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## Editor's Message

### A Lifer's Journey Through the Ranks

by Joe Hikel

I would like to thank the Board and members of SBCA for having the confidence in me to be your President. I am honored for the privilege and take the responsibility seriously.

Find out about your new President's roots.

Here is a little background about my career in the industry so you have perspective on my views. I am what you would call a "lifer" in component manufacturing. I worked for two other component plants before we started our family business in Westminster, Maryland in 1976. I have done just about every job in a component plant including wall panel assembly, truss assembly, saw operator, jig set up, forklift operator, truss design, sales, plant management and sales management. Today I run the daily operations of our enterprise with the title of Chief Operating Officer. Like many family businesses the majority of our family's personal net worth is in the business. It truly motivates you to be successful when most of your money is on the line every day.

Like other family businesses we have had to consider succession planning in our overall strategy. We went to a retreat dedicated to this subject in 2000. We decided that in order for me to have the responsibility to successfully run the daily operations, I needed to enhance my skill set in business management. We struggled with how to accomplish this—I was already working full time managing the business, so I was getting all the on the job training possible.

I was in my SUV in between sales calls one day and a commercial came on the radio advertising an Executive MBA program designed for senior managers of their organizations. I thought it seemed like a perfect fit for our needs and pitched the idea to my family. They thought it was a great idea as long as it didn't take away from performing my daily responsibilities. I started the program in 2001, about the same time we oversold our production capacity by about 30 percent. We decided it was time to think about expanding our capacity to capitalize on the margin we were leaving on the table by subcontracting out these sales. The next two years became 90-100 hour work weeks where I integrated going to school and running the business. I would write papers about our business, and also weave new ideas from my peers in the program into the design and execution of our new manufacturing facility. The strategies we implemented during this time have enabled us to be extra lean in these hard times; they will also allow us to react quickly when the market recovers.

My company has been engaged in SBCA since the early days of our company. My dad Dwight has been active in various roles at the chapter and national level. He encouraged me to become engaged at about the same time I took on a general management role. The idea of having an opportunity to discuss similar issues with component manufacturers from all over the country has been invaluable for us. From ideas that we incorporated into our plant during visits when we were in our benchmarking period, to financial reporting and wage and benefit comparisons, to direct business opportunities on both the buy and sell side, our company has benefitted greatly from our association. Our company goal is to be state of the art in component manufacturing, and SBCA plays a very important role in that pursuit. A recent example of how SBCA participation has helped us is the SCORE program. We were looking for something that would turn our philosophy on excellence into something tangible, marketable. We feel SCORE set the tone for best practices and

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#### at a glance

- ❑ Joe Hikel from Shelter Systems Limited (Westminster, MD) is this year's SBCA President.
- ❑ Hikel worked up through the ranks in the family business, doing everything from component assembly to truss design to sales.
- ❑ SBCA plays a very important role in Shelter's pursuit of running a state-of-the-art operation.

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achieving the Elite level of SCORE fit with our goals. I wish more component manufacturers out there realized the same benefits from SCORE certification that we have.

My goal for the association this year is to solidify our link in the building supply chain by working to improve collaboration with our vendors and our customers. There are several initiatives underway to accomplish this goal. Exciting stuff! I'll tell you about them in more detail in future articles. I also want to make sure that each and every member understands that my goal for SBCA is to provide the tools to not only *survive* current economic conditions but also to *thrive* in the future. I don't know about you, but I plan for our family business to be around for a long, long time. **SBC**

*SBC Magazine encourages the participation of its readers in developing content for future issues. Do you have an article idea for a future issue or a topic that you would like to see covered? Email your thoughts and ideas to [editor@sbcmag.info](mailto:editor@sbcmag.info).*

**note:** In the past, the November issue of *SBC* has included a complete directory of the supplier and professional members of SBCA. Due to budget constraints, this year's directory is not included in the print edition of the magazine, but will appear on our website's Past Issues page under November 2010. For additional ways to search for SBCA Supplier and Professional Members, see the ad on page 19.

# New! Fire Insights

The latest technical resources from SBCA address building component performance in fire situations. Called *Fire Insights*, these bulletins analyze issues component manufacturers face with respect to fire performance and offer position statements.

*Equivalent Performance Through Testing of Unprotected Floor Assemblies* discusses a 2012 IRC and IBC code change requiring floor truss assemblies to be covered with a minimum of ½" gypsum board to provide fire resistance. The code change is based on data from various floor assembly fire tests were conducted under vastly different test criteria and conditions. Therefore, the data should not be used to influence code changes.

The report concludes with SBCA's position that fire resistant materials ought to be required for *all* floor structural framing materials and not single out one particular material.

SBCA's policy is to foster the concept of fire ground safety that is fair and rational. Where increased fire resistance is desired, beyond what has traditionally been allowed by the IRC/IBC, a minimum of ½" gypsum wall board or other materials that increase the fire resistance of the floor assembly should be applied to unprotected floor applications, regardless of the structural framing materials that make up the floor system.

Visit [www.sbcindustry.com/fireinsights.php](http://www.sbcindustry.com/fireinsights.php) to view more *Fire Insights*. **SBC**



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