



Build Strong Relationships

Two: Not a Lonely Number

When two associations team up, the possibilities are endless.

by Sean D. Shields

I don't know about you, but in most cases, I can accomplish more than twice as much with two of something than with just one. I see a lot better with two eyes, I hold things better with two hands, and I certainly run and walk better with two feet. Applying that logic to your company, it is likely you can accept more jobs if you have two designers instead of one, cut more lumber if you have two truss saws not just one, and make more deliveries if you buy a second truck. It stands to reason, then, that more good can be accomplished having two well-focused trade associations working on your behalf than just one.

That's what component manufacturers in Florida are discovering as WTCA and the Florida Building Materials Association (FBMA) are partnering together to host a Joint Legislative Conference at the Florida Capitol in Tallahassee. Scheduled for March 27-28, this significant event will bring the structural building components and building material supply industries together to meet with state lawmakers and advocate issues important to both groups: property and casualty insurance; property taxes; workers' compensation insurance; and, impact fees and their effect on affordable housing.

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For certain, their collective membership will reap the benefits of this cooperation, but much can also be learned from what made it possible—strong relationships. "I see the relationship between FBMA and WTCA as one that is continually spiraling upward in a positive direction," says Bill Tucker, FBMA's Executive Director, "but it took time to develop."

In his 22 years of association work, Tucker said the thing he has enjoyed most is watching these kinds of relationships develop. "Almost all relationships in this business start as professional relationships, but over years of interaction, mutual respect and trust can turn them into personal relationships. That's fun to watch," says Tucker.

Apparently, it's also quite a journey, as Tucker and Kirk Grundahl, WTCA's Executive Director, have discovered over the past 15 years. For example, recently the Pennsylvania Lumberman's Insurance Company invited a group of people, including Grundahl and Tucker, to the 2005 PGA Championship. As they watched Phil Mickelson win the tournament at a Monday play-off round, there were a number of valuable conversations between the two. Not long after that event, Grundahl and Tucker held meetings with Ralph Del Valle of 41 Truss and Rick Cashman of Florida Forest Products that laid a foundation for collaboration.

"The relationship-building we did at that golf tournament was not only very fun, it has proven to be extremely valuable," says Grundahl. "Our partnership is bringing together individuals in the closely-aligned building material supply industry, so we can take our varied experiences, and develop closer relationships. It will make our collective industry much stronger."

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at a glance

- The collaboration of FBMA and WTCA creates greater influence when advocating for legislative solutions.
- The associations' scopes of work have been clearly defined as to not duplicate efforts.
- The relationship allows each organization to provide more value to their members without additional investment.

Read this closely. There's going to be a test.

O.K., maybe not a test like what you think. But if you manufacture wood components, you WILL BE TESTED.

Right now at least a thousand plants are cutting components with manual or "semi-automated" saws. Most are wondering whether they should bring in a fully automated saw. But what kind – a conventional automated component saw or one of the new linear feed automated saws? How much do they cost? Do they have the right kind and size operation? How in the world will they pay for it? Exactly what will it do for their production? Which manufacturer's saw should they go with? And, all critically, exactly how would it impact their bottom line?

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That last statement will be carried out as members of both trade groups address mutual issues with their state lawmakers. Collectively, they present a louder voice and greater influence in advocating for legislative solutions that are to their benefit. "We're bringing together two groups of well-intentioned people," explains Tucker, "I can only believe positive things will come from it."

One of those well-intentioned people is Barry Dixon, True House, who has witnessed first-hand the positive work these two organizations have done separately in Florida over the years. "I think that both of these organizations have unique strengths. I am excited to think about what can now be accomplished through WTCA and FBMA bringing those complementary strengths together," says Dixon.

Dixon, Del Valle, Cashman and Doug LaChapelle of West Coast Truss have played an integral role in establishing a comprehensive cooperative agreement between FBMA and WTCA to help guide the two organization's collective efforts. This agreement has also served to broaden the reach of their "upward spiraling" relationship, for it was used as a template to forge a similar partnership between WTCA and the Lumberman's Association of Texas and Louisiana (LAT). In turn, WTCA and LAT will host two Joint Legislative Conferences in Austin and Baton Rouge later this year.

"Developing cooperative relationships on the state level with these organizations also provides strong support for our efforts to collaborate on a nationwide basis with the National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association (NLBMDA)," says Grundahl. "It builds awareness of the differences and similarities between our two industries, and generates momentum toward greater collaboration for the benefit of our members."

As an example, WTCA and NLBMDA recently announced they are partnering together during their annual Legislative Conferences in Washington, DC, April 16-18. By holding their conferences simultaneously, WTCA and NLBMDA will be helping their combined membership lobby Congress effectively on burning issues in 2007.

"By bringing our members to Capitol Hill at the same time, NLBMDA and WTCA's partnership will allow us to cover more ground in the new landscape of the 110th Congress," said Shawn Conrad, NLBMDA President. "Working together, we will increase our industry's impact on legislation critical to the building supply channel."

Members of each organization will continue to visit their lawmakers separately, to maximize the quantity of meetings held with Congressional delegates. However, WTCA and NLBMDA will work together to coordinate the analysis and messaging on each issue so that members of these two organizations will present a united front.

At the end of the day, these cooperative relationships based on trust and professional respect allow each organization to provide significantly more value to their members without additional investment. If it works so well on a national and state level, just imagine what benefits these kinds of relationships can hold for your company. All it takes is a little effort. Consider participating in the national legislative conference in Washington, DC this year, or one of the state-level legislative conferences in Florida, Texas or Louisiana. You'll begin building relationships that will serve you and your business for years to come.

For more information and to register for the SBC Legislative Conference and the various state legislative conferences, please go to www.sbcleg.com, or contact Sean Shields at 608-310/6728 or by email at: legislative@sbclg.com. **SBC**



2007 SBC Legislative Conference

April 16-18
Washington, DC

"This was my first time in our nation's Capital, and it was an experience I will never forget. My respect for Congress and its importance in our country has grown for me to a much higher level through participating in this year's Legislative Conference. I will be back for another round next year."

—Scott Ward,
Southern Components
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