smart Use of Down Time

Robbie said orders slowed considerably in October and into November of last year. Instead of laying people off, he adopted a healthy attitude and put them to work on updates to their facilities. “We’ve always taken advantage of slow times. That’s when we use the opportunity to improve ourselves, and plan for when we get busier,” he said.

As a result, cosmetic improvements—insulation on the building and a new façade for the front—have been made to the building. A conference room and reception area were also built, and a (heated!) bathroom was added.

An added benefit of filling up the slow times is an improved relationship with your employees. Robbie said, “(Our employees) know that we’re trying as hard as we can to get them a full paycheck at the end of the week and they really appreciate it.” Dean says there is great benefit in inviting employees to participate in making their work environment better. “Among other things, it’s a pride-building exercise. When the team is involved in a cosmetic change in the company, they are literally seeing the company grow before their eyes.”

Thanks to their recent benchmarking efforts, Robbie is already filling his plate with shop improvement housekeeping activities for a slow winter: “We are planning to relocate the line, and hopefully it will improve our efficiency.” Making this adjustment when production is slow will give the workers time to get used to the change, Robbie said.

Personal: Building a Workforce for Longevity

In an industry that is challenged by a volatile workforce, keeping good labor around often seems like an unrealistic

“Wall panels are not as much of a moving target if you think like a framer.”
Follow-up on R-Squared... Continued from page 42

goal. From a business philosophy, Dean says, R-Squared looks at growth from every angle, including hiring. Since our first interview, they’ve put a heavy emphasis on hiring for growth. “We’ve started to focus on longevity when we hire,” he explained. “We’re looking for people who are open to taking on different roles in the business so our company can grow.”

Hiring people who want to grow with the company has inspired loyalty among the Roods’ workforce. “I’m starting to see a greater level of respect from employees than I used to [a few years ago],” said Dean. “They understand that we are committed to steady growth and improvement, and that builds loyalty.”

“We’ve started to focus on longevity when we hire. We’re looking for people who are open to taking on different roles in the business so our company can grow.”

What the Future Holds: Growth
In terms of goals for the next several years, Dean and Robbie intend to hire another salesperson, additional office staff and a few more designers. They’ve doubled their staff since our last interview, and predict that they could double again in another few years. In the shop, Robbie says R-Squared could significantly increase production capacity without making any new major equipment investments.

One thing is certain; the Roods are committed to growing their business one step at a time. They don’t necessarily talk about it, but Robbie and Dean say they both have the same vision for R-Squared. You can bet it has something to do with growth. SB C
See why it is taking the industry by storm.

More than 75 RAM Easy Rider systems have been installed in just the last 18 months. One truss plant alone has 16 Easy Riders in everyday operation. Clearly, it is the most successful truss fabrication system ever introduced. Why? The answer is simple. Because you can build more trusses with less labor. Its unique distribution of workload keeps the manufacturing process smooth, efficient and highly productive.

The AutoSet C4 is an exciting new addition to the complete line of available jigging options. The C4 is an automated jigging system with an innovative offset drive that keeps table slots clear and open to the floor for easier maintenance. AutoSet C4

See for yourself why the RAM Easy Rider is the component industry’s leading trackless truss fabrication system. Call your Alpine representative to learn what the RAM Easy Rider can do for your production and ask for a copy of the video showing the Easy Rider in action.
A Hybrid Approach to Wall Panel Manufacturing

by Ed Hell

A hybrid wall panel manufacturing system coordinates machinery options with expandable production software platform.

The initial capital investment for wall panel manufacturing equipment systems will become obsolete or less efficient than others. Therefore, it is difficult to say today which equipment-driven components will become as common as roof components. One can determine with absolute confidence whether wall panel manufacturing technology is either very manual or very automated. So manufacturing personnel trained with this technology are able to operate efficiently whether laying a plate out by hand, for example, or monitoring the performance of a highly automated saw that cuts and marks the plate.

The right software enables a framework from which standard operating procedures and operator skills can fully develop. In this way, a hybrid system investment provides a great degree of flexibility.

For instance, if your initial machinery investment overwhelms the skills of your workforce, your rate of return will certainly suffer. It’s important to realize that your actual rate of return will be directly proportional to your organization’s abilities in areas like manufacturing procedures, personnel development, design skill development, and service and maintenance skills. In many companies, such skills are inadequately developed, and it’s important to recognize that a machinery investment alone cannot compensate for a lack of technical ability. Therefore, use your organization’s collective skill level to help you determine the appropriate choice for machinery investment.

And this is where the hybrid concept really shines. Because it is built on an affordable, flexible software platform, it enables manufacturers to enter the market with a minimal investment in machinery while allowing your team to build the skills necessary to compete, capture greater market share, and, as a result, deliver a good return on investment. In other words, it’s a simple, scalable “pay-as-you-go” approach.

Expandability

Wall panel manufacturers benefit immensely from the hybrid approach’s capacity for expansion and growth. This flexibility is delivered through production software that provides an essential framework for organizational development. An initial investment in production software also enables easy connectivity to higher levels of machinery sophistication in the future.

A sound software investment delivers essentially the same manufacturing functionality and benefits at each level of organizational sophistication. This means it delivers a paperless stream of management and manufacturing instruction regardless of whether the machine operation is either very manual or very automated. So manufacturing personnel trained with this technology are able to operate efficiently whether laying a plate out by hand, for example, or monitoring the performance of a highly automated saw that cuts and marks the plate.

The right software enables a framework from which standard operating procedures and operator skills can fully develop. In this way, a hybrid system investment provides a great degree of flexibility.

Do Your Homework

As with many other businesses, the future of wall panel manufacturing can seem like a moving target. That fact alone makes researching the marketplace and your prospective customers’ needs so important before you make any machinery or software investments. Exciting markets are developing all over the country, but best practices in this industry are just beginning to be established. Market forecasts for product demand vary widely, even in the same region, and this factor affects both the short- and long-term viability of wall manufacturing systems. The bottom line? Do your due diligence and purchase wisely!

A typical hybrid system includes manual machine technologies, production software, material delivery components, and eventually, automated machine systems. Each system is designed to meet specific, defined challenges presented by an evolving wall panel manufacturing market and to accommodate the widely varied levels of expertise each organization brings to its business.

A hybrid system offers four big advantages over off the shelf systems: It is affordable, expandable, forward-looking, and technology-driven. In my opinion, the key to a healthy return on investment in wall panel manufacturing is striking the proper balance of these characteristics for your needs. Let’s take a look at them individually:

Affordability

So why are you in business, anyway? It’s likely your overall goal is to achieve a good return on your investment. And ideally, that return should improve over time. So controlling your initial capital investment in a manufacturing plant is critical.
A Hybrid Approach...

Continued from page 49

wonder whether an operation too small is practical and whether a larger one can still be efficient. By design, a hybrid system is expandable, and can anticipate and accommodate future industry developments. Such carefully considered and powerfully designed software platforms create the most forward-looking systems in the industry.

Technology-Driven

This characteristic is very important because high production settings require highly skilled personnel. And the higher the production rate, the more significant this criterion becomes. This reality runs contrary to the common belief that highly automated facilities can operate with low levels of personnel skill.

Manufacturing walls is not like building typical assembly-line products. Wall designs involve many specialized exceptions. Therefore, it makes sense to develop your organization’s collective skills while also ramping up your wall component production rate. It is here, again, where the technologies associated with a hybrid system can help your operation grow. For instance, in a hybrid system, production software provides a paperless interface to production workstations, complete with specific personnel work assignments designated by the design office. And even the most basic production software platform also delivers greater material scheduling, handling and material delivery efficiencies.

The overarching goal is to meet changing market opportunities with higher levels of automation when it is strategically wise to do so. More expensive equipment technology becomes an appropriate and attractive investment when it can be carefully justified and implemented.

In summary, I believe that choosing a hybrid approach will enable your organization to enter and compete in the growing manufactured wall panel market at a reasonable cost to enter. When you put powerful, expandable and affordable production software at the core of your business, you ensure you’ll be both strategically positioned and agile enough to anticipate, respond to, and capitalize on growth opportunities in this dynamic industry. Good luck! SBC

Ed Heil worked as an apprentice on a wall panel line at age 15. He later started a labor-only framing company, which became a national turnkey framer providing material, labor, and engineered products for multifamily framing projects in 15 states. He opened a truss and panel plant in Baltimore in 1989 to service his framing company. Ed joined MiTek in 2003 to oversee wall panel software and machinery development.
since a May 2006 WTCA Board of Directors resolution encouraged component manufacturers to open their doors to professionals outside the industry, truss plant tours have worked in the industry’s educational favor. So far, lawmakers, building inspectors and others have assembled at truss plants across the country to learn about the design and manufacture of structural building components. The response to this effort has been overwhelmingly positive, and important relationships have been formed.

To us it’s innate that structural components are the future of framing buildings because they provide the most affordable, efficient and technically advanced framing option possible. But to others, trusses and other building components are very new, non-traditional products that have unknown performance characteristics. Hence, they have attributes that can cause them to be viewed in a less than favorable light. Because there are widely varied messages about our products in the marketplace (in particular within the fire service), it reasonable to expect that it will take a great effort by our industry to inform the market that the use of engineered building products/components is quickly becoming standard across the country, and everyone will benefit from understanding their true performance and capabilities. The component manufacturers of WTCA-NY made a significant impression in the New York State Building Officials Conference’s (NYSBOC) perception in October 2006.

WTCA staff has a relationship with Sam Ricotta from the New York Department of State Codes Division because we had worked together to get some educational classes approved with the state. Ricotta contacted WTCA to collaborate on a truss plant tour and also requested a live fire demonstration as part of our presentation for their annual educational conference. We then worked together to get the tour and the fire demonstration approved for CEU credit as well.

WTCA-NY became very involved from a planning and logistics perspective. Bruce Hutchins, chapter president, offered that the chapter would sponsor the event and worked closely with everyone involved on the catering, the handouts, for the attendees, and some of the raw materials for the burn demonstration.

Fire Demonstration & Plant Tour Show off Truss Industry for NY Building Officials Conference

by Libby Maurer with Will Warlick & Melanie Birkeland

The effort to educate the market about our industry continues—this time in New York.

Thank You to the Tour Sponsors:
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Truswal Systems, an ITW Company
WTCA-NY

at a glance

- Truss plant tours have worked in the industry’s educational favor.
- The WTCA-NY made a significant educational impression in the New York State Building Officials Conference’s (NYSBOC) perception in October 2006.
- The tour shed a lot of light on the truss industry for building code officials and fire service members.

To us it’s innate that structural components are the future of framing buildings because they provide the most affordable, efficient and technically advanced framing option possible. But to others, trusses and other building components are very new, non-traditional products that have unknown performance characteristics. Hence, they have attributes that can cause them to be viewed in a less than favorable light. Because there are widely varied messages about our products in the marketplace (in particular within the fire service), it reasonable to expect that it will take a great effort by our industry to inform the market that the use of engineered building products/components is quickly becoming standard across the country, and everyone will benefit from understanding their true performance and capabilities. The component manufacturers of WTCA-NY made a significant impression in the New York State Building Officials Conference’s (NYSBOC) perception of trusses on October 17, 2006.

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Profit from the automation promise.

Production lines employ a significant amount of investment. Weinmann automated production lines from Stiles Machinery employ a promise – increased production capacity and increased product quality at a lower cost. Only the precision engineering offered by Weinmann can deliver on that promise. The only truly software driven production line available, Weinmann consistently builds exterior wall panels at a rate of 16 feet every 2.5 minutes while reducing manpower requirements by 75 percent. When you work with Stiles you are automatically connected to our Total Production Solutions™ delivering superior equipment, technology and expertise. Employ the automation promise. In the U.S., call Michael Miller, Director of Building Automation, at 616.698.7500 or mmiller@stilesmachinery.com.

Stiles – Your success is our business.
One Tour at a Time...
Continued from page 52
Saratoga Lumber Traders, in Ballston Falls, NY, was one of the closest truss plants to the town of Colonie, NY, where the whole event was taking place so they were called to see if they would be willing to help with the opportunity. They stepped right in and took on the responsibility with passionate leadership. This is just another great example of WTCA Chapters and staff collaborating well together.

Plant Tour at Saratoga Lumber Traders
A total of 280 attendees (half of which were fire service members and half were building officials) were split into groups of 25 to tour Saratoga Lumber Traders.

Ricotta said, “The tour shed a lot of light on the truss industry for people on what they often see arriving banded at the jobsite. It was well-received by all, including new-comers and veterans alike, among the building and fire officials.”

One retired building inspector said the plant tour was a great experience, especially for the younger firefighters. “The most interesting part was learning how the design is sent right out to the floor where the trusses are assembled,” said John Flanigan, also a fire service commissioner.

Flanigan commented that there are many custom homes being built in this area of the state, and it’s best to assume that there are trusses in these houses. “It’s amazing all the different shapes they get in those homes,” he said. Another firefighter/fire inspector/building inspector said it was really good to see how trusses are made, since most big houses now contain them. “I’m impressed with the quality of these products,” he said.

As noted by one of the suppliers in attendance, it was important for the fire service to observe the quality and sophistication of the production equipment. “The point was made that the machinery isn’t nickel and dime stuff, that these guys are making serious investments into this work,” said Dennis Fleishman of Robbins Engineering. Ricotta said, “The component saws were very intriguing. I noticed a lot of people trying to figure out how [the saw] was cutting all those angles at the same time.”

Hutchins said getting participants in the door can be a challenge, but in nearly every instance it fosters communication and builds goodwill.

Marc James of MiTek noted that firefighters took particular interest in the QC station at Saratoga. “It seemed to be the biggest eye opener of all. The way they check the joints with vellum for plate placement was impressive to many on the tour,” he said.

Continued on page 56
One Tour at a Time...
Continued from page 54

Fire Test: NYSBOC Fire Demonstration
The objectives of the fire demonstration were as follows:
• The goal was to demonstrate the growth of fire and its effects on two typical unprotected floor structural elements included in a sheathed assembly.
• A floor assembly measuring approximately 8’x15’ was placed on top of walls that enclose all four sides so that the fire will be unaffected by wind and the elements.
• The floor assembly included both traditional joists and trusses in the same structure so both structural elements experienced identical fire conditions.
• The floor was built at an angle so observers could view the effects of the fire on the concentrated loads that were applied directly onto the sheathing and onto both the trusses and 2x10 joists in the floor assembly.
• The load was applied so that both the 2x10 joists and the trusses were stressed to equivalent levels.

280 firefighters and building officials attended. The observers were asked how long they thought the joists would last in the fire, and how long the trusses would last. Many thought the trusses would fail much sooner.

The demonstration assembly was an approximately 8’x15’ unprotected floor assembly that was sloped to be viewed from the ground. The walls were panels provided by Saratoga Lumber Traders.

The burn demonstration was provided at the request of the NYSBOC for its Capital District Educational Conference at the Town of Colonie, NY’s Municipal Training Facility on Oct. 17, 2006. It was offered in conjunction with the truss plant tour.

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The floor assembly had 2x10 SPF joists and 12” floor trusses spanning from the low end to the high end. These were sheathed with 23/32” OSB. Joists and trusses were included in the same structure so they would be exposed to identical fire conditions.

At 9 minutes, 31 seconds. The loads begin to tilt more noticeably as the floor assembly sags. Sag warns of impending collapse, but it is not always present, and is rarely so noticeable.

At 10 minutes, 35 seconds. The concentrated live loads were applied using 22-lb. bricks. The joists on the left carried 528 lbs, and the trusses on the right carried 1112 lbs. The joists and trusses were equivalently stressed under these loads. See www.fire.carbeck.org for a more detailed description of the demonstration design.

At 11 minutes, 23 seconds. The sag increased gradually during the burn as the structural members charred and lost strength. Before collapse, the floor assembly was sagging about 8-10”.

At 12 minutes, 15 seconds, the fire penetrating the floor indicated significant gaps in the decking on the truss side. At 12 minutes, 51 seconds, both the joists and the trusses are still holding load.

At 13 minutes, 11 seconds. The concentrated loads bearing on the sheathing have now fallen through. One point made by the demonstration is that sheathing typically fails in fire before the structural members.
One Tour at a Time...
Continued from page 56

Comments

John Flanigan said the fire demonstration was a great experience. “In the fire service we are told that trusses are dangerous and don’t go in the building if there are trusses. This shows that with some protections trusses will hold,” said the 50+ year fire service veteran.

Dennis Fleishman also found it very valuable, but noticed that some members of the fire service were questioning the results of the burn. “It seems to me that some people are set in their opinions and when a demonstration does not show what they believe in it raises big question marks. It will probably take many demonstrations like this over many years to address the pre-set opinions,” he said. Bruce Hutchins heard the same questioning from some in attendance. “The reactions I heard just shows how much educational work we have to do,” he said. Fleishman encouraged future interactions with the fire service based on the fact that this made a real impact on those in attendance, something they will never forget: “The way the demonstration played out was not lost on anyone in attendance.”

Marc James said he heard that a lot of the attendees were impressed with the performance of the trusses and joists and the fact that their performance was essentially the same.

There was a noticeable difference in how the veteran and young fire service attendees reacted to the demonstration. Sam Ricotta said, “The ‘newbies’ tended to be more in awe of the test. The ‘old guard,’ (older code officials and former firefighters who now do code enforcement) were more critical.” Bob Cordell agreed that there was mixed reaction about the test: “We got comments—some said it was good, others not so good. It was good people could see it; they could make their own call.”

The fire test and truss plant tour got the following rating from 86 participants who returned evaluation forms.

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The NYSBOC Truss Plant Tour & Fire Demonstration Feedback

At 13 minutes, 19 seconds, the trusses and joists collapsed simultaneously. This demonstrated that trusses and joists, when equivalently loaded, perform similarly in fire. It also showed that unprotected construction will not last long in fire.

After the collapse, firefighters extinguished the fire.

After the fire, severe charring was seen on all structural members. Even on the outside truss, charring reduced the size of the chords significantly. Without trying to make this point, the demonstration also showed the effectiveness of gypsum protection on the walls.

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No manual jiggling.
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3 Assemblers + 1 WizardPDS™ Workstation =
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Any way you look at it, nothing else compares. Nothing. You could spend less and get a table with half the automated jiggling, but you’ll pay more in productivity, quality and profit each time you set up to build the next truss. The WizardPDS™ System requires NO additional jig hardware or images to set up the most complex truss designs – even multiple top and bottom chord pitch breaks. The WizardPDS™ is completely automated – pure performance.

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For the past seventeen years, Lakeside Trailer has been leading the way in the component trailer industry with innovative ideas to ensure your delivery operations remain efficient in today's competitive market. We know there is no such thing as a "small problem" when it comes to completing your contract with a builder. That is why Lakeside has perfected ways to reduce or eliminate your transportation concerns such as loading, off-loading and wide loads.
You may be familiar with that now famous phrase “Move that bus!” With ABC’s hit TV show Extreme Makeover: Home Edition taking the nation by storm, structural building components are in high demand for the homes being built. This season, the show is featuring a project in each of the 50 states, and it is possible that you may be asked to participate at some point.

SBC recently caught up with two companies that were involved in the show (Richco Structures of Haven, WI and Cascade Mfg Co of Cascade, IA) to bring you an insider’s look at what it is like to undertake a project like this. Here we present exclusive information about what you can expect if ever approached by the show, or a similar project.

One thing is obvious. Without the use of structural building components, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition as we know it would not be possible. With such a tight schedule for the show, components are absolutely necessary to pull these projects off in such a short window of time. Sean Kelly, operations manager at Richco says, “Structural building components are essential. It’s not a question.”

The show only allows seven days to complete the entire project, from demolishing the old structure to making the home move-in ready, so components enable the show’s cast more time to paint walls, arrange furniture and decorate. According to Merle Nett, president of Richco, “Our product is probably the single most critical product in helping them accomplish their goal.”

What would you do if approached by Extreme Makeover? Get the inside scoop so that you are prepared to make the right decision.

- Structural building components are essential for a show like Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.
- With such a tight schedule, structural building components are the single most critical material in helping reach the show’s deadlines.
- The most important thing you can do throughout all four stages of production is to be flexible.
- Be onsite for the framing the whole day to help with any questions or conflicts should they arise.

by Emmy Thorson-Hanson

Hardware and Software Solutions from Alpine

- Manage costs from job-bids to final delivery
- Detailed, accurate production information and reports
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at a glance

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We’ll now hear feedback from these two companies about their experiences and they will offer advice in each of the four main categories component manufacturers are involved in for the show: design, manufacture, transportation and on-site framing.

**DESIGN**

When it comes to design, you and your team must be prepared to go the distance, both in time and flexibility. According to James, Cascade had to be in constant contact with the builder, Hubbell Homes. “The amount of hours and coordination were the biggest challenge; things were changing every day. Every meeting we had involved changes with updated plans; every time I talked to the designer at Hubbell he had a new updated plan to send me.” Jake Schmidt, central Iowa sales representative for Cascade, recalls that many little details popped up without advanced notice: “We had to constantly change things in the plans to accommodate the designers from the show.”

The changes that occur in an Extreme project are not as unusual as you would expect, and are not all that different from the changes that happen when designing a regular project, according to these companies. Sean says, “There are no more changes in plans than you would see on a normal house, but everything happens within a week, so you have to adapt to the changes immediately.”

**Be Flexible:** The most important thing you can do throughout all four stages of production is to be flexible, but it especially comes in handy during the design process. “Flexibility is the key, because you may get calls at any time. Everyone needs to be on call and ready to go at any time, from the engineers to the truckers. If the design team decides to put an extra load on the structure, you have to change the design of the trusses,” advises Sean.

**Expect Late Nights/Long Hours:** Cascade put in extra effort to make sure everything went perfectly. “Whatever we had to do to make this thing go quickly and as easily as possible is what we did. We worked closely with the design team at Hubbell Homes, and I even stayed up all night to do...”

“Structural building components are essential. It’s not a question.”

**Richco Structures • Haven, WI**
The Koepke family of Dundee, WI was left to live in an unsafe house with exposed electrical wires and insulation, a leaking roof, broken windows and an attic infested with bats after losing their father to cancer just five months after his diagnosis.

Richco accepted the request to supply the roof trusses and wall panels for the project that aired on November 19, 2006. “We felt good about helping the family and adding to the benefit they would derive from the project,” remarked Merle.

**Cascade Mfg Co • Cascade, IA**
After losing their home to a fire in 2005, the Kibe family of Gladbrook, IA, was living in a trailer and on the verge of losing their farm. So when Extreme Makeover: Home Edition approached Cascade to provide the floor and roof trusses, they graciously accepted the opportunity.

But that doesn’t mean the project was easy. James Kurt, central Iowa design manager for Cascade remarked, “It definitely tested us. But at the end of the day it was all about building a nice house for this deserving family.” The episode aired on October 29, 2006.

In just one week, 1,500 volunteers pulled together to build this 3,740 square foot country colonial home with a wrap-around porch with dormers for the Koepke family of Dundee, WI.

After seven days of extreme effort, the final product is a beautiful house for the Kibe family in Gladbrook, IA.
“Move That Bus!”
Continued from page 64

the final design,” said James. “There was a lot of action in a short amount of time and it really tested our ability to work together.”

Richco anticipated changes and tried to prepare for them, which came in handy when the attic trusses were removed from the plans a couple of days prior to construction. “We had to put in some overtime to get it done,” Sean said of the last minute changes.

“It takes a lot of coordination both internally and externally, because if something goes wrong, you have to be able to adapt at any time.” Sean also offers some advice: “I’d tell truss companies (getting involved in an *Extreme* project); you must take into consideration that you’ll be on call from two days prior to construction to two days after the build is over.”

**Plan Ahead:** It is important to be prepared for anything, and devising a plan on how to deal with any situation that may arise is highly advised. According to Sean, Richco had three designers on call at all times leading up to the framing. Only one was actually working on the project, the other two were just on call for backup. By covering all of their bases, Richco ensured they weren’t caught off guard with inadequate staffing.

James gives similar advice: “Make sure you plan, plan, plan. Plan for every possible question or problem. No amount of planning is enough, so make sure to cover everything on the front end and it will be appreciated by everyone involved.”

**Cooperate:** Not only will you have to work well within your own team, but you will also have to work closely with other trades, which may be something new for you. “It was by far the most contact I’ve ever had with other trades on a job. It was really interesting because everybody knew that the more time we spent on the front end, the better off everyone was going to be in the long run,” explained James. “It was great working closely with the plumbing and HVAC trades. I worked with them to find out exactly where they needed to put the plumbing and air ducts and then adjusted my design accordingly so that they wouldn’t have problems. They were able to give me the exact locations of where they needed an air duct, or a plumbing drain.”

The collaboration that goes on between the different trades during *Extreme* projects is its secret to success. Without the mutual respect between trades and the willingness to combine forces, it would be impossible to meet the deadlines set by the show.

“We don’t usually work directly with a lot of people that supply products to the same jobsites and we don’t tend to run

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“Move That Bus!”
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into them. On this project everybody was willing to take their time to plan ahead so that we wouldn’t run into issues or problems later on. It’s too bad we can’t work together on every job,” said Jake.

MANUFACTURE
The manufacture of the components needs to be perfect so that the framing process goes smoothly.

Teamwork: Your production workers will need to be able to work efficiently. “The cooperation among people in our company is what made it go so smooth. It tested how well everyone in your company cooperates. It was because we all worked together,” said Jake. He also recommends that production workers be flexible with their schedules and plan on putting in some overtime.

Get a Head Start: Another useful tip James shared is to start building as soon as possible. “Make sure you build and load as early as you can because it gives you a safety net, so that if something happens to a truss during loading you have time and can fix it.”

It is also important to note that the size of your company makes a difference in how much your other projects will be affected. James said Cascade was able to continue with all of their ongoing projects while undertaking the Extreme project. This balancing act was possible because they have three plants in Iowa where they were able to send other projects that needed to get done. “It helps to have the other plants, so that we can push a project in if it’s hot,” he said.

TRANSPORTATION
The transportation of trusses to the job site is a very fragile step where being one minute off schedule can spell disaster.

Pay Attention to Details: Homes are often built on a narrow street where there is only room for one truck. “The biggest challenge was that there were people on the jobsite 24/7. It was tricky coordinating the product delivery at the last minute, and making sure we didn’t slow anything down. Something that might not be a big deal on a regular jobsite can easily become a catastrophe at this jobsite,” recalls Jake.

Richco also had to follow a tight transportation schedule that could change at any moment. “On Sunday at about 10 p.m. I got a call that they wanted loads moved over to the house around 3 a.m., so we had to contact the driver and have him move his time around. Everyone has to adapt,” advises Sean.

And don’t expect it to be a normal delivery either. “The truck drivers had to get up at 2 a.m. on a Sunday and be on call to bring products in,” recalls Merle. “Our trailers had to be parked there (at a nearby sports field) for what you could call staging. Everything stayed on the trailers until they needed them.”

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ON-SITE FRAMING

Have someone onsite: You also need to be prepared to stay on-site while the house is being framed. “I arrived at 4:00 a.m. and didn’t leave until after 8:00 p.m. The floor was up in ten minutes and I was there to help them if they had any questions. We had to do more service than a typical job because every little bit really helps the end result in this project. It’d be nice if we could do that on every job if it could work out,” notes James. “This was a once in a lifetime kind of thing, it was pretty neat watching it go up with no problems.”

Help Out: Sean highly recommends that you have someone onsite for another important reason; to help out. It came in handy for Richco when they noticed that the framers were doing something that wasn’t on the plan, and even though it didn’t affect Richco’s product, they were able to bring it to the attention of the framers. “Since we knew the plan so well, we saw some things that they were doing wrong and pointed it out for them, which saved time,” Sean said.

James agrees that it is helpful to be available should problems arise: “I would highly recommend that you have someone onsite. It is an opportunity to make things easier for the framers. It just helps to be there so that you can answer questions should anything come up.”

Be ready for the elements: But there is something that you can never plan for—the weather. If you participate in the ‘show must go on,’ there is no time to reschedule for a different day with nicer weather, as Richco learned. “Framing was through rain storms, lightning and tornado warnings—some really tough conditions. They only thing, it was pretty neat watching it go up with no problems.”

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Before the house was framed, Richco's framing department was able to work on site until the doors were installed. "Once the framing is up, it’s easier for the framers. It just helps to be there so that you can answer questions should anything come up," says James. VOLUNTEERS AT THE PROJECT IN DUNDEE, WI, BRAVED extreme weather conditions including rain, thunderstorms and a tornado warning.

As changing the design. The schedule actually changes a lot so the driver needs to be available to be at the job site for the entire day. James recommends that you don’t take the schedule as the absolute final word because it most likely will change at least a few times. Cascade put forth a large effort to ensure that they didn’t cause any problems. They staged the deliveries, collared the trusses to come off the truck in the order they were to be set and fabricated over-sized trusses in one-piece to minimize piggyback framing on the site.

"Move That Bus!"

Continued on page 72

His was let go.

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Volunteers at the project in Dundee, WI, braved extreme weather conditions including rain, thunderstorms and a tornado warning.

“Move That Bus!”

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The size of your fleet can play a part in how the transportation is handled and how your other projects are affected. According to Merle, normally 80 percent of the trucking they use is from their own fleet. “We used our own trucks and drivers for this project, although since it was during a busy time we did have to get outsourcing trucking to cover our other projects.”

Coordinate: The delivery schedule can be just as challenging as changing the design. The schedule actually changes a
“Move That Bus!”
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took off one hour during the storm because of the danger, and then they went back at it. They were like the mailman; nothing was going to stop them,” said Merle.

Be positive: Despite the unsatisfactory weather, everyone kept a “sunny” outlook. “We had no negatives. We were successful in getting the house built on time despite the horrendous weather,” noted Merle.

At the end of framing, everyone felt great about how flawlessly everything came together. “From start to finish, the way everyone pulled together was great, from the designers to the truck drivers,” he said. It’s something to be proud of when things go seamlessly with no mess-ups.

Conclusion

As we have seen there is a lot more to this show than meets the eye. While it is an honor to be asked to contribute to an Extreme project, it is also a major decision not to be taken lightly. It requires lots of time, effort, dedication and financial investment to get the job done. And once you commit to involvement, everyone will be depending on you to do your job, and do it well. We hope that you are now armed with knowledge that could help you make the right decision for your company if the opportunity arises.

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Point: The Hidden Value of Marketing

By Emmy Thorson-Hanson

Doing a good deed and being part of a unique experience are obvious reasons for participating in an Extreme Makeover: Home Edition project. But there is a hidden value, one which benefits your company and the industry. Richco let us in on how the marketing from the show impacted their company.

Merle Nett commented on the advantages of using components for the project. “This allows us to build in a factory environment with perfect conditions, and get the components completed and to the job site on time. There’s a tremendous amount of time savings, everything fits like a glove, and people don’t have to spend a lot of time looking at plans.”

Merle also mentioned the exposure the industry receives when component manufacturers are involved in it: “It promotes the use of manufactured building components to turn things around quickly…we’re reason we’re in business.”

Sean Kelly agrees that the time and energy are well worth the effort. “It’s a way of showing the community and Wisconsin what we can do,” he said. “Seven days is no big deal to us. It makes a statement about your company.”

“When you commit you realize that there is a tremendous responsibility resting on your shoulders,” noted Merle. “There are literally thousands of people relying on you to do your part, and do it well.”

Sean also learned that not only does it make a statement, but it gets your name out and recognized in the public eye. “I most definitely would encourage component manufacturers to get involved,” he said. “To be seen in the community, the advertising alone is worth it. I’ve walked into businesses with my Richco jacket on and people say, ‘Oh, you were involved in Extreme Makeover. You can’t put a price on that.”

With all of the other benefits that this project offers, marketing is just icing on the cake. Sean has advice for component manufacturers that may get asked to do the show: “If you get the opportunity to be involved, do it hands down. Nothing is better for your company than community involvement.” SBC

Counterpoint: Make Sure Your Eyes Are Wide Open

By Kirk Grundahl

Joe Hikel’s Shelter Systems committed to an Extreme project during Season 3 (March 2006) at the urging of a customer with whom Hikel hoped to develop a stronger relationship. “We thought working together on the show would lead to more business in the future,” Hikel said. He also hoped his company would derive some recognition after donating the $30,000 of roof and floor trusses for the new home. When the episode aired in August 2006, Hikel was disappointed that not only was the framing process omitted from the footage, but Shelter’s contribution was not included in the credits. “We got hosed. We felt like we bent over backwards to accommodate the show’s schedule and all the last minute changes,” he said. “And we saw nothing in promotional value after the fact. Nothing.”

He pointed out that you have to sign your life away in terms of contractual rights from a marketing perspective. The experience has decidedly soured Hikel’s opinion of the feel-good show. “I’d never volunteer again, and I’d caution any CM thinking about getting involved to understand that they shouldn’t expect anything in return except the satisfaction of knowing they helped someone,” he said.

On the heels of Hikel’s feedback and an Extreme project happening in each state, the industry would be wise to consider the following thoughts. In the last several years, many WTCA member manufacturers have generously donated their time and products to Extreme Makeover: Home Edition projects. However, there is something about this that has recently begun to bother me. The most central tenant of my argument has been stated over and over: without the use of structural building components, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition would not be possible. With such a tight schedule for the show, components are absolutely necessary to pull these projects off in such a short window of time. You should know that manufacturers are asked to donate time and materials to make these projects happen, and receive no compensation for their efforts.

Here is some history on the show. Extreme Makeover: Home Edition is an Emmy Award-winning ABC series that began broadcasting on November 3, 2003 as a special and as a regular series since February 15, 2004. The show is one of ABC’s top-rated series. The show is hosted by Ty Pennington, whose pay is estimated to be $6 million annually from the show and various endorsements.

Now about the network. ABC is a for profit business. To that end, all the networks have moved to up-front advertising sales. In 2005 a resurgent ABC grew $500 million and moved up to $2.1 Billion. In comparison, rival network CBS added $400 million to total $2.6 billion. Fox settled in at $1.6 billion (about the same as in 2004). The WB was at $675 million (also the same as in 2004). UPN grew some $25 million to $375 million.

ABC has the strongest hand based on the continuing strength of hits like Grey’s Anatomy and Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. It is expected to lead the market in advertising rate increases and possibly dollars. It could even beat the network’s upfront take last year of $2.1 billion. ABC is the only network that will finish higher in the ratings both in 18-49 and in total viewers—both up eight percent over the 2004-05 season.

With this background in tow, I ask these questions:

1. Since without the use of structural building components this show would not be possible, why are WTCA members being asked to donate time and materials?
2. Since we make it possible, doesn’t it seem that industry donors should be getting paid handomely for that benefit or value?
3. What value has ABC given back to the industry that makes Extreme Makeover: Home Edition possible?
4. Have you seen an ABC program dedicated to the value of the structural building components?
5. Have you seen ABC investing any resources to improve or advance the structural building components industry?
6. Is it possible that ABC found the perfect profit formula—a heart wrenching need, companies and people willing to donate to serve that need, an emotion-packed TV show and the guise of benevolence?

I’m not suggesting that there hasn’t been a great deal of good done through Extreme Makeover: Home Edition—my intent is not to throw cold water on that. However, there are times when it is appropriate to look at an issue without any emotional overlays and ask: a) Is anyone being inappropriately taken advantage of b) Whose back are all the profits being made on? and c) Do the facts of this make any good common sense at all?

The WTCA Executive Committee is currently evaluating this issue. Please send your thoughts and comments on this topic to extrememakeover@sbcmag.info. SBC

Sources:
2 http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles. showarticle&art_id=42678
3 http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117943141.html?categoryid=146&c=1
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Chapter Spotlight

Publications Co-ops: One More Benefit of Membership
by Anna L. Stamm

By the end of 2006, WTCA Chapters had one more benefit of membership to discuss when encouraging nonmembers to join—automatic inclusion of a member’s purchases each month in the chapter’s publications cooperative. Previously, a chapter member had to specify that he wanted his order held for the co-op. Orders were then fulfilled on the designated date each month and any applicable quantity discounts were applied.

Now, all chapter member purchases are automatically included in the publications co-op. In addition, all orders are fulfilled as they are submitted since none of them need to be “held for co-op.” Instead of showing a quantity discount at the time of purchase, the savings is credited back to the member at the end of the month.

The possible savings to chapter members are great. All WTCA publications are included in the co-op as well as other products and even educational courses. The best part is that no effort is required to receive the benefit since the savings are credited back to the member at the end of the month automatically.

To see if you have earned a credit, you may log on to the WTCA website at www.sbcindustry.com/loc_chap_coop.php. A report of the credits earned by the members of each chapter is available, too.

So, the next time you are encouraging someone to join your local chapter, remember to tell them about the potential savings from your publications co-op. It is a very measurable benefit of membership in a WTCA Chapter. SBC

Chapter Highlights

Central Florida Component Manufacturers Association

The Central Florida Chapter held its final meeting of the year in November. High on the agenda was discussion of the educational programs and truss plant tours that the chapter is planning to provide for the fire service. Depending upon attendance, they may run several tours on consecutive days to accommodate all of the fire stations. In addition to the tour, they plan to offer one or more Truss Technology Workshop courses. Since the event will offer continuing education credit, they anticipate a solid turnout.

Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association

BCMC in Cedar, IA was the site of the Mid Atlantic Chapter fall meeting. The chapter’s Education Committee reported on its continuing efforts to educate local fire departments and schedule regional fire service training events on the fire performance of trusses. The latest Carbeck binder and CD have been furnished to the Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau as well. As the committee gears up for the winter educational sessions, first on the calendar will be a Truss Technology Workshop for builders. The workshop is open to any interested builders who wish to understand more about trusses, handling, installation, and bracing in North Liberty, IA. Workshops for homebuilders, building officials and the insurance industry will be conducted this year. Serving on the committee will be Ray Noonan, Jr., Craig Thier and Ben Hargis of Carl, Co. Alex Ench of Lumber Specialties, Bruce Kinney and Scott Baker of Timber Roosts, Rick Parino and Jim Gach of Plum Building Systems, Tom Lambertz and Wes Parker of Roberts & Dybdahl, Dave Mitchell of Engineered Building Design and Tod Hennessy of Alpine Engineered Products.

Under old business, Ray Noonan, Rick Parino and Tom Lambertz reported on their attendance at the State Fire Marshall’s Fire Code Advisory Committee meetings as “persons of legitimate interest.” A letter on behalf of WTCA and the Iowa Chapter with comments on the proposed changes to the International Fire Code (IFC) and portions of the International Building Code (IBC), 2006 editions, as proposed in Public Safety Department (661) Notice of Intended Action (PSD 661) has been reviewed. The letter describes how the adoptions proposed in PSD 661 are currently being reviewed by the Public Safety Committee. In contrast, WTCA and ITMA suggest that the State of Iowa adopt the entire IBC 2006 statewide as well as the 2006 IFC, and suggest the adoption of the 2006 edition of the IRC statewide to complete the set of building codes coordinated with the IFC. The members approved the submission of this letter to the State of Iowa Rules Administrator.

Mid Atlantic Wood Truss Council

Once again, the Mid Atlantic Chapter held its fall meeting at Williamson in Horsham, PA. The guest speaker was WTCA Legal Counsel Kent Pogal, who delivered his final presentation of the year on successfully negotiating an acceptable customer contract. The attendees appreciated the valuable presentation content and expressed their thanks to Kent.

Education remains a top priority of the Mid Atlantic Chapter. With a solid track record of supporting courses for code officials through Rutgers University in New Jersey as well as presentations for local associations, the chapter was pleased to add participation at the 38th Annual Pennsylvania Builders Conference (PennBC) in October. The chapter has also taken on the charge of the WTCA Board Resolution requesting each chapter designate a local relationships building chair to facilitate at least two truss plant tours and other educational events during the year for building and fire officials, architects, engineers, legislators and students. Rich Phalines will head up this effort, which has already begun with a request from the Deputy Chief of the Winston-Township Fire Department and a tour planned for a building trades school.

South Carolina Component Manufacturers Association

The South Carolina Chapter held a special evening meeting on November 7 and welcomed John McLeod, Certified Building Official for the County of Charleston and guest speaker. His presentation featured significant changes from the 2003 to the 2006 IBC/IRC and South Carolina Amendments. Attendees were encouraged to bring their questions. Local building officials were invited to dinner on behalf of the chapter, too.

McLeod provided an overview of some of the changes proposed relating to trusses that were discussed at the recent ICC Code Hearings in Orlando, FL. He used the ICC Hearing Summary document prepared by WTCA as his point of reference when discussing this information. He also reviewed some of the more significant differences between the 2003 and 2006 IBC, as well as the current amendment process. SC is currently reviewing the 2006 IRC and IBC and accepting code change proposals. All proposed changes will be compiled by the end of the year, reviewed by various committees, and hearings will be scheduled for further public input. The 2006 edition of the IRC and IBC, with SC amendments, are currently targeted for adoption in early 2008. Mr. McLeod also invited the chapter to provide a seminar at a future state code officials meeting.

During the abbreviated membership meeting portion of the evening, chapter members discussed marketplace issues. More and more jurisdictions are requiring that roof trusses be attached to the supporting walls with framing anchors. There was a brief discussion regarding the pros and cons of using anchoring framing as well as a discussion of the benefits of using the ICC approved connections. (Section 88 of BCS was referenced.) The apparently growing trend of building designers questioning the wind uplift reactions provided on the truss design drawings was noted also. In addition, members were updated on an education project that was approved to provide a seminar at the next meeting of the Coastal Region of the South Carolina Code Officials.

South Florida WTCA

The South Florida Chapter kicked off its November meeting with a review of the changes in the 2006 edition of Building Component Safety (BCS) and a presentation made by Ryan Draper of First American Engineering. They presented a handout to summarize the main improvements and discussed the thorough review process involved in updating this industry standard. A summary of the 2006 Supplement to the Florida Building Code was reviewed also. The changes in this 2006 glitch cycle supported the effect on December 8. Including extensive revisions to the both the 2004 FBC-Building and FBC-Residential (plus extensive restructuring), as well as the FBC-Mechanical, the changes are not trivial (comprising 360 pages) and the 2006 Supplement should be considered more like a full code revision.

Under other updates, the meeting attendees reflected on their experiences at the 2006 BCCM show in Houston, TX. Once again, the show did not disappoint, and the truss plant tours were especially good this year, too. A new Chapter President was elected for 2007 as well—Glenn Gelatt of Solar Components will take the position starting in January.

Southern Nevada Component Manufacturers Association

The Southern Nevada Chapter had many items to discuss at its fall meeting. First up was the Code Committee with an update on the 2006 IBC. All meetings takes in Las Vegas will use the 2006 IBC Code, and all relevant information is posted on the Clark County website. The implementation date is May 1, 2007. Currently, Clark County is accepting the new code as a variance; though it is not officially approved by the various councils of various municipalities, once the county commissioners, a variance will not be necessary. Members were cautioned that there are numerous changes that should be reviewed, but that the economic impact will likely be small in Las Vegas. Garry Tebbins will be a guest at the meeting this year to discuss the State of Nevada Association (SEASON) and the Southern Nevada Home Builders Association to urge them to move quickly through the issues as well.

The chapter continues to work with the Drywall Contractors Association (DCAN) on a document to define responsibilities for stacking and stack heights. The latest draft of the handout was reviewed and will be returned to DCAN with edits.

A memo from Clark County was produced that appeared to open the door to having looser standards for light commercial projects compared to residential. The consensus was that the chapter would oppose this step and the Code Committee would contact Clark County and register an objection.

Next, the Code Committee raised the issue of proposed modifications to TG12 at the Clark County Building Department (CCBD) and a desire to have concentrated loads indicated on the truss design drawing. Garry Tebbins was that this was not a problem, but that they should be asked to define what a “concentrated load” is. The chapter agreed to send some good and bad examples to help the CCBD define the issue. The 2007 state of chapter officers was presented and approved. Glenn McLeod of Sun State Components will return as President, Ron Barett of General Building Systems will become Vice President, Art Ramirez of Landmark Truss will be Treasurer and Stuart Coles of Sun State Components will be Secretary. In addition, a motion was made to run the chapter to create a Projects Committee to help develop educational and truss plant tour opportunities. The first objective of the new committee will be to schedule a fire service educational/truss plant tour/presentation in Las Vegas.

Truss Manufacturers Association of Texas

The Texas Chapter Board of Directors met in November to determine the 2007 slate of officers and meeting locations. Paul Johnson of Universal Forest Products will be President, Shaun Allen of Thrusway will move up to Vice President, Gary Walls to Treasurer and Gary Tubbs will move up to Secretary. The 2007 slate of officers and meeting locations will be: January 18 in San Antonio, April 19 in San Antonio with golf, June 21 in Austin and September 20 in Austin with golf.

In addition, the attendees acknowledged their third straight win as the Texas Chapter’s golf team. The 2007 slate of officers and meeting locations will be: January 18 in San Antonio, April 19 in San Antonio with golf, June 21 in Austin and September 20 in Austin with golf.

Continued on page 80

Chapter Corner

For more information about WTCA Chapters and how to become more involved, contact Anna L. Stamm (800/310-6735 or ostram@qualtim.com) or Danielle Bostain (903/310-6735 or dbostain@qualtim.com). Contributions to Chapter Corner, including pictures, are encouraged. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.
The guest speaker at the membership meeting was Ed Buck, Vice President, Strategic Programs, Bozzer Lumber Co. His program on manufacturing efficiency emphasized labor reductions, which are perceived as the best source of savings to compete in the DC market area. Estimating, production and operation managers were encouraged to attend, too. During the open forum discussion, Joe Hikel of Shelter Systems Limited also spoke on his methods of capturing costs for trusses, and chapter members were invited to share their ideas on truss shop costing.

It was agreed that the January meeting would be held at the Hyatt Dulles but a subcommittee would investigate new meeting locations. Fairfax and Prince William County code officials would be invited back on January 13 to speak to the chapter on changes under the 05/06 IRC code. Also, the date of the fall 2007 meeting was moved from October 10 to November 7.

Wood Truss Council of North Carolina

At its November meeting, the North Carolina chapter members reviewed the success of the presenters’ presentations, for the North Carolina Department of Labor (NCDOL), focusing on permanent bracing and job site safety, the two half-day presentations at the three-day conference in Raleigh were very well received and did much to support the chapter’s ongoing cooperation with NCDOL. The chapter expects future training opportunities to follow.

Discussed at the chapter meeting were several current marketplace issues. An update was given on a reducible load issue being addressed by the chapter. Recent requests for sealing I-joint placement plans were noted. The changes made to the 2006 edition of the Building Component Safety Information (BCSI) booklet were described. The WTCA Board resolutions on a local relationship-building chair and responding to local media situations were covered. As with several other chapters this fall, the attendees agreed that the media resolution was well received and that even more information could be developed to train all levels of employees in the industry on how to respond to difficult situations.

The next meeting of the North Carolina chapter will be held jointly with the South Carolina chapter on March 14. The speaker being approached is Immigration Attorney Charles Kuck, who spoke at the Georgia chapter meeting in October. SBC

Chapter Corner

Continued from page 79 of TeCommunity Building Components in 2005 and Frank Klingier of Mid-Valley Truss & Door Co. in 2004) won the title of #1 Component Manufacturer Recruiter. Former McMinnia of Mid-Industries captured the #1 Supplier Recruiter title for his third straight year. Though the Arizona chapter nearly passed Texas to win the #1 Chapter portion this year, the members made an outstanding recruitment push in the final hours of the competition and brought on board nine new members in three days—three component manufacturer, five suppliers and three professional members.

West Florida Truss Association

The turnout was unprecedented for the 21st Annual West Florida Chapter Building Officials Event in November at Robbins Engineering’s truss testing facility. Exceeding all expectations, nearly 140 building officials, architects, engineers and chapter members gathered for two Truss Technology Workshop presentations (on Job Site Inspections and Design Responsibilities) and the annual testing of a truss to the limit, this year comparing a braced and unbraced truss to demonstrate the effect of bracing. With lunch courtesy of Simpson Strong-Tie Co., the event, though crowded, was a resounding success!

At its December membership meeting, the chapter voted on its 2007 officers. John Goley of West Coast Truss was elected President and Ralph DeValle of Mid-Valley Truss became Chairman of the Board of Directors. This was confirmed as President-Elect. Remaining in their positions were Robert Wall of Architectural Services and Engineering as Vice President, Ron Gaines of Simpson Strong-Tie Co. as Secretary and Stephen Santos of Builders FirstSource as Treasurer.

Wood Truss Council of the Capital Area

The Capital Area chapter’s 2007 officers were approved by its Board at the November meeting. Russ Arrington of Chesapeake Structural Systems will be stepping up as President with Craig Dewees of Chesapeake Building Components becoming Past President. Ed Basham of Chesapeake Building Components remains Secretary and Sloty Campbell of Great Southern Truss Treasurer. Added to the officer roster was Brian Johnson of Structural Technologies as Vice President.

Above/below: WFTA enjoyed incredible attendance at the 21st Annual West Florida Chapter Building Officials Event. Ryan Dexter of WTCA staff presented the TTWs.

At BCMC 2006 in Houston, TX, members of TMAT proudly possed with the #1 Recruiting Chapter trophy for WTCA’s Annual Membership Drive— their third straight win!
California’s Solar Power Requirement

The California Solar Initiative, known as a “million solar roofs” bill, was recently signed into law by California’s governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in response to the rising costs of new electric power sources. The plan aims to have one million solar roofs created in California by 2018, and will be implemented by the California Public Utilities Commission. Those roofs could provide 3,000 megawatts of additional clean energy and reduce the output of greenhouse gasses by three million tons, which is comparable to taking one million cars off the road.

The bill includes $2.9 billion in incentives to homeowners and building owners who install solar-electric systems and will allow consumers who install solar panels to sell excess energy back to power companies for credit on their monthly bills. Beginning January 1, 2011 the law also requires California developers of more than 50 new single-family homes to offer solar-energy systems as an option to all customers. [Source: Green Builder, Oct. 2006, p.14]

Builder Confidence Holds Steady In December

Heading into the holidays, builders of new single-family homes continue to believe that the worst of the downswing in home buying is behind them, according to the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) for December. At 32 for the present month, the overall HMI is down a single point from November but remains above the recent low of 30 in September. “This was the third consecutive month in which builder expectations for sales over the upcoming six-month period have improved, and it’s a good sign of things to come in the new year,” said NAHB President David Pressly, a home builder from Statesville, N.C. “The HMI has come off September’s low point, and other recent indicators confirm that buying conditions have improved and that demand is stabilizing—including improvements in measures of housing affordability, strengthening consumer assessments of home buying conditions and an upsizing in applications for mortgages to buy homes,” said NAHB Chief Economist David Seiders. [Source: www.nahb.org, 12/18/06] SBC

Housing Market Index (HMI)

The HMI is a seasonally-adjusted index derived from ratings for present single-family sales, single-family sales in the next 6 months and buyer traffic. The first two components are measured on a scale of very “good” and “poor” and the last one is measured on a scale of very “high” and “very low.” A rating of 50 indicates that the number of positive or good responses from the builders is about the same as the number of negative opinions at peer responses. Ratings higher than 50 indicate more positive or good responses.

Source: National Association of Home Builders

Success Is What You Make It

Ted Watkins

Theodore (Ted) Watkins, 63, of Longs, SC, passed away on Dec. 5, 2006. He was born on April 18, 1943 in New Brunswick, NJ. He was a founding member of the Wood Trust Council of the Capital Area and served as president.

After attending accounting school in Baltimore, MD, Ted got his start in the truss business by becoming the accountant for a flouting company, Ryland Homes in Columbia, MD. Ted then spent several years as a manager for Shelter Systems both in Frederickburg, VA and Houston, working with Lenny Sylk, where computer-aided job costing and innovative material handling systems were pioneered.

Dwight Hikel of Shelter Systems Limited recalls what made Ted such an asset to the industry: “Ted was very committed to the industry. He was interested in pursuing new ideas and was a very practical and sincere person.”

Later in his career, Ted took a job at Blue Ridge Truss, a rather remote truss plant in the mountains of Virginia, where he would spend the next 15 years. There he distinguished himself as one of the finest managers in the truss business, according to owners Mr. and Mrs. Willard Fansler. Ted displayed a “tireless energy” attention to both sales and profitability—literally pricing every job in a $1 million per month facility.

During his employment at Blue Ridge Truss, Ted worked with Daren Lam, then design department manager. Lam remembers Ted for “taking a personal interest in the people and turning it into what it is today. His good character, and he applied his winning strategy to business. He knew numbers better than anyone I’ve ever worked with in the industry.”

Ted then went on to run two wood treatment plants to get together and form an association, which became the Capital Area Chapter of WITCA. After training his successor for a full year, Ted enjoyed a very short retirement before passing away at the University of South Carolina.

During a personal drain at a neighboring plant from 2001 to 2002, Ted came back to the industry as President of Galea Components in Winchester, VA. He successfully rebuilt the plant, and prepared the company for a successful sale.

Lam recalls that Ted was known to be unseasoning when he believed in something: “One of the funniest things I remember about him was his reaction in sales meetings. Every time a salesman would complain about prices being too high, Ted stuck his fingers in his ears and shot his eyes as if to say ‘I’m not listening’,” Lam says that just him could seem stubborn, but when he knew what he what, he wouldn’t relent.”

In 2002, Ted retired to Myrtle Beach, SC, where he enjoyed playing chess and taking walks on the beach. Ted is survived by his wife of 40 years, Christina, his two sons, Theodore Watkins II and Brian Scott Watkins, and seven grandchildren. He will be remembered for the trust he earned from several prominent truss plant owners, and the high praise he received from them. SBC.

Thanks to Joe Kamnelli ofMitte Industries, Wilson Rynan and Scott Gabber of Galea Components and Dwight Hikel of Shelter Systems Limited for contributing to this piece.

Submit items for consideration to SBCmag.info. Photos are encouraged and will run as space allows. Submissions may be added for grammar, length and clarity.
### Industry News & Data

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### Consumer Price Index

An index measuring the change in the cost of typical wage-earner purchases of goods and services experienced by a particular group of consumers.

<table>
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<th>Changes from Previous Mo.</th>
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### Unemployment Rate

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<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
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Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

### Producer Price Index - Customized Industry Data

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<td>0.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<td>Oct</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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</table>

Source: Federal Reserve Board

### Consumer Confidence Index

The Consumer Confidence Index is a measure of consumer optimism toward current economic conditions. The confidence index is calculated and is available on the website of the Survey of Consumers.

### U.S. Prime Rate

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<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>8.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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Source: Federal Reserve Board

### Industrial Production Index

The index is a measure of industrial production, which is defined as output in the manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities industries. The index measures the change in the volume of industrial production, as well as its relationship to the size of the labor force. The index is calculated by the Federal Reserve Board of New York.

### Component Manufacturer News

**VICWEST INCOME FUND ACQUIRES VALLEY TRUSS & METALS LTD.**

Valley Income Fund recently announced that it has acquired Valley Truss & Metals Ltd. of Kensington, Prince Edward Island for approximately $7 million cash. The strategic investment is being financed with the Fund’s credit facilities. The acquisition is expected to be immediately accretive to the Fund’s earnings—generating distributable cash of approximately $10.00 per unit in 2007.

Valley is Atlantic Canada’s only manufacturer of metal cladding and roofing, and PEI’s leading supplier of engineered wood trusses with a significant market share in its core product categories. The acquired business will operate under its existing brand as a division of the Fund’s Vicwest Industrial business unit. All existing Valley employees are being offered continued employment.

The Fund’s Chair, Bryan Heil, said, “We are pleased with this acquisition, which represents our fourth major investment in the Fund’s growth strategy. The addition of Valley further broadens our geographic reach as Canada’s only national manufacturer of metal roof, wall and deck systems and will allow us to improve service levels to our customers in the Atlantic provinces. As well as being accretive to distributable cash available to our unitholders, this acquisition will further diversify our product offering, allowing the Fund to benefit from operating synergies with its Quebec-based operations and become even more price competitive. In addition, the Valley facility can serve as a platform for increased shipments to neighboring Atlantic provinces.”

### Industry News & Data

For an in-depth explanation of this summary, go to https://ism.ws/ISMReport.

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Fax: 308-384-8326

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For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/triad.htm
The Carlsbad Golf Clubhouse in Carlsbad, CA, was designed by Alliance TruTrus as 48 2x roof trusses to be lifted into place as one piece. According to Ben Hershey, President of TruTrus, this was a very challenging job because the architect wanted to achieve a specific design that would allow the trusses to remain exposed from beneath. Things got interesting when one of the walls on the section was not square and drifted in about six inches, offsetting the ridge line. Because the trusses needed to be exposed and to match, TruTrus had to change each truss’s ridge line to slowly move the ridge over a length of 14 feet. This project contained roof, floor and glue laminated trusses. This is the fourth (and smallest!) round roof lift that TruTrus designed and manufactured in 2006. Their largest was a roof for a retail center measuring 52’ in diameter. SB C
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