



Carter-Lee Opens Plant to Jumpstart Chapter

by Libby Maurer & Emmy Thorson-Hanson

This chapter used the appeal of plant tours to get the chapter ball rolling.

So far in this series, we've covered tours of component manufacturing plants geared toward educating groups such as firefighters and fire inspectors, building officials and elected officials. In this installment, we're spotlighting a group that you are most familiar with: component manufacturers. They are your neighbors, your competitors, your peers, and maybe even your biggest allies. That's according to Steve Stroder.

When the Indiana Chapter of WTCA had an organizing committee in 1998, Stroder was excited about getting to know his competitors. "The question I always got was 'why would I want to meet with guys I'm competing against?' It's a very common misconception that you shouldn't commiserate with your competitors," says Stroder.

By getting a group of people together that genuinely want to grow the market, they can begin to develop relationships with building inspectors, who need to know how effective structural building components can be for all types of framing applications.

After several attempts, the chapter never got very far off the ground and remained stagnant. Until now.

On January 11, Stroder hosted 30 WTCA members for a tour of Carter-Lee in Mooresville, IN. He hoped welcoming his competitors to the plant would show them that joining forces with fellow CMs is in their best interests.

As chapter president since that first meeting in 1998, Stroder says now is as good a time as any to unite, and the primary reason, he says, boils down to creating higher industry-wide market share. "I feel as an industry we desperately need to grow our markets. 2006 was a tough year, and we're all fighting pretty hard to grow our piece of the pie." Stroder believes that by getting a group of people together that genuinely want to grow the market, they can begin to develop relationships with building inspectors, who need to know how effective structural building components can be for all types of framing applications. "We haven't educated them about our products. If we go after this as a team, and we educate them on this product, then hopefully they'll encourage builders and contractors to use our product more," he says. And that means a bigger pie for everyone.

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at a glance

- ❑ Carter-Lee Building Components hosted WTCA-IN for a plant tour, showing them that joining forces is in everyone's best interest.
- ❑ Steve Stroder thinks the downturn in 2006 woke some people up to the value of chapter participation.
- ❑ The chapter plans to focus on marketing their products and clarifying design responsibilities to building inspectors.

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Terry Murphy, Dura Panel Truss

"I was at the original meeting in '98, and it just wasn't the right time to get a chapter off the ground. This time around, a lot was accomplished at the meeting. It was excellent to get in the same room with so many manufacturers and suppliers. There is strength in numbers, especially when we are dealing with problem code language and design responsibility issues with municipalities throughout the state. [At the meeting] we talked about several different issues like how building inspectors look at components as compared to stick framing. For instance, they expect more information from us like sealed layouts for roof systems. They seem to think that you can stick frame a roof and not have to provide any documentation, so therefore stick framing is preferable. We would like to see them look at components the same, so it'll take some education on our part."

One Tour at a Time

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For WTCA-IN, Stroder thinks this time around he has a few more supporters. "The downturn in 2006 woke some people up and they realized maybe we do need to get together," he says. "I think people are excited about it."

So what's next for the chapter? Stroder hopes to present training programs to local building inspectors. "Hopefully they will start to see the advantages of using building components," he says. He also thinks another good area to focus on is developing a training course for contractors. "I envision us putting on a day-long seminar for as many contractors as possible. We could teach them how to read the documents in our jobsite packages and convey to them how to properly use our products," Stroder says.



Carter-Lee Building Components General Manager and WTCA-IN Chapter President Steve Stroder tells the group about the manufacturing portion of the facility.

Craig Wagner, Stark Truss Co.

How did it benefit the CMs who attended the tour?

"It seemed like everyone was involved and interested. It is always interesting to see someone else's style. The value of a plant tour is in looking at different equipment, how it is set up, observing the flow through the plant."

Why do you think it is valuable for the chapter to start meeting again?

"There are a lot of issues that could use some help. If each individual has to address their problems alone it won't be as effective, but as a group we can get a lot more done."

Do you think that Carter-Lee opening up their plant for a tour was a good way to jumpstart the chapter?

"Yes, a lot of people came who wouldn't have come otherwise."



Steve Stroder explains the flow of materials through the saw shop while chapter meeting attendees listen in.



Attendees head toward the north side of the building where wall panels from the exterior line are pulled out of the open door.

A WTCA QC tag is fastened to each inspected roof component at Carter-Lee. The operation, now part of the Pro-Build Corporation, has been certified since 2004.



David Spooner from BlueLinx Corporation and Tom Kopydlowski from MiTek Industries, Inc. talk shop.



Tom Kopydlowski, MiTek

Why do you think it is valuable for the chapter to start meeting again?

"It gives a professional look to our industry to have organization like [the chapter] on a local level; if we address an issue as a group, we come across as a more professional industry. It's great to promote our industry as a group, because when you hold something like a plant tour as a group as opposed to individually, it gives it more validity and a better view in the public eye."

Do you think that Carter-Lee opening up their plant for a tour was a good way to jumpstart the chapter?

"Plant tours are a great way to generate interest in starting up a chapter. It was gratifying to see such a great turnout. It was a great start and I hope it will continue... everyone who attended the meeting came to the plant tour, and it brought people out that wouldn't have come otherwise. It has already been decided that the next meeting will have a plant tour as well, and someone has already offered to use their plant for the tour."



Chris Weintraut from Truss Manufacturing Company, Casey Carey from Stock Components and Jerry Harvey from Contract Lumber talk in the reception area.



The entire tour group gathered for one last shot outside.



WTCA currently has 32 chapters in 37 states. WTCA Chapters play a key role in the future of the structural building components industry. For an industry to be successful, it must have full participation of all members. Local chapters provide the opportunity for all those associated with the structural building components industry to actively participate and shape its future. From the sharing of ideas at the local level to bringing these ideas together at the national level, members serve as the catalyst for a strong, unified, prosperous industry. For more information, contact us at chapters@sbcindustry.com.

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6300 Enterprise Lane • Suite 200 • Madison, WI 53719
608/310-6706 phone • 608/271-7006 fax
www.sbcmag.info • admgr@sbcmag.info