



Wtca Update

Benefit from Questioning the Value of Your Association

WTCA members who become WTCA staff wish they knew then what they know now.

by Marisa Hirsch

In the 25 years since WTCA was first established, a large number of member requests for products and services have been filled. While this is what WTCA aims to do, it means that there are now so many available resources that members sometimes may not even know a particularly useful one exists. On the other hand, WTCA staff encounters these products and services on a daily basis—leading many to have an in-depth understanding of several and an awareness of almost all.

This contrast becomes especially apparent when WTCA members become part of WTCA staff. After getting more intimately acquainted with the products and services offered, they begin to realize the amount of valuable time, effort and money they could have saved at their previous jobs.

WTCA staff currently includes two people who, once joining staff, vocalized their regret at not having known about or taken advantage of some of these resources: Keith Hershey, formerly operations manager at Alliance TruTrus in Tolleson, AZ, and Larry Wainright, formerly design manager at Trussway, Ltd. in Sparta, MI. Hershey has been with WTCA since February 2006 as director of research and development and industry projects. Wainright has been a WTCA staff member since October 2007, working in technical education and as codes manager.

Tackling Technical Difficulties

Hershey said that before he came on staff, he didn't understand the value of being involved in WTCA. He was completely focused on the production operations at TruTrus, and thought that implementing programs or products would cost too much money and time and wouldn't make a difference to the bottom line.

"I did some minor things, but never really got involved with WTCA past going to BCCM shows," he said. "I had all kinds of excuses: I'm too busy, I don't need to spend the money, I'm not looking for machinery."

Wainright said that while his plant did use many of WTCA's programs (such as Truss Technician Training, ORisk and In-Plant WTCA QC) and he knew there were Professional Engineers on staff, he didn't realize they would be willing and able to assist with some of the issues he was struggling with.

"I didn't really know [WTCA engineers] were a resource for me," he said. "I knew they did training, but just the idea of calling them up and asking a technical question—I never would have thought of that. We'd called in the past and asked questions, but there are a lot of questions that I didn't know anyone here would know or care about."

For example, Wainright said it wouldn't have ever occurred to him to call WTCA for help on code issues relating specifically to Michigan. Instead, he spent significant time researching and interpreting these issues whenever Trussway salesmen contacted him with a code question. He did the research, interpreted the codes and came up with the answers—usually on his own.

"I could have called [WTCA] and talked to people who...had more research than I could have gotten on my own, especially dealing with code officials," Wainright

Technical Assistance: To view and read WTCA Tech Notes, please visit www.sbcindustry.com/technotes.php. To request help with a technical question or issue not addressed in a current Tech Note, please contact Ryan Dexter (rdexter@qualtim.com or 608/310-6744) or Jim Vogt (jvogt@qualtim.com or 608/310-6703).

said. "[Staff] talks to code officials all the time, and they have relationships with many of them. They can get in contact with [officials] and get information quickly and take care of any problems before they become issues."

Hershey also mentioned WTCA engineers as a resource he didn't know he had during his time at TruTrus. He and several others at the company spent serious time battling code issues and individual inspectors about things that are addressed within WTCA's Tech Notes. "We have policies, notes and documents in place at WTCA that address [those issues], or previous emails and statements that have been made that were consistent for the industry," he said.

Hershey also said that not being aware of WTCA resources led TruTrus to do work they didn't need to do. It took employees a long time to work through some of the code battles. "As a company, I felt we were alone battling these things because of my lack of involvement [in WTCA]," said Hershey.

Both Wainright and Hershey said that taking advantage of WTCA's engineers' expertise was the number one thing they wish they'd done at their plants.

"We didn't even think to ask questions that WTCA engineers would probably have known the answers to and had answered 100 times before," said Wainright. "We were thinking that the issues were just related to us, or Michigan, and that they were not national issues. We just assumed that."

Both of them also said they encourage current WTCA member companies to take advantage of what they didn't. "The long and short of it is, do you want to be an individual or do you want to fight [codes] with an industry stance?" Hershey said.

High Quality & Specific Programs

There were some WTCA resources that Hershey said he was aware of, but was unsure of their value and the time and money trade-off. In-Plant WTCA QC was one of these. His plant had its own QC program in place, so they stuck with it and always found an excuse not to use WTCA's. Hershey said that even though they knew there were things they really liked about the program, they talked themselves out of participating.

"I thought, why should I spend time on this QC program when it just slows me down?" Hershey said. "We were trying to maintain a program by ourselves, but run it quickly, and had not done as thorough of a job as we thought."

Once Hershey began working at WTCA and got to know the QC program better, he started urging Alliance TruTrus to seriously consider using it. The plant became WTCA QC-certified in December 2007. Don Hershey, director of Alliance TruTrus, said that he originally doubted that the WTCA QC program was superior to the plant's in-house program, and was surprised to see an increase in quality post-certification.

"When we did go with [WTCA's program], I was surprised when we improved the quality amongst our employees and did a better job monitoring plate placement,"

Continued on page 22

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at a glance

- ❑ Some former component manufacturers that have joined WTCA staff now see that there are many more programs and services available than they realized.
- ❑ The engineering, technical and code assistance offered by staff for WTCA members are among the most valuable and time-saving for CMs.

WTCA Update

Continued from page 21

said Hershey. "Frankly, we ended up doing a better job. Our quality today is better than it's ever been as far as plates."

Another resource Keith Hershey said he wishes he'd taken advantage of is Operation Safety. He said that although insurance companies frequently offer their own programs, they are often geared toward the construction industry in general and are not specifically for component manufacturing plants—such as WTCA's Operation Safety program is.

"The program, if used correctly, will walk you right into setting up a very personal safety program for your plant, and you have ongoing materials that you can work with," said Hershey.

With Operation Safety, plants can get support and guidance through WTCA and end up with a well-developed and specific program for their own operations. "It still requires follow through and doing the work, but it's more geared toward the company and isn't just a document sitting on the shelf," he added.

Taking the Time

Hershey said he recommends that people who are interested in learning more about the resources available to them should start by getting involved in their local chapters and attending those meetings. And not just attending—but participating. The link between local chapters and WTCA is what makes it possible to approach issues with a united front.

"[Attending local meetings] will bring out some of those code-related things that everybody's battling," he said. "That could help WTCA focus, and focus for your needs."

Wainright said that before joining WTCA staff, he simply didn't know what was being accomplished. "The gist of it is that, when I came here, I didn't realize the volume of work that gets done, the number of people that were here—but also the volume of things that get done and the resources that are available."

He said his main recommendation is that members take the time to find out if WTCA can help them tackle any issues they're facing. "If you've got any questions of the technical nature, absolutely call or email," Wainright said.

Hershey said that once he joined WTCA's staff, he realized he could have benefited from being a more involved member. "I always came up with that time excuse, but what I didn't realize was the time I was wasting in the plant trying to do the same stuff," he said. "To me, it wasn't worth my time or effort. But when I came to this side of the fence, all of a sudden I realized how I missed the ball there. I could have been a much better tool for my company and WTCA by being more involved." **SBC**

Additional WTCA Resources:

WTCA can help with many of your questions, problems and/or business-related issues. Please feel free to use the list below to determine who can best help you regarding many topics.

ANSI/TPI standard:

Ryan Dexter (rdexter@qualtim.com)

Building Codes/Technical:

Ryan Dexter (rdexter@qualtim.com)

Agron Gjinolli (agjinolli@qualtim.com)

Jim Vogt (jvogt@qualtim.com)

Larry Wainright (lwainright@qualtim.com)

Chapters & Member support, Truss Technology

Workshops and plant tours:

Melanie Birkeland (mbirkeland@qualtim.com)

Dani Bothun (dbothun@qualtim.com)

Cindy Kotajarvi (ckotajarvi@qualtim.com)

Trish Kutz (tkutz@qualtim.com)

Anna Stamm (astamm@qualtim.com)

Financial Performance Survey and Wage & Benefit Survey:

Melanie Birkeland (mbirkeland@qualtim.com)

Fire-related questions and Carbeck:

Melanie Birkeland (mbirkeland@qualtim.com)

In-Plant WTCA QC:

Tony Piek (tpiek@qualtim.com)

JOBSITE PACKAGES and other WTCA publications:

Brooke Kutz (bkutz@qualtim.com)

Eric Monson (emonson@qualtim.com)

Mike Younglove (myounglove@qualtim.com)

Legislative:

Sean Shields (sshields@qualtim.com)

Operation Safety:

Brooke Kutz (bkutz@qualtim.com)

ORisk Program:

Libby Maurer (lmaurer@qualtim.com)

Plant Operations and Management:

Keith Hershey (khershey@qualtim.com)

SBC Research Institute & Testing:

Keith Hershey (khershey@qualtim.com)

Michael Oftedahl (moftedahl@qualtim.com)

Dan Hawk (dhawk@qualtim.com)

SCORE:

Marisa Hirsch (mhirsch@qualtim.com)

Truss Technician Training and In-Plant Basic Training:

Dani Bothun (dbothun@qualtim.com)

Cindy Kotajarvi (ckotajarvi@qualtim.com)

TRUCK Program (driver training):

Sean Shields (sshields@qualtim.com)

Molly Butz (mbutz@qualtim.com)

WorkForce Development:

Sean Shields (sshields@qualtim.com)

WTCA website:

Emily Patterson (epatterson@qualtim.com)

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Oakdale, CA 95361-9367
209/847-9184
Mr. Lance Lester

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Mr. Jeff Schilling

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242/361-7764
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Clermont, FL 34712-1550
352/242-0100
Mr. Hans Bentzon

McClancy Engineers

102 Murdoch Creek Ct
Cary, NC 27519
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