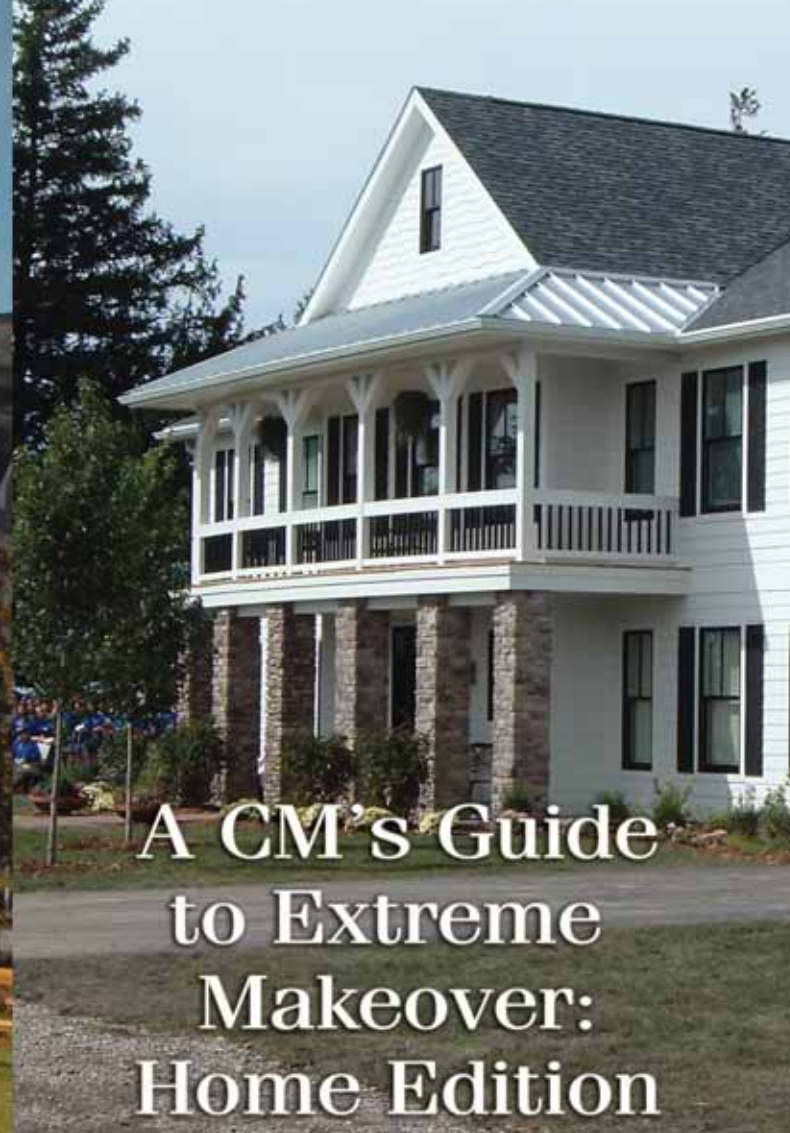


“Move That Bus!”



A CM's Guide to Extreme Makeover: Home Edition



by Emmy Thorson-Hanson

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

at a glance

- ☐ 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.

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.

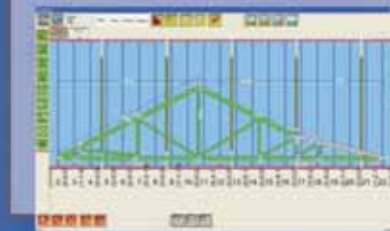
One thing is obvious. Without the use of structural building components, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* as we know it would not be possible. With such a tight schedule for the show, components are absolutely necessary to pull these projects off in such a short window of time. Sean Kelly, operations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

Continued on page 64

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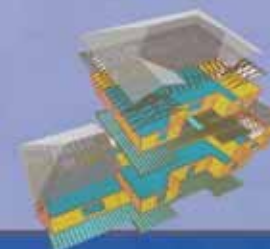


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“Structural building components are essential. It’s not a question.”

Project Background

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.



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.

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.



After seven days of extreme effort, the final product is a beautiful house for the Kibe family in Gladbrook, IA.

“Move That Bus!”

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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

Continued on page 66

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Work continued at a steady pace for framers on the Richco site, while the show's cast filmed segments.



A roof truss is hoisted into place on the Cascade site.



Coordination is key for any *Extreme* build. At the Richco site, sheathing was applied to the garage roof while concrete was poured for the basement below.

"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 for 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

Continued on page 68

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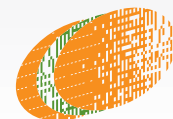
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OPERATOR COSTS PER YEAR <small>(Based on \$12/ph & \$6/ph other costs)</small>	\$37,440.00	\$ 37,440.00	\$ 74,880.00	\$74,880.00
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Wall panels were hoisted to the second floor of the building on the Richco site.



Framers set wall panels in place on the Richco site.



Walls for the Richco project were set ahead of schedule, speeding up framing overall and allowing designers more time to work on the interior of the house.

"Move That Bus!"

Continued from page 66

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 easy because we all worked together," said James. 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 jobsite 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."

Continued on page 70



Roof trusses for the garage being set on the Richco site.



Coordinating deliveries was especially important for the Richco project because the site was located on a small city street, so trucks had to quickly unload materials and move to make room for the next delivery.



The Cascade house as it was starting to come together.

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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!”

Continued from page 68

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 outsourced trucking to cover our other projects.”

Coordinate: The delivery schedule can be just as challenging as changing the design. The schedule actually changes a

lot so the driver needs to be available to be at the jobsite 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, collated the trusses to come off the truck in the order they were to be set and fabricated oversized trusses in one-piece to minimize piggyback framing on the site.

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, remember that this is show business, and we all know the catch phrase “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 rough conditions. They only

Continued on page 72

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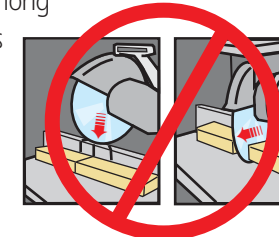


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“Our product is probably the single most critical product in helping them accomplish their goal.”

See page 74 for a continued point/counter-point discussion about CM participation in ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* in “The Hidden Value of Marketing” and “Make Sure Your Eyes Are Wide Open.”

“Move That Bus!”

Continued from page 70

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. **SBC**

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Point • Counterpoint

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 jobsite 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...the 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.¹

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.³

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.³

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 handsomely 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



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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:

- ¹ <http://www.forbes.com/lists/2006/53/J2KW.html>
- ² http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.showArticle&art_aid=42678
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