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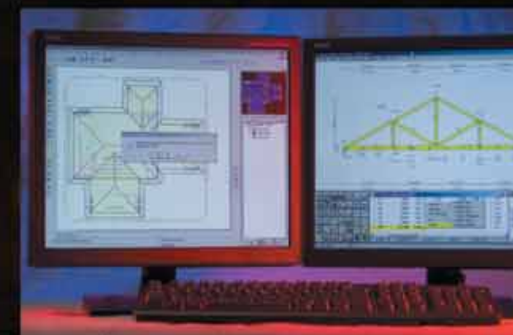

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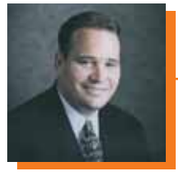
contents



Editor's Message

Framing Up the Wall Panel Market

by Don Groom

Involving builders and framers early on could be your key to selling wall panels in a resistant market.

When it comes to wall panels, most component manufacturers wonder: "Is there a demand for wall panels in my market, and if so, how do I ensure they work within my business structure?" Whether or not your company currently offers wall panels, they are, and will continue to be, a major part of the overall component growth in our industry. Because they are still new to markets in many parts of the country, wall panels are the next frontier in component construction, much like roof trusses were four and five decades ago.

Wall panels are a very market driven component; it only makes sense to commit the time and effort to produce them if there is a steady and reliable demand in the marketplace. Component manufacturers can also do a great deal to bolster demand in their market by reaching out to builders and framers and convincing them that component construction is a win-win for all involved. The outlook has been good lately and many markets across the U.S. are poised for the introduction or the increased use of wall panels. The strong housing starts we continue to see—especially in multi-family markets—are proof that builders are busy and focused on the value of time. Compared to stick framing, wall panels offer builders the opportunity to increase productivity and complete more projects using fewer framing crews.

The 1996 Framing the American Dream® project helped to illustrate the many benefits of building with wall panels (see list on page 8).

at a glance

- A little education can go a long way in showing framers the overall time, labor and material savings of wall panels.
- In order to make wall panels cost effective, the builder's framer has to buy-in to the concept.
- It's true, wall panels may not be a fit in every market, but there are many markets throughout the U.S. that have yet to realize the full potential of these components.

Whether a company will succeed with wall panels depends on many factors. Do the builders and framers in the field truly understand the benefits of wall panel framing, and are they willing to work "outside the box" of stick framing? A little education can go a long way in showing framers the overall time, labor and material savings of wall panels. WTCA's ***Framing the American Dream®*** brochure compares component construction to stick framing and illustrates many of the benefits of wall panels. This 1996 project sponsored by WTCA, in cooperation with the Building Systems Council of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), constructed two identical house plans side by side using

Continued on page 8

Editor's Message

Continued from page 7

two different methods—one stick built and the other constructed with wood roof and floor trusses and wall panels—and the results are astounding.

The results from the project clearly show that, when wall panels and stick framing go head to head, wall panels:

- Offer better utilization of material.
- Reduce man-hours required to frame a structure.
- Optimize scrap utilization.
- Decrease the likelihood of theft at the jobsite.
- Save money in waste removal.

Educating customers may sell them on the idea of wall panels, but they won't sign on the dotted line unless they see true all-around value. In order to make wall panels cost effective, the builder's framer has to buy into the concept. In other words, they need to be willing to offer a framing package discount for the set time efficiencies that go along with wall panelization. They have to fully understand that they will win, the builder will win and the component manufacturer will win. One of the best ways to help customers transition from stick framing to wall panels is to bring the builder and the builder's framer to the table at the very beginning of a project. Establishing relationships early in a project and getting on the same page can be invaluable in winning over builders and framers on the benefits of component construction and preventing costly backcharges.

Once they decide to use wall panels, customers need guidance and training to understand how component construction is installed on site. Component manufacturers can do a lot to sell the benefits of wall panels, not just in theory, but out in the field by making component construction an efficient and profitable choice for customers. Customer service can go a long way in building a package of value around the wall panel business that includes having a knowledgeable sales staff, providing easy-to-read dimensions on the field installation drawings, and by providing installation efficiencies such as stacking components on the truck in the order they will be used at the jobsite. Building strong relationships is a sure-fire way to help builders succeed with wall panels.

It's true, wall panels may not be a fit in every market, but there are many markets throughout the U.S. that have yet to realize the full potential of these components. The need for wall panels is out there. Component manufacturers have the power to break into these markets and, through education and unbeatable customer service, create an environment where wall panel business can flourish. 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.**

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THE FUTURE OF FRAMING

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The mission of *Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC)* is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing structural building components. Further, *SBC* strives to ensure growth, continuity and increased professionalism in our industry, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. *SBC*'s editorial focus is geared toward the entire structural building component industry, which includes the membership of the Wood Truss Council of America (WTCA), the Steel Truss and Component Association (STCA) and the Structural Component Distributors Association (SCDA). These associations make up an industry strategic planning committee called the Structural Building Components Council (SBCC). The opinions expressed in *SBC* are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of the associations listed above.

Publisher's Message

Turn, Turn, Turn

by Libby Maurer

"Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better."

—King Whitney Jr.

Let's ring this New Year in right, with a meaty issue full of wall panel news, lots of talk about whole house design concepts, an update on where the component industry stands with the fire service, perspectives on a name change, and a special birthday. Whew. Take a deep breath; 2006 looks to be a wild ride.

You may recall that the January/February 2004 issue was ***SBC's*** first ever issue devoted strictly to wall panel manufacturing. You loved it, and thanks to your rave reviews, we've permanently added it to our line-up! Enjoy features spotlighting two component manufacturers who take very different approaches to their success. The folks at Blenker Building Systems (our cover story) have mastered customer service and relationship building, a theme that echoes throughout their sales, design, production and framing departments. The feature on Clearspan Components highlights an extremely efficiency-minded operation. Clearspan's focus on developing solutions from within their organization makes their plant truly one of a kind. Whether you are considering adding walls to your product mix or not, don't miss these two articles.

Whole house design: is it or is it not the future of this industry? Articles from Carl Schoening of Truswal Systems Corporation and Jay Deakins of Deacom, Inc. indicate it's a strong possibility. Schoening discusses the trend toward WHD in terms of a big shift in the demands of the component manufacturer's customer. Deakins takes the business approach to WHD, explaining why specialized business software is helpful for component manufacturers making the transition to a WHD business model.

Remember a time when it seemed as though the fire service would never accept component construction as the most efficient and cost effective modern building material? No so anymore, according to, well, the fire service. More and more, members of the fire service are eager to bury the hatchet and instead rally for more training to educate a new generation of firefighters about changes in building construction and new techniques to fight fires within such structures. Captain John Vardian of the Phoenix Fire Department (PFD) is leading the charge. With up to 50 percent of PFD's firefighters retiring in the next three years, Vardian sees a golden opportunity to incorporate building classification training into fire service education curricula.

Change is never easy for human beings. We're just not programmed to accept it willingly. If you've served in this industry long enough, you know that the marketplace has changed significantly over the last decade. The majority of you reading this are no longer producing exclusively roof trusses, which has industry leaders questioning whether the name "Wood Truss Council of America" is inclusive enough as we face the future. Be sure to read "Quarter-Life Opportunities: What Will WTCA Mean in the Future?," which includes the perspectives of two industry leaders as they contemplate an association name change. We encourage you to be a part of this decision; after all, the future is yours.

Welcome to 2006! Don't forget to keep in touch with us throughout the year. We enjoy hearing from you! SBC

at a glance

- This issue of ***SBC Magazine*** focuses on wall panel manufacturing.
- Two component manufacturers are featured in this issue: Blenker Building Systems and Clearspan Components.
- Additional feature articles spotlight whole house design concepts as they relate to the building components industry.

Technical Q & A

Wall Panels & Sealed Engineering

For the wall panel industry, added interest draws additional questions. Read the most common FAQs.

by WTCA Staff

Wall panel manufacturing is by no means a new idea—instead it seems to be catching on. Many truss manufacturers are seeing the benefits of adding wall panels to their product mix and customers, too, are seeing the benefits—buildings go up more quickly and thus more units can be constructed with no increased need for labor. As the market for wall panels grows, so do questions from the field. Here are two of the most common questions we receive.

Question

Why are wall panel designs not prepared and sealed by a professional engineer?

Answer

It's pretty simple—wall panel designs are not engineered. When walls are built on the jobsite they follow prescriptive provisions in the building code, eliminating the need for site-built walls to be engineered. Wall panels are built to the same prescriptive requirements. The big difference is they are built in a controlled environment and delivered to the jobsite as opposed to being built in an uncontrolled environment and tilted up on the jobsite. This fact does not make wall panels subject to different or additional requirements.

Question

Some walls are engineered, such as shear walls. Why doesn't the wall panel manufacturer provide sealed designs for those?

Answer

It's true some walls do not fall within the building code's prescriptive requirements and must be engineered. In that case, the Building Designer will provide detailed instructions on how the wall panels are to be constructed to render the wall panels to be engineered. The framer, in the case of site-built walls, and the manufacturer, in the case of manufactured walls, needs only to follow the Building Designer's instructions for the walls to be rendered engineered.

At some point in the future, it certainly is conceivable that shear wall design process will mimic the current roof and floor trusses process; that is, component manufacturers will produce sealed shear wall design drawings. SBC

To pose a question for this column, call the WTCA technical department at 608/274-4849 or email technicalqa@sbcmag.info.

at a glance

- ❑ As wall panels gain popularity, questions pertaining to sealed engineering requirements have increased.
- ❑ Can walls built in the shop rely on the prescriptive provisions of the building code?
- ❑ In the future, it is possible that component manufacturers will be responsible for providing sealed design drawings for their wall panel designs.

Safety Scene

Back to the Basics

by Molly E. Butz

"For safety is not a gadget but a state of mind."
—Eleanor Everet

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to refocus your safety program and get back to the basics. There are certainly plenty of hazards in a component manufacturing plant that can lead to injury or illness, but you may find that taking care of the little things can make each day a little more safe. Take a few moments the next time you hold a toolbox talk or Monday morning safety meeting to go over the following quick and easy ways your employees can be more focused on safety as they work each day. (Better yet, visit **Support Docs** at www.sbcmag.info to download a formatted poster you can hand out or post in each department!)

- Be aware of your environment.
- Concentrate on YOUR responsibilities.
- Always report any safety or health concerns to a supervisor immediately.
- Never operate any machinery unless you have been formally and properly trained.
- Make sure you understand and follow all safety guidelines!
- Lock the facility when no one is present.
- Never leave a running machine unattended.
- Regularly (once per week) check all hand tools, portable power tools and other equipment. Report any concerns to your supervisors so that the equipment can be fixed or replaced.

- Wear your assigned personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Regularly (once per week) check all PPE that has been assigned to you. Report any concerns to your supervisors so that the PPE can be fixed or replaced.
- Maintain good housekeeping.
  - –Clean up spills immediately.
  - –Keep walkways and stairs free of tripping hazards.
  - –Keep all hand and power tools in their proper places.
- Avoid wearing jewelry and loose clothing around machinery.
- Smoke in designated smoking areas only.
- Use all equipment only for its intended purpose.
- Never hesitate to ask questions!

Many, if not all, of the items on this list may seem like common sense, and they are! But it's easy to lose sight of the simple things over the course of a year that every person can do to ensure that each day is as safe as possible. SBC

To pose a question for this column or to learn more about WTCA's Operation Safety Program, contact WTCA Staff at 608/274-4849, email wtca@woodtruss.com, or view the Operation Safety demonstration online at www.wtcatko.com.

at a glance

- ❑ The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to renew your focus on a safety program.
- ❑ Finding the time to take care of little things that have the potential to turn into big hazards can make each day more safe.

Coast to Coast

50 out of 50

For the past seventeen years, Lakeside Trailer has been leading the way in the component trailer industry with innovative ideas to ensure your delivery operations remain efficient in today's competitive market. We know there is no such thing as a "small problem" when it comes to completing your contract with a builder. That is why Lakeside has perfected ways to reduce or eliminate your transportation concerns such as loading, off-loading and wide loads.

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Code Connection

Wall Panels

by WTCA Staff

Take a few minutes to demystify the codes as they relate to wall panels so that future plan approvals and inspections will be less of a headache.

Panelized walls are becoming increasingly integrated into some component manufacturers' business plans. While the manufacture of walls is a relatively simple process, there can be confusion in the marketplace as to how panelized walls are considered for plan approval or during inspections.

Wall panels can fall into one of two categories, or a combination of the two:

- Those that follow prescriptive design: the International Residential Code (IRC), the International Building Code (IBC) Section 2308, or the American Forest & Paper Association's (AF&PA) Wood Frame Construction Manual—prescriptive provisions.
- Those that follow engineered design: the IBC or AF&PA's Wood Frame Construction Manual—engineered provisions.
- Those that follow a combination of prescriptive and engineered design.

When the structure in which the wall panels are to be installed falls within the scope of the IRC (see Figure 1) and utilizes the included prescriptive plate, stud, header, sheathing and bracing requirements, the panelized walls should be treated the same as site-built walls and are subject to the same approval and inspection requirements. The same is true for structure that fall within the scope and limitations of IBC Section 2308 (see Figure 2).

R101.2 Scope. The provisions of the International Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings shall apply to the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, removal and demolition of detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories in height with a separate means of egress and their accessory structures.

Figure 1.

2308.1 General. The requirements of this section are intended for conventional light-frame construction. Other methods are permitted to be used provided a satisfactory design is submitted showing compliance with other provisions of this code. Interior nonload-bearing partitions, ceilings and curtain walls of conventional light-frame construction are not subject to the limitations of this section. Alternatively, compliance with the following standard shall be permitted subject to the limitations therein and the limitations of this code: American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA) Wood Frame Construction Manual for One- and Two-Family Dwellings (WCFM).

2308.2 Limitations. Buildings are permitted to be constructed in accordance with the provisions of conventional light-frame construction, subject to the following limitations, and to further limitations of Sections 2308.11 and 2308.12.

Figure 2.

However, if the panelized walls are completely engineered or include portions that are engineered, then the engineered portions may require sealed drawings and/or calculations as required by the code authority having jurisdiction per IBC Section 2301.2 (see Figure 3).

at a glance

- ❑ In today's market, wall design is generally performed using code prescribed tables and provisions.
- ❑ When a building of conventional construction contains structural elements exceeding the prescriptive code, these elements shall be designed in accordance with accepted engineering practice.

2301.2 General design requirements. The design of structural elements or systems, constructed partially or wholly of wood or wood-based products, shall be based on one of the following methods.

2301.2.1 Allowable stress design. Design using allowable stress design methods shall resist the applicable load combinations of Chapter 16 in accordance with the provisions of Sections 2304, 2305 and 2306.

2301.2.2 Load and resistance factor design (LRFD). Design using load and resistance factor design (LRFD) methods shall resist the applicable load combinations of Chapter 16 in accordance with the provisions of Sections 2304, 2305 and 2307.

2301.2.3 Conventional light-frame wood construction. The design and construction of conventional light-frame wood construction shall be accordance with the provisions of Sections 2304 and 2308.

Exception: Buildings designed in accordance with the provisions of the AF&PA Wood Frame Construction Manual for One- and Two-Family Dwellings shall be deemed to meet the requirements of the provisions of Section 2308.

Figure 3.

In the case of structures built within the IBC provisions, the requirements for wall design are described at Section 2304.3 (see Figure 4).

2304.3 Wall framing. The framing of exterior and interior walls shall be in accordance with the provisions specified in Section 2308 unless a specific design is furnished.

Figure 4.

In the case of structures built within the provisions of the IRC, the design of engineered portions is covered at R301.2.3 (see Figure 5).

R301.1.3 Engineered design. When a building of otherwise conventional construction contains structural elements exceeding the limits of Section R301 or otherwise, not conforming to this code, these elements shall be designed in accordance with accepted engineering practice. The extent of such design need only demonstrate compliance of non-conventional elements with other applicable provisions and shall be compatible with the performance of the conventional framed system. Engineered design in accordance with the International Building Code is permitted for all buildings and structures, and parts thereof, included in the scope of this code.

Figure 5.

In today's market, wall design is generally performed through the use of code prescribed tables and provisions. The installation details are also provided by the code. It is certainly conceivable, at some point in the future, that wall construction will be designed in a manner similar to roof and floor trusses utilizing the engineered design provisions of the building code. This will help our industry progress into a more sophisticated design process for buildings that fully utilize structural components. SBC

For more information about how to get involved in the code process, contact WTCA staff at 608/274-4849 or codes@woodtruss.com.

Bcmc 2006

Bigger & Better in Texas!

by Doug Folker, BCMC 2006 Chair

New year...new theme... the best show yet!

Taking on the role of 2006 BCMC Committee Chair is both challenging and energizing. BCMC just celebrated a record-breaking 25th anniversary in Milwaukee, and it's hard to believe we are already planning our next show in Fort Worth, TX, this October 4-6, 2006. Each month until the show I will set forth in ***SBC Magazine*** the numerous reasons, in my opinion, to attend or exhibit at the upcoming show.

The 2006 show promises to be as good if not better than the excellent show we had in 2005. Statistics don't lie! There were 1,682 attendees and 980 exhibitors (individuals, not booths!) at BCMC 2005. Of the 155 exhibitor booths, 37 were brand new to the show—a clear record breaker! 90,600 square feet of exhibit space was filled with products targeting company owners, CEOs, presidents, managers and technicians looking for the latest in technology, automation and other component manufacturer essentials.

The 2006 show is headed to Texas—specifically Fort Worth. The Fort Worth Convention Center is located just 20 minutes from the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. Downtown Fort Worth has everything you want within walking distance of the convention center and the show hotels. Here you will find a variety of fine restaurants, nightclubs, art museums, theaters and cultural performances—many featuring genuine Texas hospitality.

According to the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau, their city is where the West began, and it all started in 1849! Over time, Fort Worth became the last major stop on the legendary Chisholm Trail, the dusty path where millions of cattle were driven north to market.

Nowadays, visitors to the west do not need to worry about driving cattle to the market. Today, Fort Worth is ranked as the 19th largest city in the United States and boasts a population of more than half a million in the city proper. Fort Worth is repeatedly ranked among the top places in the nation to work, live and do business.

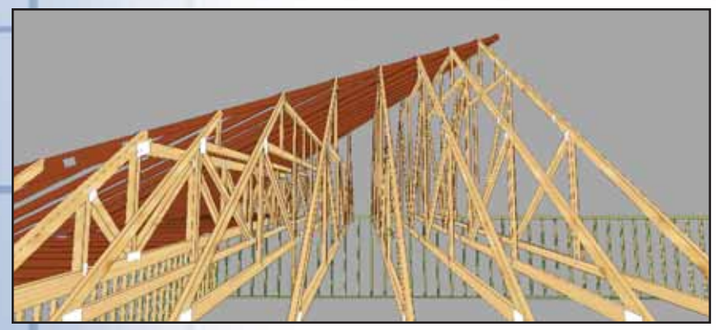
There is something that will appeal to everyone in Fort Worth. So come to BCMC on October 4-6, 2006 where we will be ***Bigger & Better in Texas!*** SBC

Information courtesy of the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.fortworth.com.

at a glance

- BCMC 2005 was another record breaking show.
- Doug Folker of Robbins Engineering is the 2006 BCMC Committee chair.
- The 2006 show will head to Fort Worth, TX on October 4 - 6.
- The show's theme will be *Bigger and Better in Texas*.

Our Genuine Innovation: Your Successful Future



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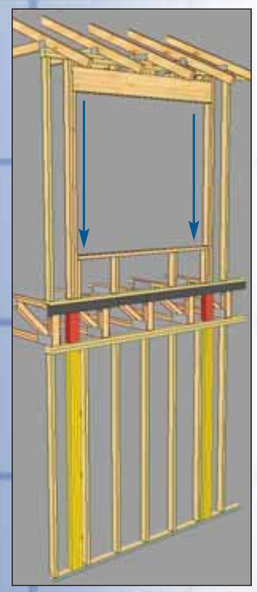
Truswal has **leapt ahead of all other software** providers in the areas of California Hip input and automated design. Truswal customers building California Hips have **all the pieces generated electronically** on the cut list including members and rafters. Cycle time improvement is immediate! **THAT is cool!**

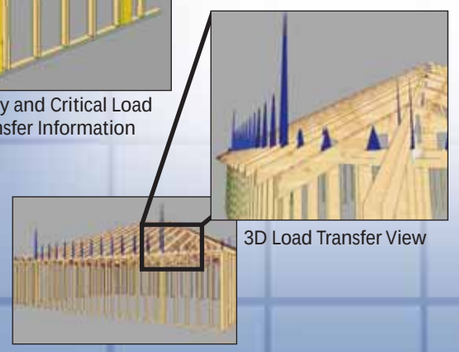
3D Parametric Modeling allows designers to check that all components are going to fit together properly in the field and **up-to-date building codes** in the software ensure your projects will be properly designed.



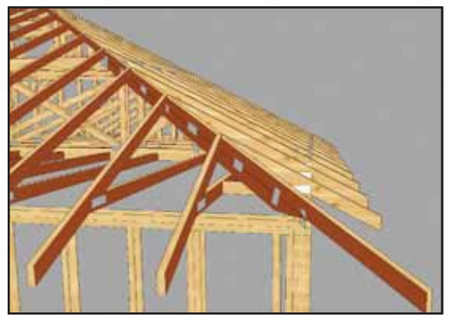
Gravity and Critical Load Transfer Information

Load Transfer

The load transfer capabilities in IntelliBuild™ reduce design staff errors by calculating **load transfers from truss to truss** as well as calculating **load transfers from the roof systems through to the foundation**. The 3D View allows a quick and automatic visual representation of the load distribution within the roof system and the forces acting on the roof as a system as opposed to individual trusses. Directional arrows make the magnitude of the forces easy to recognize and allow for an overall improvement in design.



3D Load Transfer View



Stacked Rafters

Stacked Rafters have been added to provide Truswal customers **greater options in design**. Now a built up **stacked chord rafter** may be used in place of more costly "wide face" lumber. A **reduction in lumber cost** means more competitive bids and improved profitability.

TrusNet

TrusNet is the latest Truswal effort in providing **real time feedback**. Truswal customers can track jobs as they move through production and **immediately recognize production bottlenecks** or opportunities. Production managers can track jobs from their command center rather than walking the floor when a customer calls. **Real Time, Real Value!**

COMING SOON!

Truswal customers are talking about the new look of TrusPlus! Our new Truss Design Interface (TDI) creates dependencies between dimensions and all truss members—changing one updates them all! Other new features like docking information windows and customizable toolbars let Truswal customers create a look they like and improves productivity.

More Great Features!

- **Enhanced CT load generator** provides correct auto loading of trusses in layout to improve truss design cycle time. Graphic load magnitude indicators provide an **instant double check** that loads have been accounted for in the design and transferred to the appropriate member.
- TM Pro's new **Report Writer** feature provides Truswal customers **complete flexibility in designing custom reports**. No need to request a special report, write it yourself easily with Report Writer! In addition, the **new Digital Schedule** in TM Pro finally provides a **graphic replacement to the standard manual scheduling boards** used by most component manufacturers. It can be customized to easily identify work in progress by salesman, customer or numerous other variables.
- Truswal's TrusPlus™ engineering software offers **Joint Detail Reports** and **Joint QC Details**, along with **Effective Tooth Reports**, all to improve truss quality control throughout fabrication. And, Truswal's software is currently the only software that has **WTCA's QC program fully functional**.

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Wtca Update

Study Reveals Increased Level of Automation among Truss & Wall Panel Manufacturers

An initial study indicates that the trend toward automation has already taken hold in the structural building components industry.

by WTCA Staff

In a recent assessment of the U.S. modular home industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory observed that automation and advanced technology were largely absent from modular home factories. Although taking place in a controlled factory environment, much of the construction process resembled that of traditional on-site stick built house construction.

Background

The Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with North Carolina State University, assessed home manufacturing technology, offering the following insights:

- The major process stations in a modular home factory that use wood based materials are floor framing, floor decking, wall framing, wall sheathing, wall set, roof framing, roof assembly, roof decking, and roof setting.
- The typical U.S. modular housing factory has very little advanced technology. Examples of base technologies found to be in use include manual pneumatic nail guns, manual cut-off saws, cranes, and roller track systems. Opportunities to implement advanced technology potentially abound.
- Factories that manufacture roof trusses or wall panels have generally implemented a higher level of technology. Many modular home manufacturers purchase roof trusses, but we did not find that same trend for wall panels.

Objectives & Approach

Following the assessment, the group plans to examine barriers that prevent modular manufacturers from incorporating advanced technologies by developing a series of surveys—one for wall panel equipment manufacturers and one for wall panel manufacturers. Automated wall panel systems will be used for benchmarking because they offer an appropriate fit into the modular home factory. They offer a range of capacity and technology level. It is expected that the modular home industry will likely consider such systems in the next three to five years as pressure increases toward more effective workforce utilization.

Wall panel equipment manufacturers and wall panel manufacturers will be asked in the surveys to describe the capabilities and application of equipment they supply. They group will be asked to identify purchasers or users of their equipment and those that use the equipment effectively. Wall panel manufacturers will be surveyed regarding their use of wall panel systems equipment. Tests such as time studies will be conducted with a sampling of wall panel manufacturers using automated or semi-automated equipment to better understand and confirm capabilities and limitations of manufacturing systems. Final reports will describe information from the surveys and studies, and attempt to classify wall panel equipment systems according to technology level. The study will conclude in December 2006.

Information reported on wall panel equipment assessments from this study will be of interest to the wall panel industry. Reports will be summarized, published in trade journals and presented at an annual Forest Products Society meeting. SBC

For more information about this study, contact Dr. Phil Mitchell (phil_mitchell@ncsu.edu), North Carolina State University Department of Wood and Paper Science.

at a glance

- ❑ The first phase of a new study conducted by U. S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory and North Carolina State University revealed that wall panel manufacturers employ a higher degree of manufacturing technology than do modular home manufacturers.
- ❑ Phase 2 of the study will include time studies of wall panel manufacturing facilities.
- ❑ Wall panel manufacturers and equipment suppliers will complete a survey about technology in the industry to reveal the barriers the modular homebuilding industry has in introducing advanced technologies into their operations.

SBC Readers Most Interested in Design & Engineering Topics

SBC readers have spoken. According to 50 component manufacturers that completed an online survey in 2005, design and engineering advancements ranked as most important out of a list of 75 different component industry topics. Here is a list of the other issues that rounded out the top ten:

1. Design and engineering advancements
2. Customer service
3. Design responsibilities
4. Quality control
5. Educational programs for builders or framers
6. Finding/training/retaining truss technicians
6. Profitability/margins
7. Education for architects/engineers
7. Building code issues
7. Lumber quality

Among issues of least interest were the producer price index, fall protection, insulation requirements and cement supply/price.

Results from this survey will be used to determine future editorial content. A special thanks to all who participated! SBC

New WTCA Members

Amigo Services
2077 Swan Place
Fairfield, CA 94533
707/688-7696
Mr. Joe G. Olivares

Becklin & Whitney Consulting Engineers
PO Box 471
Cambridge, MN 55008
612/598-4993
Mr. Douglas K. Whitney, PE

Call Engineering
7337 Northview
Boise, ID 83704
208/321-2656
Mr. Brian J. Garner, P.E.

Jennings Truss Manufacturing
342 Mtn Industrial Dr
Brevard, NC 28712
828/877-6262
Mr. Richard G. Jennings, IV
Sponsor: Mr. Michael McIntosh

Precision Wall Systems
40 Oliver Terrace
Shelton, CT 06484
203/944-0264
Mr. Stephen E. Chafetz
Sponsor: Mr. John F. Goodrich

Stafford Inspection & Consulting Services, LLC
14418 Roxane Dr
Orlando, FL 32832-6514
407/380-7914
Mr. Thomas Stafford
Sponsor: Mr. Robert J. Becht

Truss Technology
4742 Liberty Rd S #156
Salem, OR 97302
503/390-2700
Mr. Doug Enger

WTCA™

For more information about WTCA membership, contact Anna (608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com) or visit www.woodtruss.com. Listing as of December 14, 2005.

Open Quarterly Meeting Highlights: October 15, 2005 • Milwaukee, WI

The October Open Quarterly Meeting in Milwaukee, WI, kicked off the new year for the 2006 WTCA Board of Directors.

by WTCA Staff

On October 15, 2005, Don Groom convened his first Open Quarterly Meeting (OQM) as WTCA President. After the minutes from the August OQM were unanimously approved, Groom introduced 2006 President Elect/Treasurer Barry Dixon and Secretary Bob Becht. He introduced new or returning At Large Representatives, Chapter Representatives and Associate Member Representatives, and thanked representatives leaving the Board. He alos presented Rip Rogers and Clyde Bartlett with plagues recognizing their service.

Groom then introduced the 2006 Committee Chairs: Bob Becht (Membership), Ken Cloyd (Marketing), Bob Dayhoff (Engineering & Technology), Joe Hikel (Quality Control), Doug Folker (BCMC), Allen Erickson (Legislative), Ben Hershey (Management) and Kendall Hoyd (Past Presidents and Nominating). He also reviewed the 2006 Board meeting schedule. The next meeting will be held in San Antonio, TX, on March 1-3. All component manufacturers and industry suppliers are of course welcome to attend.

Incoming 2006 President Don Groom presented Kendall Hoyd will a gift on behalf of WTCA for his contribution to the association as president in 2005.

2006 Key Projects & Executive Committe Report

Groom announced that committee planning teleconference meetings will be held in November and December to define and update Committee priorities, tasks and project plans for 2006.

The Board then eviewed and briefly discussed the Executive Committee's proposed policy with regard to WTCA Staff Attendance at Local/Regional/State Code/Fire Service Meetings. *The Board unanimously passed a motion to approve the policy with regard to WTCA Staff Attendance at Local/Regional/State Code/Fire Service Meetings.*

Groom also reported that WTCA is in the process of developing a relationship with the National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association. WTCA is excited about the possibility of working together on areas of common interest and avoiding the duplication of effort between our organizations. Examples of such areas include safety and legislative issues.

The Board reviewed the updated Non-operating Funds Investment Policy, which was originally approved in October of 2004. The policy was updated to deal with potential cases of specific investments that are downgraded after purchase by WTCA. The new language states that if an owned investment is downgraded below a financial rating of BBB or equivalent, it should be liquidated and replaced with an investment that ensures the portfolio meets the criteria of the investment policy. *The Board unanimously approved the updated language in the Non-operating Funds Investment Policy.*

WTCA staff provided a brief update on the testing facility and the upcoming update of BCSI.

Member Policy/Resolution Action Item

Staff reported on member feedback that the current truss design drawings are difficult for some people in the field to read. The key issue to address is that our industry needs to define the direction with respect to the truss design drawing (TDD) process, versus having TDD format regulated by others. The Truss Plate Institute (TPI) members in attendance agreed with the concepts presented.

The Board unanimously passed a motion that stated: The WTCA Board recommends to the TPI Board that it establish a TDD task group whose goal is to create a consistent approach for the display of engineering information on all TDDs, so that it is easier for every user to find the information they need on all industry TDDs.

Treasurer's Report

Barry Dixon reported on the year-to-date financials and noted that the financials are improved over the year-to-date budget. He further noted that the 2006 time and expense budget will be created after the committee planning teleconferences are held and priorities are determined in December. The budget will be approved at March 2006 meeting. Component manufacturer members with an interest in the financial health of WTCA were encouraged to attend an Executive Committee teleconference or contact WTCA staff to receive financial information.

Dixon also presented year-to-date figures from TPI/WTCA revenue sharing. The numbers show that our cooperative efforts to combine documents and tags have paid off for both organizations. *The Board unanimously passed a motion to approve the treasurer's report.*

BCMC Report

Groom reported that BCMC 2005 was a huge success. He presented preliminary attendance statistics and announced record-setting exhibitors and exhibit space. Exhibitors experienced the smoothest move-in in the history of the show.

BCMC 2006 will be held in Fort Worth on October 4-6. The theme is *Bigger & Better in Texas* and a planning site visit meeting was held on December 7, 2005.

SBC Magazine Update

Staff thanked advertisers for their continued support of the industry and urged the Board to send in any quotes that could be used in the magazine. Groom encouraged anyone with an article idea to contact staff.

Key Industry Supplier Update: Truss Plates & Steel

Charlie Hoover announced that two WTCA resolutions pertaining to ANSI/TPI 1 Section 8.9 were amended and approved by the TPI Board at their August 25, 2005 meeting:

ANSI/TPI 1 Section 8.9 Resolution 1 as submitted by WTCA:
The TPI Board approved the following amended statement pertaining to WTCA's Resolution 1 request: "The TPI Board will evaluate and review ANSI/TPI Section 8.9.2 based on test results."

ANSI/TPI 1 Section 8.9 Resolution 2 as submitted by WTCA:
The TPI Board approved the following amended statement pertaining to WTCA's Resolution 2 request:

"The TPI Board directs TPI TAC to complete round robin testing and test analysis by January 31, 2006 to expedite a solution to ANSI/TPI 1 Section 8.9.2.

(1) The testing protocol will be developed by TPI TAC with input from WTCA E&T.
(2) Testing protocol to be developed by Sept 30, 2005."

Hoover reported that TPI TAC's recommendation to open ANSI/TPI 1-2002 standard for public review and comment was approved by the TPI Board. A project committee will be formed to address proposed changes to the standard. He encouraged WTCA members to participate in this committee if they are interested.

Continued on page 30

at a glance

- The October OQM included the introduction of new representatives to the board and the 2006 committee chairs. Board members who had fulfilled their terms were also recognized.
- Passed motions included a policy with regard to WTCA staff attendance at Code/Fire Service meetings and updated language in the Non-operating Funds Investment Policy.
- The next OQM is schedule for March 1-3 in San Antonio, TX.

OQM Highlights

Continued from page 29

The TPI Board approved a TAC recommendation to reaffirm the temporary and permanent bracing committee (BSR/TPI 3 committee). As the project moves forward, WTCA's continued involvement is anticipated.

Key Industry Supplier Update: Connector Industry/Steel

Steve Hanek reported on recent industry testing. He noted that values on common misinstallations are now being supplied to truss manufacturers, providing information for evaluating the connection. Information not specifically shown in current literature, including gap testing, reduced heel heights and alternate use of fasteners, have now been provided.

Key Industry Supplier Update: Lumber

Joe Kusar reported that the damage to the Gulf's timber supply due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita was significant, although much of the blow-down has been recovered and is being preserved in "wet yards." According to Kusar, Mississippi sustained the most timber damage.

At the close of their respective terms, 2006 President Don Groom presented Rip Rogers (above) and Clyde Bartlett (below) with plaques for their service to WTCA.

New Business

Dave Motter asked about the status of the association name change. This will be addressed prior to the next Board meeting in March of 2006. (For more information on this issue, see the article on page 32, "Quarter-Life Opportunities: What Will WTCA Mean in the Future?")

There was a discussion about providing more time for chapter updates. In the future, the board will focus on this area to ensure there is good participation and information provided regarding regional updates and emerging issues. SBC

The next WTCA Open Quarterly Meeting will be held March 1-3 in San Antonio, TX, and will include full committee meetings. For more information, contact WTCA staff at 608/274-4849 or wtca@woodtruss.com, or visit www.woodtruss.com.

Quarter-Life Opportunities:

What Will WTCA Mean in the Future?

WTCA has come a long way in 25 years, but is "Wood Truss Council of America" the right name for the future?

by WTCA Staff

Those of you who attended a chapter meeting in 2005 know that WTCA is contemplating a significant change. Market demands in the past several years have steadily changed the WTCA component manufacturer membership's business landscape. Since its formation in 1983, the Wood Truss Council of America's fledgling membership of truss manufacturers (247 in 1992) has evolved into a vast body of component manufacturers—1,179 locations to be exact. A quarter century later, some of you still remain roof truss manufacturers. Many of you have added wall panels and floor trusses to your repertoire. And an increasing number of you have declared yourselves a "one-stop shop," supplying a variety of structural component design services, all the building materials and even the installation labor that accompany the move toward a whole house value proposition. Suddenly, the WTCA membership has reached an unparalleled level of diversity that is causing many within the organization to question whether the current name truly fits the many business models of the membership and the demands for increasingly broad association services to support their needs.

Background & Member Survey

This past spring, the WTCA Executive Committee commissioned a survey to investigate whether the "Wood Truss Council of America" is the right name for the organization as we look ahead 25 years. The survey was distributed at chapter meetings and posted on WTCA's web site. With 305 members participating in the survey, the response represents a very broad base of opinions. Responses to the following questions clearly revealed the direction in which the majority of the membership would like to move:

- Do you believe that changing the name of the Wood Truss Council of America to a name that more broadly represents the industry's highly varied business interests is an intelligent strategy?
  – *Only 25.4 percent replied "no."*

- As we look toward the future, what name will best represent our industry's interests over the next 25 years? Select your answer and please explain below.
  – *Only 26.8 percent advocated staying with Wood Truss Council of America. (There was no overwhelming choice of what the new name for WTCA should actually be.)*

There is no doubt that the majority of our members believe it is in the best interest of WTCA to address our future proactively. The survey indicated that the vast majority supports a name change to accurately reflect our members' changing business models. It has also been made clear that the chosen course of action needs to leverage the brand equity that WTCA has built over the last 25 years and embrace the highly varied futures of individual component manufacturer businesses.

With that said, the WTCA Past Presidents and Board of Directors charged the Executive Committee with defining an approach to engage the entire membership. In order to make this process easier to arrive at a conclusion, the Executive Committee discussed this at length and narrowed the list to two options:

at a glance

- ❑ As component manufacturers' scope of work changes to meet varying customer demands, should the association's name also evolve to reflect that change?
- ❑ Some component manufacturers believe that in order to represent the varying interests of the membership, the name of the association should change accordingly.
- ❑ Other component manufacturers have voiced concern that changing the association's name will destroy the branding progress that has been made over the last 25 years and could shift the organization's focus away from truss manufacturers who originally formed WTCA.
- ❑ The WTCA Board of Directors has narrowed down the list of choices to two options: the Wood Truss Council of America (no change) or WTCA: Representing the Structural Building Component Industry.

1. Continue with the current logo and name:
   Wood Truss Council of America
2. Continue with the current logo, and over a carefully planned transition, discontinue using the words "Wood Truss Council of America" and add a new tagline:
   Representing the Structural Building Component Industry

Retaining brand equity while considering the strategy to serve our industry's best interests was of critical importance in choosing these options. The survey outlining these two choices is posted on WTCA's web site. Please visit www.woodtruss.com today to cast your vote.

Two Perspectives from within WTCA

Perspective 1: "I'm Passionate about Refocusing WTCA" by Don Groom, 2006 WTCA President

I have been in this industry for over 20 years, most of which I've spent working closely with wood trusses. So I am fully aware of the passion that all of us share when it comes to the wood truss. I am also aware of and extremely grateful for the "pioneers" who worked very hard to establish the Wood Truss Council of America (and successfully brand its name) in the early 1980s and for all the work the Truss Plate Institute has done since the truss plate was invented in the 1950s. When the first pioneers got together to establish WTCA, change was in the air. Stick-framing was the norm and, in most cases, the only component being used in residential and commercial construction was the wood truss. WTCA was formed by people who had a vision for the future. The reason I have such a passion to change our association's name is because I believe that this is the spirit in which this organization was founded.

As years progressed, there have been many other advancements in component construction: the I-joist, wall panels and light gauge steel just to name a few. While the name "WTCA" may not reflect this fact, most of our members have embraced many forms of component construction beyond wood trusses. I attribute a great part of the success experienced by Stark Truss to the vision of our company's founder, Abner Yoder, who challenged everyone in our company to look beyond roof trusses to products that would complement our truss packages and provide increased value and service to our customers. Other companies have done the same to advance their organizations. In the future all of us most certainly will embrace new products and most will probably also

> "Change is inevitable in everything. As an association, if we are not willing to acknowledge the changing market and embrace a change of our own, we face the prospect of becoming obsolete."

consider new raw materials that are used to build components. Who knows what products will be developed over the next 25 years that can and will be used in component construction?

I have no doubt that we will witness greater change in the future than what I have seen in the past 20 years. Our organization must carry on the spirit of our pioneers and be the association that represents all structural components both now and into the future. Our name must also reflect this spirit and representation!

Our customers and the market continue to demand our evolution based on their desire to concentrate on the work they do best and profit from the most: developing land and selling the buildings. As a result, they will demand that we offer business solutions that provide:

- Lower in-place cost
- Cost stability
- Reduced construction cycle time
- Increased labor efficiency

Continued on page 34

Quarter-Life Opportunities...

Continued from page 33

- Increased labor availability or replacement
- Increased durability and quality (i.e., no call-backs)

There are many ways we can respond to the demands of our customers. One way would be to simply manufacture trusses and sell only to those customers and within those markets that want trusses. Another way would be to meet the demands of the customer and become a full service framing material supplier and find the means to provide whatever the customer wants. Yet another way would be to not only supply all the necessary materials, but to offer the products turn-key with labor and perhaps even with a full package of design services that enables the builder to construct more efficiently and inexpensively. In these terms, it seems certain to me that we will not be merely selling trusses, but supplying the structural building component solution to give our customer the best economic value. What better way to retain long-term customers!

Change is inevitable in everything. As an association, if we are not willing to acknowledge the changing market and embrace a change of our own, we face the prospect of becoming obsolete. Additionally, WTCA's past work can be easily leveraged to support all the product lines into which our business may grow. There is much to be said for not having to pay membership dues to multiple organizations for the same services our association already provides.

I have a passion for embracing all building components. This means supporting all the product lines of our current members and welcoming new manufacturers that produce all types of building components into our organization. To me this is a win-win for current members and those who may be interested in joining WTCA but think all we do is support wood trusses. They can bring a considerable amount of knowledge and value to our organization. In turn, we have the basic tools that can be cost effectively modified to help their businesses flourish.

It is for these reasons that I believe so strongly in making the change to "WTCA Representing the Structural Building Components Industry." In my opinion, it is the best of all worlds. It retains our brand and more accurately reflects the work of our membership. It builds on our collective strengths. It will also make our individual businesses stronger in the long-term. I believe embracing this change will help our association and industry continue to focus properly on the aggressive advancement of our being the future of framing for all building construction.

Perspective 2: "Why WTCA Should Remain the Wood Truss Council of America" by Dan Holland, 2004 WTCA President

As a WTCA Past President, I have been tasked with providing a different perspective than that of Don Groom. The following contains the key concepts that I have heard in the discussions that I have had about changing WTCA's name. These points of view represent the WTCA membership that does not support evolving the association into more than just the Wood Truss Council of America.

1. **Tradition and Name Recognition:** Our name has strong emotional ties among those who oppose a name change. As the Wood Truss Council of America, WTCA has a history and it is well understood and recognized by many in the industry. This is the main reason some manufacturers do not think the name should be changed. Another issue is that the association has worked hard for the past 10 to 15 years to achieve this name recognition in the building

Continued on page 36

A Perspective from Outside the Industry

The Past Presidents requested that the Executive Committee and staff research a perspective from outside our industry to shed light on the concept of the evolution of our association and the membership services it provides. At the heart of this evolution lies a critical task: ensuring that the association's name appropriately reflects our past growth and the growth our industry will experience over the next 25 years.

We have chosen the work of Philip Kotler, the Father of Modern Marketing, to present the marketing perspectives of an industry, business or organization seeing growth and evolution. Kotler made his mark at Northwestern University, where he is the S. C. Johnson and Son Distinguished Professor of International Marketing at the J. L. Kellogg School of Management. The author of more than 25 books, Kotler's *Marketing Management* is considered the most widely used text in MBA programs worldwide.

Here are Kotler's thoughts on a few concepts that businesspeople need to consider in order to meet the unprecedented challenges of the future. These challenges are precisely what WTCA faces as we contemplate evolving our name.

Concept 1: Defining Marketing Management

According to Kotler, "Marketing is the business function that identifies unfulfilled needs and wants, defines and measures their magnitude and potential profitability, determines which target markets the organization can best serve, decides on appropriate products, services, and programs to serve these chosen markets, and calls upon everyone in the organization to think and serve the customer." This requires looking beyond today's transaction toward building mutually profitable long-term customer relationships, through fully understanding the changes taking place in the market and being able to accurately predict future needs.

Concept 2: Embracing Change

Kotler also notes that in the coming decade, marketing will change considerably. He asserts that businesspeople will continuously need to revisit basic marketing concepts to even survive in what he views will be a hypercompetitive and rapidly changing marketplace. Survival will demand self-cannibalization, Kotler says. Being able to change faster than the competition will be a definite competitive advantage. Kotler believes that companies will need to develop new visions and mission statements that adopt the concept that the company will thrive on change and see it as a "standard operating procedure" rather than as a disruption of the norm.

Jack Welch of General Electric put it this way: "Change or die. When the rate of change inside the company is exceeded by the rate of change outside the company, the end is near."

Concept 3: Categorizing Your Organization

Kotler notes that there are four types of organizations that have been observed and that these categorizations explain why the average enterprise disappears within 20 years. They are:

(1) those that make things happen.
(2) those that respond after things have happened.
(3) those that watch things happen but fail to respond.
(4) those that fail to notice anything happening at all.

Although many have postulated on what makes a company great, Kotler offers the simple thesis that "companies last as long as they continue to provide superior customer value." These kinds of customer-oriented companies make steady gains in mind share and heart share, leading to higher market share, which, in turn, leads to higher profit share.

Concept 4: Fostering Creativity & Innovation

Where companies once won their marketing battles through superior efficiency or quality, today they must win through superior creativity and innovation. According to Kotler, "This requires stimulating creativity through hiring great people who are naturally creative and giving them free rein; stimulating creativity through [a variety of analytical] techniques; for help in finding breakthrough ideas." Smart companies also encourage their employees, suppliers, distributors and dealers to offer suggestions that save money or yield new products, features and services.

If an enterprise does not innovate, it will die. And, if it innovates unsuccessfully, it may still die. Kotler states that, "Innovation is a safer bet then standing still." It cannot be limited to new products or services, but must include new businesses and business processes as well. The key is to transform innovation and imagination into a capability more effectively than the competition.

Conclusion

It is clear that to have continued success all organizations need to have a culture that embraces change and that the organizational evolution needs to match up well with predicting future market needs and serving those needs fully. This will require creativity, innovation and diverse points of view in order to generate the best possible ideas. When an organization has strong talent, does a good job of listening to the market and has great ideas, success is then primarily found in the ability to rapidly and accurately implement those ideas.

The final question is: How is your organization doing? SBC

"Marketing is not the art of finding clever ways to dispose of what you make. Marketing is the art of creating genuine customer value. It is the art of helping your customers become better off. The marketer's watchwords are quality, service and value."—Philip Kotler

Continued from page 34

industry, and now that it is well branded, there is a risk of confusing the market and losing our momentum.

2. **Credibility:** The name should be unchanged because everyone in the component industry knows WTCA already represents all areas of building component construction and does a good job of supporting their interests to the fullest extent possible. Additionally, the name by itself does not make or break an organization; it is the way the organization is run that truly matters. WTCA is known as a well-run organization that gets the job done.
3. **Service to the Majority:** There is also concern that changing the name would shift the focus of the association from the products that the majority of fabricators make, to the expanding business models of a minority of larger fabricators. Some manufacturers have pointed out that a focus on highly varied interests is not what got the WTCA ball rolling in the first place; the specialized self-interests of concerned wood truss manufacturers did. Therefore a focus on wood trusses needs to remain central to the name and mission of the organization as long as it is the primary product of the majority of the membership.
4. **Cost:** Finally, there is concern about the cost associated with the evolution process. First, there is the cost of re-branding the association (letterhead, signage, market confusion, etc.). Second, there is concern that broadening the scope of the organization will dilute the services provided by dividing the monetary pie into smaller pieces to undertake projects for the wider range of interests represented.

Key issues for those who want to maintain the name "Wood Truss Council of America" include tradition and name recognition, credibility, service to the majority, and cost. To weigh in on this important issue, be sure to visit www.woodtruss.com.

These concerns about changing the name illustrate the incredible brand equity that the "Wood Truss Council of America" has built over the last 22 years and are important to consider as we move forward in this discussion. Regardless of the outcome of this particular issue, however, the vital keys to achieving future success in our organization will be honest dialogue, sound decision making, and a spirit of unity in every issue we tackle. SBC

Customer Service from the Inside Out

by Molly E. Butz

For Blenker, a pocket full of cleverness, an eye for quality and a mission to serve serves up the perfect recipe.

As you pull into their parking lot in rural Amherst, WI, the Blenker Building Systems empire sprawls out before you. The impressive brick installment up front looks more like a swanky seafood and steak house than a construction showroom and corporate office. And the manufacturing facility in the rear, well, it's just plain huge. But, Blenker wasn't always the 90,000 square foot, one-stop construction shopping spectacle it is today. Back in 1974, Blenker was your basic general contracting and remodeling business and decisions were made at the kitchen table. However, no matter what else changes, the most important things have remained the same throughout the last 30 years: ingenuity, quality and good old-fashioned customer service.

at a glance

- Blenker's business is built on ingenuity, quality and customer service.
- A unique internal cross-training approach fosters self-respect and teamwork.
- Offering a one-stop shop means providing a complete service for their builder customers.

The ingenuity began in the mid-90s when Peter Blenker decided to begin manufacturing wall panels for the homes he was contracted to build. Pre-manufacturing wall panels utilizing an indoor crew gave Peter the control he needed to be most effective as a contractor. Wall panels allowed for much greater control of costs, work environment, scheduling and possibly most importantly, quality. Pre-manufacturing also gave him the opportunity to provide better customer service, which blossomed from the inside out. Yes, it meant providing reasonably priced, higher quality products to the buyer, but it also meant serving his framing crew more readily with on-time output that was straightforward and speedy to install. (Not to mention using great lumber and always plumb!)

As the wall panel manufacturing business grew, Jason Blenker, Peter's son and

"Communication is the key, and we consistently set up face-to-face meetings in our office, and are out on the jobsite constantly. It's an essential part of our customer service."

current president of Blenker Building Systems, got involved in the family business and continued channeling the values that the family implemented from the start. And although the Blenker business has expanded by leaps and bounds, the culture and atmosphere are grounded in their original beginnings in wall panel manufacturing.

Today, Jason manages the new 85,000 square foot manufacturing facility and the additional 6,500 square feet of office and showroom space at Blenker Building Systems. He continues to stress the importance of serving his customers from the inside-out and is proud of the wall panels they produce.

Subtle improvements have been made over the years to ensure their products' quality. For starters, Blenker switched to a minimum of 1650 MSR lumber to minimize problems with their cutting and marking equipment. This automatically makes it easier for his crews to assemble the wall panels. According to their customers, this is a winning combination. "Because of Blenker's new automatic cutting systems they use a very high grade of stud, and the computer compensation of the saw cuts even slightly twisted lumber true. The resulting panels are of a noticeably higher quality for professionals that work with them in the field," said Scott Irwin, of I3SM, LLC in Peru, IL.

Justin M. Ballard, Senior Project Manager for Advanced Building Corporation agrees. "Blenker gives us the edge. We can competitively price while continuing to provide high quality wall panels in our finished projects. Blenker's panels are more true than any other builder I've worked with and we end up saving money down the line during drywall, trim and cabinet installation because the walls are straight." There you have it, serving internally and externally at the same time.

Blenker also worked a bit of automated magic when they installed "lumber trains" in their new facility. "I bought a fleet of used electric forklifts for a good price from eBay," Jason explained. (Forklifts? eBay? Who knew?) "And we modified them to work with our lumber carts and then added a remote control unit to each one. The electric forklifts make

Continued on page 40

These "lumber trains" are an example of Blenker ingenuity that has made their workflow and materials handling easier and more efficient.

Blenker's heritage as builders gives them a "framers point of view" as they grow their business.

Walls are loaded on the delivery truck so framers can work in sequence, eliminating the need for double handling.

Customer Service from the Inside Out

Continued from page 39

it easy, everything is enclosed, and the remote controls work with a wireless system, so it only takes one person to run the saw and the train," he said.

Another reason Blenker has been so successful is because of its heritage as builders. "A lot of truss companies are manufacturing wall panels. We feel as though our 'framers point of view' gives us an advantage. We can serve our customers better because we understand what they want; we've done it ourselves. Wall panels are a very unique business, with their own quality, material handling and jobsite delivery issues."

"We load all of our walls in a sequence so the framers can work right down the line. There's no double handling and they can build the entire house as it's delivered right off of the trailer," Jason described. "We take great care in making sure nothing gets broken during loading or shipping and then we crane them off in groups rather than using the more common roll-off trailers."

Blenker's Top Five:

- Inter-departmental Cross-Training
- Meaningful Customer Care
- Creative Material Handling Solutions
- Employee Collaboration
- Product Line Expansion

It comes as no surprise that their customers notice the difference. Mark Robinson of Robinson Homes appreciates the quality and attention to detail he sees in Blenker's work. "I've used other companies in the past and what I like about Blenker is that their product comes out square and true," Mark said. "And they also take great care in packaging and delivering their material. That's really what sets them apart in the industry."

Blenker's approach to knowledge and training is also unique, because every employee is cross-trained for various job positions. "Even if the person we hire has experience, they start out in the shop building wall panels," Jason said. This allows Jason to evaluate each new staff member's skill set and teach new skills where necessary. It also allows for a three- to four-month period to learn the tools and systems at Blenker. "I like each department to have knowledge of what the others are doing. So after three or four months we try to rotate them out into the field," Jason added.

That's right, in addition to manufacturing wall panels, Blenker has continued to employ three framing crews that go

Continued on page 42

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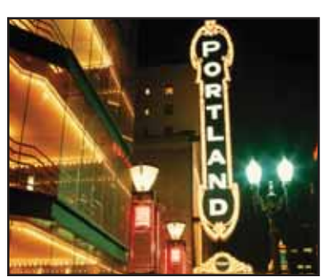

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“We’ve instilled a culture where people can bring their ideas to the table and know that they will be heard.”

Customer Service from the Inside Out

Continued from page 40

out to the jobsite and install them once they have been produced. Jason explained that starting an employee on wall panels and then cross-training helps each individual understand why they build the panels in a certain way and why it’s important to do everything right from assembly and loading to delivery.

Blenker’s cross-training program gives employees a clearer picture of the whole business and feeds the company’s culture of customer service.

In addition, cross-training adds to the atmosphere of teamwork and internal service that runs rampant at Blenker. “There’s just more ownership and they have a deeper respect for themselves and the demands that are placed on others,” Jason told ***SBC*** staff. And if their products are a true reflection of the company culture, then it is obvious that customer service at Blenker starts on the inside. “We’ve always valued all of our employees,” Jason said. “We’ve instilled a culture where people can bring their ideas to the table and know that they will be heard. From the guy sweeping the floor to the guy managing the department, every idea is worth listening to. And we’re always willing to make changes to make their jobs more efficient. We’ve gone so far as to custom build some equipment based on suggestions from our employees.”

A high grade of machine-rated lumber and a new automatic cutting system makes a winning combination for producing quality components at Blenker.

Wall panel production and framing have continued to be a big part of Blenker’s business. But a growing market has resulted in changing customer demands, which in turn has necessitated their latest expansion. Soon after their wall panel business took off, Blenker added a floor panel manufacturing line. The new facility has allowed for expanded wall and floor panel production and the addition of a roof truss line.

“We realized we were purchasing a lot of roof trusses from outside vendors,” Jason said. “Producing our own trusses gave us the same control we had over wall panels, including cost, work environment, scheduling and quality. Plus, it was another opportunity to increase customer service, because now we could offer components for the whole house.”

“I’d estimate that 95 percent of our residential packages include all of the structural elements,” Jason continued. “We can offer our customers components that have been engineered for the entire structure. We can transfer loads through the roof down to the floor and know we’re providing a better quality product because it’s a more convenient product.”

A vertical truss stacker aids in finished product handling on Blenker’s new roof truss line.

Great care is taken in the packaging and delivery area so that nothing is damaged before the customer receives it.

The expansion is proving to be a success. “Robinson Homes does things a little bit different. We’re a true general contractor,” Mark explained. “Everything we do is subcontracted out. Blenker can supply all of the materials, labor and installation. They’re a perfect fit for us. I am very pleased with them. And now that they have expanded in so many directions, I’m using them exclusively.”

Jason has been personally happy with the expansion as well. “I grew up in this business, working at lumber yards in high school and college, so I was always involved in the ‘supplying’ business. I grew to understand that it’s important for a good business to be efficient and customer-friendly. As I got more involved in our family business, expanding our product line just made sense as our customers’ needs became more diverse.”

“Now we can offer everything the builder is expecting,” Jason continued. “Communication is the key, and we consistently set up face-to-face meetings in our office, and are out on the jobsite constantly. It’s an essential part of our customer service. Our builders know that we expect to meet with them. They get what they want and we don’t have to spend time on call-backs. Basically, there’s just no room for mixed signals.” Blenker’s builder customers concur. “We are very enthused about Blenker,” Justin told ***SBC*** staff. “We spend a lot of time face-to-face with Jason and many of his staff. We meet in their office and we work with them on the jobsite. It’s a little more old-fashioned and their customer

Continued on page 44

"Wall panels are a very unique business, with their own quality, material handling and jobsite delivery issues."

Resources for Your Wall Panel Business

If you're currently manufacturing and selling wall panels, or are looking to expand into the market, WTCA has resources you may find valuable:

What We Learned By Framing the American Dream®
This publication addresses the benefits of framing with roof trusses, floor trusses and wall panels versus traditional stick-framing methods. Specifically, it highlights the advantages of wall panels, which include:

- Walls are ensured to be square.
- Proper nailing patterns are used.
- Wall lumber is optimized.
- Sheathing can be pre-applied in the factory.
- Installation times are drastically reduced.

Truss Technology in Building (TTB): *Considerations for Contractors Building with Wall Panels*
This publication is aimed toward building contractors, covering several benefits of building with wall panels. In addition, this TTB includes a checklist for contractors to use in providing necessary information to their wall panel manufacturer. It also has a recommended procedure for wall panel installation.

New for 2006
WTCA is currently developing a new comprehensive, bilingual TTB entitled, ***Proper Handling and Installation of Wall Panels,*** which will cover manual lifting of wall panels, proper wall panel installation and bracing procedures, as well as recommendations on creating pre-installation plans and worksite safety zones to minimize wall panel damage and risk to workers on the jobsite.

If you have any additional ideas for wall panel manufacturing documents or other aids for this emerging industry segment, please contact WTCA staff at wtca@woodtruss.com. SBC

Customer Service from the Inside Out

Continued from page 43

service is remarkable. They're very tuned-in to getting problems solved and their team is extremely knowledgeable. They always do exactly what they say they'll do."

From Minnesota to Michigan, and a sharp eye on Iowa, Blenker's customer base is growing, and Jason will be the first to tell you why. "They're all number one to me, whether they buy two houses or 20. Each one is just as important as the next." And although the single-family residential market in middle Wisconsin is slowing just a bit, Blenker is pleased to be diverse enough to keep up with the changes, gaining new multi-family and commercial customers regularly.

"We're not a commodity business because we're providing much more than just handing them a price," Jason explained. "Our goal is to provide a complete service. We spend quality time with each of our customers. Now that we're providing structural components, windows, doors, siding and more, we're creating a one-stop shopping experience so that the customer knows that all the parts and pieces that go into a structure are going to fit."

Advanced Building Corporation has found that working with Blenker simplifies their construction process. "Blenker can give us the quantity and sizing we need for larger jobs, and they are really a one-stop shopping center," Justin said. "We can get everything we need from Blenker, from panels and trusses to windows to cabinets. I never have to make more than one phone call to get materials or have a problem solved. They've really helped our turnkey situation as a management company; we manage them and they manage the project."

"I think this area of our business is my passion," Jason concluded. "These days, a person's time is too valuable to be driving all over town picking up all the parts and pieces. That's why we offer a one-stop shop. Blenker makes it easy to be efficient."

And at only 29, Jason is a young president who's come into his own. But how does he feel about all of his responsibilities? "President? To me it's just a title. We make decisions together, as a company. That way we know we're making the right decision for the business, the employees and most importantly, the customer." SBC

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Commitment to Efficiency Propels Grassroots Innovation at Clearspan Components

by Libby Maurer & Melinda Caldwell

One component manufacturing company sets itself apart through a commitment to developing the best efficiency solutions from within.

For most component manufacturers, efficiency comes in all shapes and sizes—sometimes with a hefty price tag. But Clearspan Components, one of the oldest wall panel manufacturers in the country, has redefined efficiency by creating a brand of its own. Nestled in modest Meridian, MS, from the outside Clearspan appears to be a traditional component manufacturing facility. Step inside, however, and you'll quickly find that this operation is anything but typical.

Company president Dan Holland is proud of the Clearspan team and the uniquely innovative approach to operating a component manufacturing business that has developed over time. Primarily servicing the multi-family building construction market, Clearspan has not deviated much from its roots. Holland's father-in-law started the company in 1962 as a counterpart for an already successful homebuilding company that he owned with his brother. "They bought the property Clearspan now sits on intending to build a subdivision," Holland explained. "Instead of completing the homebuilding goal, the brothers embarked on building a component company instead."

Clearspan initially began as a roof truss plant and started building wall panels shortly thereafter. Holland's father-in-law sold his share of the business in 1972 and bought it back 15 years later. It was around that time, in 1987, that Holland himself became involved in the family business.

Manufacturing Magic

Grassroots innovation is the best way to describe the philosophy of technology and efficiency at Clearspan. Quite literally, most of their ultra-efficient equipment, processes and material handling solutions are ideas that originated from within the company. Not only have the ideas for production improvements been conceived at Clearspan; the design and engineering behind these new machines originated from the talent within company as well.

Holland and his management team believe it only makes sense for the Clearspan staff to design material flow improvements that can be built specifically to accommodate the facility's available space, production capacity and the constraints of a largely unskilled workforce. "Because we intimately know our own facility, we can be assured that we will gain a distinct competitive advantage by incorporating custom-built solutions to remedy our own unique set of challenges," he said.

It's all about teamwork when it comes to carrying out Clearspan's unique philosophy of grassroots innovation. In addition to a visionary management team, committed sales force and loyal production crew, the company employs a trio of gifted programmers and a talented on-site machinist to make the custom equipment designs come to life, incorporate new pieces into the shop and fine-tune them once installed.

When Hurricane Katrina and all her wrath rolled through the Gulf in late August, loss of power only hampered Clearspan's operations for a week. Holland reported the only damage sustained was to a lumber shed in the yard. It's no surprise that the other shed, designed with Clearspan's own customized CAD software and built with Clearspan hands, is still standing like a rock. One of Clearspan's grassroots innovations, the customized CAD program, makes it very easy for customers to use 3-D truss layouts instead of the more traditional layouts.

A Way with Walls

Wall panels comprise 50 percent of Clearspan's total annual sales, and their wall panel shop reflects their commitment to grassroots innovation. From tables, to an innovative wall panel flipping machine, to a custom-built header form/mold, there's a Clearspan-branded efficiency enhancer around every corner. The company's newest innovation, a wall panel laser machine, marks wall dimension details. This laser is driven by a custom wall panel program that was written by Clearspan's programmers. The real boon of the program is that it has made the task of designing walls much easier and more efficient by dividing the task between two technicians. According to Holland, one technician does the drafting tasks associated with the location of walls, dimensions and openings. Then, another technician comes back to do the design of each wall and the stacking sequence of the panels for the project.

"Determining the most efficient stacking sequence for each wall panel job is a significant part of wall panel design that newcomers don't necessarily understand. It's much more of a consideration with wall panel manufacturing than it is with roof trusses," Holland commented. "Our custom program allows the technician to design the stack so that it fits on the truck in the most efficient way possible."

All for One & One for All

Not surprisingly, Clearspan's roof and floor truss shops are marked with the same philosophy of efficiency as its wall panel facility. For instance, there are sawing enhancements and concepts that have been implemented to most efficiently cut every stick of lumber that goes through the plant. In a systematic procedure, the precise number of webs and chords for a particular truss is taken directly from the saw department and stacked on small wheeled carts. Several methods have been implemented to assure that it is quick

Continued on page 50

at a glance

- Clearspan Components in Meridian, MS is one of the oldest wall panel manufacturers in the country, servicing the multi-family housing industry.
- The company embraces a culture of grassroots efficiency in its wall panel and roof and floor truss shops.
- A custom-built internal database organizes the company's processes from sales to design to production to delivery to invoicing.
- The "finished goods identification and control system" addresses the issue of skilled labor on the jobsite.
- The multi-family housing market is projected to be strong in 2006 because of a weakened single family market and other factors.

New wall panel laser machine marks wall panel dimension details in the wood.

Lumber is placed on a table in preparation for the headers to be nailed.

Wall panel line worker prepares to nail header.

Commitment to Efficiency...

Continued from page 49

and easy for the truss builders to locate all the parts and pieces of wood required for each truss. In a nearby nook, a truss plate picker assembles a box of the exact number and size of truss plates needed to produce that truss and delivers it to the wheeled cart, which is now lined up in an orderly fashion not far from one of seven truss lines.

The systematic process Clearspan uses for production is part of the most powerful and all-encompassing efficiency strategy that Clearspan deploys. The Clearspan Central Database (CCD) is an internally-built program that controls everything from estimating to design to production to inventory to shipping to invoicing. "It basically controls every function of the business," Holland explained. Paperwork generated before the job goes to the shop is printed and scanned, automatically updating its status from design to production. Completed trusses are each scanned prior to being loaded on the delivery truck, automatically removing them from Clearspan's inventory. Finally, Holland said, "Jobs are scanned prior to leaving the yard, which triggers the customer's invoice to be printed."

The reasons for such rigid organization, according to the Clearspan team, are many. One reason is as a remedy to the ever-increasing shortage of skilled labor. "It's a fact that our industry faces a labor shortage," Holland explained. "[Our system] makes truss production easy to learn and understand."

Clearspan even brainstormed a proprietary delivery trailer to eliminate the need to comply with DOT-imposed wide-load regulations. Banded trusses are stacked vertically (instead of horizontally) and fastened with banding to both ends of the trailer. "The state enforces all sorts of wide-load restrictions and permits can get expensive," Holland stated. "While there are height restrictions as well, our product typically doesn't exceed them." A commercial trailer manufacturer has built a total of seven of the specialized trailers for Clearspan based on the company's specifications. The only trade-off is that Clearspan's trailers are not self-unloading, which wouldn't work well for single-family homes, but isn't a problem for Clearspan's predominately multi-family customers because they have the necessary unloading equipment.

This is a great example of the internally-designed customized solution being a much better fit for an individual manufacturing operation—it might not be the right solution for every manufacturer, but it's the perfect solution for Clearspan because it grew out of their specific need. Members of the Clearspan team feel strongly that the concept of grassroots innovation is something all component manufacturers should consider putting into practice as there is much to be gained from the insight and creativity of the people who know your business best—your employees.

Continued on page 53

Job identification tags stacked on cart before truss assembly.

Banded trusses are tagged with the job title and number, truss type and number (for placement during framing). The bar code is scanned by a dispatcher as the trusses are loaded for delivery.

Webs are neatly stacked on a cart according to their placement in the truss and labeled with the job title and number.

Roof trusses are stacked vertically on a custom-built trailer.

A box on top of cut webs contains the precise number of connector plates for that specific truss.

Individual trusses are tagged with details of their placement to help framers during installation.

Commitment to Efficiency...

Continued from page 50

Customer Service Meets Grassroots Innovation

And what about the skilled labor problem on the jobsite? Clearspan has a solution for that, too. Thanks to the "finished goods identification and control system" function of CCD, a large sticker is placed around the bottom chord of each finished component. These weather-proof stickers are pre-printed with various job details, including the project name, the length of the component, which building (and in some cases, level of the building) the individual component goes to, and a number that corresponds to the truss placement diagram used for installation on the jobsite. What's more, the sticker is printed in such a way that even if the installer doesn't read English, he can match the character on the sticker to a character on the placement diagram to ensure that each component is in its proper place.

"The sticker allows for us to communicate more information, more clearly to the framer than ever could be with a grease pencil or spray paint," Holland said. "The scanning procedures we have implemented provide the ability to track each component individually, which allows both Clearspan staff and our customers to have the most accurate information possible about the whereabouts of each piece of every job."

A Look to the Future

The 2006 multi-family housing outlook looks strong, a fact Clearspan hopes will boost the company's sales in the coming year. The Clearspan management team predicts multi-family construction will be on the up-swing in the next few years for two reasons according to Holland. "One, the [Federal Reserve] is poised to continue raising interest rates incrementally. And second, although gas prices have dropped sharply since their post-Katrina peak, the elevated cost of fuel continues to be a factor in consumer decision-making. The 'wait and see factor' is good for the apartment market because new homebuyers are likely to wait and see what interest rates and gas prices will do before they make one of the biggest decisions of their life—to buy a house," Holland explained.

"Wait and see factor" or not, Clearspan is primed to compete. Between a staff committed to developing innovative solutions, a philosophy of highly efficient production and a tradition of southern charm, Clearspan Components is at the top of its game. Although they are growing, Holland says adding another production site isn't in the cards. "Decentralization is too difficult to manage," he noted.

One thing is a sure bet, however, Clearspan will always make room for improvements as they continue to innovate and streamline efficiency from the inside out. SBC

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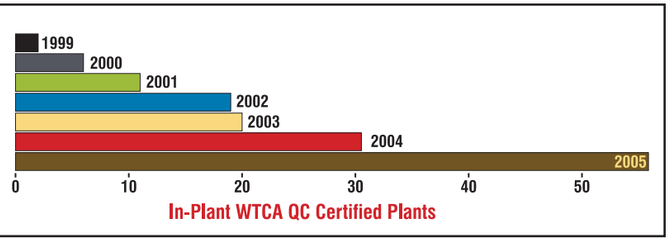

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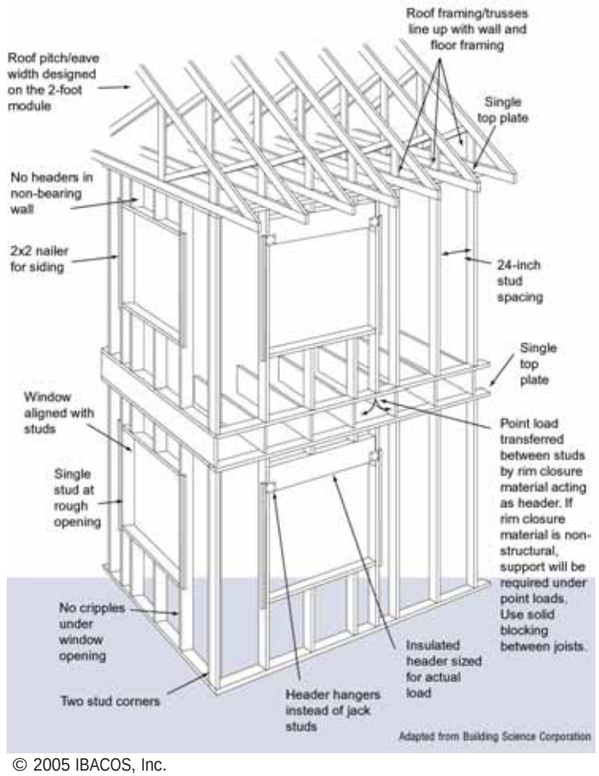

Optimum Value Engineering:

The Whole House Concept Expanded

by Libby Maurer

Discover what OVE means to component manufacturers and framers as well as how each is applying it.

It's only January, and we already have our fingers on the pulse of a likely candidate for this year's buzzword. Three words to be exact. If you've been hearing "optimum value engineering" an awful lot lately, you're not alone. Let's take a look at this concept and what it means to component manufacturers.

Adapted from Building Science Corporation

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What It Is

There are two schools of thought when it comes to optimum value engineering, or OVE. The first is a set of advanced framing techniques aimed at reducing material costs, material waste and labor on the jobsite. Don't let its imposing name fool you; these OVE techniques are all about making the house as affordable as possible while maintaining structural integrity for the safety of the end user.

Most of these techniques are applied on the jobsite during framing rather than in a controlled manufacturing environment. Here are some common OVE techniques:

- Two-stud corner framing with drywall clips
- Increasing floor joist and rafter spacing to 24"
- Eliminating headers in non-load bearing walls
- Increasing stud spacing from 16" to 24"
- Using single top plates with in-line framing to transfer loads directly

According to the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH), material cost savings of $500 for a 1,200 sq. ft. home and $1,000 for a 2,400 sq. ft. home can be realized if advanced framing is fully incorporated. PATH estimates labor savings of between three to five percent when OVE framing techniques are used. Since each OVE practice can be implemented independently, builders can take an incremental approach to allow framers to master a few at a time.

We've seen how OVE can cut framing expenses—great news for the builder and framer—but isn't there a design component to OVE? There certainly is, and that brings us to the second application of OVE. Component manufacturers are often involved with OVE on the front end of the truss design process for several reasons. One reason is to minimize material waste in the shop. Metal connector plates and joints can be optimized with a function found in most truss design software. Another reason optimization is necessary is if the homeowner has specified any of the advanced framing techniques discussed above. Because typical component design doesn't often take on-site framing details into account, OVE has major implications for the component manufacturer, long before walls or roof trusses are built. In structures where advanced framing techniques will be used, it will be crucial for component manufacturers to be involved in the design of wall framing up front. And those framing details will have to be accurately communicated to the builder and framing crew. You can see that much of the success of such on-site practices depends on the manufacturer's component design.

at a glance

- ☐ Optimum value engineering (OVE) has applications in the component design phase and on the jobsite.
- ☐ Using OVE techniques in the field can reduce framing expenses by as much as $1,000 per 2,400 square foot home, according to a study done by the Partnership for Advanced Technologies in Housing.
- ☐ Component manufacturers can use design software to optimize component design.

OVE within WHD looks like this: optimizing roof truss, floor truss and wall panel designs to a certain level that allows for the most efficient on-site framing solution.

The OVE/Whole House Design (WHD) Link

If that other three-word phrase—whole house design—is becoming a peripheral thought, you're on the right track. You can also think of optimum value engineering as a concept that fits into whole house design. Due to an increase in the "one-stop shop" trend, component manufacturers are selling things like headers, connectors, and the miscellaneous framing lumber—in addition to wall panels or wall framing lumber, roofs and floors—in packages. As manufacturers adopt a more holistic view of engineering the entire structure, optimizing the engineering for that entire structure is the next most logical step toward greater efficiency.

The practical application of OVE within WHD looks like this: optimizing roof truss, floor truss and wall panel designs to a certain level that allows for the most efficient on-site framing solution. This means incorporating compatible trusses and wall panel designs, with the goal of manufacturing components that can be framed using the most efficient framing techniques and with the least possible materials possible. The entire process of design, manufacturing, delivery, handling and installation accounts for ease of application on the jobsite. This even includes all the miscellaneous framing lumber and other "accessories" needed by the framing crew to progress through the construction process without delay.

When optimum value engineering techniques are carried out properly, the engineering for each structural component, connection, installation and framing detail is optimized. The end result is that you've effectively encouraging everyone in the construction process to figure out how to be most efficient. This ultimately should lead to the best economic framing solution for each construction project. SBC

Dude! Where's My Truss Industry?

by Carl Schoening

A new builder demographic means increased profit for the component manufacturer. The key is for the manufacturer to sell value in each step of the project.

I get to see a lot of the country and meet a lot of component manufacturers. Mostly it is an enjoyable experience. Sure, sure, there are a lot of things that are the same in many parts of the country, but there is change afoot.

In the last few years I have been asked the same question many times: "Where is the industry headed?" I am the very first point out that I am by no means an authority on the direction of the component industry. Nor do I have a crystal ball that will pull back the veil and allow a brief glimpse of the future. But I do see changes and can make an enlightened guess as to where we are headed.

The founders of our industry would be asking a slightly different question, "Where's my truss industry?" It is still here, but has grown (and continues to grow) into something beyond what most us ever imagined it could be. And, now as we contemplate our individual futures in the throes of change, we are also as an association contemplating our identity as an industry. We are no longer just trusses. We have grown to be more inclusive. I remember a few years ago the outrage that many long-time wood truss manufacturers felt at the sight of light gauge steel trusses at BCMC. Along with light gauge steel we are now seeing more and more truss manufacturers producing wall panels, supplying beams, lumber packages, I-Joists, hardware, and even installation labor. The trend has proliferated to a point that consideration of renaming our industry association has been prompted. The goal is to make it all-encompassing, so it reflects the diversity of products and services component manufacturers now offer.

Value, value, value. That is what we must sell to keep the industry strong.

I've seen many trends to back up my statement that the industry is changing. We see two-step markets going the direct sales route. Many parts of the country are seeing framing contractors buying all materials for projects or they are key influencers in the decision to purchase. We are beginning to see more and more framing contractors enter the wall panel and/or truss manufacturing arena. More and more integration every day.

In part, this is due to a change in the general contractor/developer profile. Not too many years ago, builders or general contractors were traditionally people who came up through the trade ranks with some knowledge of the construction process. It seems that once a broader demographic realized the profitable nature of the industry, construction experience was diluted. We now see more frequently real estate agents or brokers, MBA graduates, lawyers, doctors, accountants and anyone else entering the market as a builder or at a least part time builder. With their lack of trade experience to fall back on, these new era builders rely heavily on suppliers to provide the experience and expertise needed to profitably complete the construction of the project. This is not necessarily a bad thing for our industry. It has opened the door for truss manufacturers to become more closely aligned with these customers and become one-stop service and products suppliers.

Component manufacturers now have whole house design software available to provide the value that the new generation of builder is looking for. The builder wants someone to understand and take control of the project and have a high level of confidence that it will come together as designed. Want truss design? Just print the output. Oh, you want panels? No problem, a little more output. Hardware and material list? Got it. Engineering for the structure? Not a problem. And, now installation of the products. There is value in every step for component manufacturers. And, profit!

Component manufacturers are beginning to be more selective about customers based on their ability to provide the service and derive the most profit from the services provided. When talking about whole house design and supply, most component manufacturers realize that while they have the ability to provide more products for the structure, they may not have the physical resources to provide all products to an unlimited number of customers. Evaluating customers for profit potential and if they fit the direction and company culture is becoming more regular than in the past. In the past component manufacturers scrambled to get to every customer possible when they were selling a single product line. Now with the broad number of products component manufacturers can provide, no one wants all the business. I recently spoke to a component manufacturer that told me they had fired one of their largest customers. The customer was high maintenance, a price buyer, and generally only purchased part of the products offered. This component manufacturer gave up millions of dollars in business to focus on more profitable prospects that understand this component manufacturer's culture and value proposition.

The only possible negative is if component manufacturers begin to dilute the value of the components by not "up-selling" the value provided. This will result in turning components into commodity products. Based on the new builder demographic, the value proposition focus must continue to be cycle time improvement, construction process improvement, and a better, stronger, safer structure. The installed labor piece adds additional value to the builder by negotiating one deal for the project, streamlines accounting and other financial processes. Value, value, value. That is what we must sell to keep the industry strong.

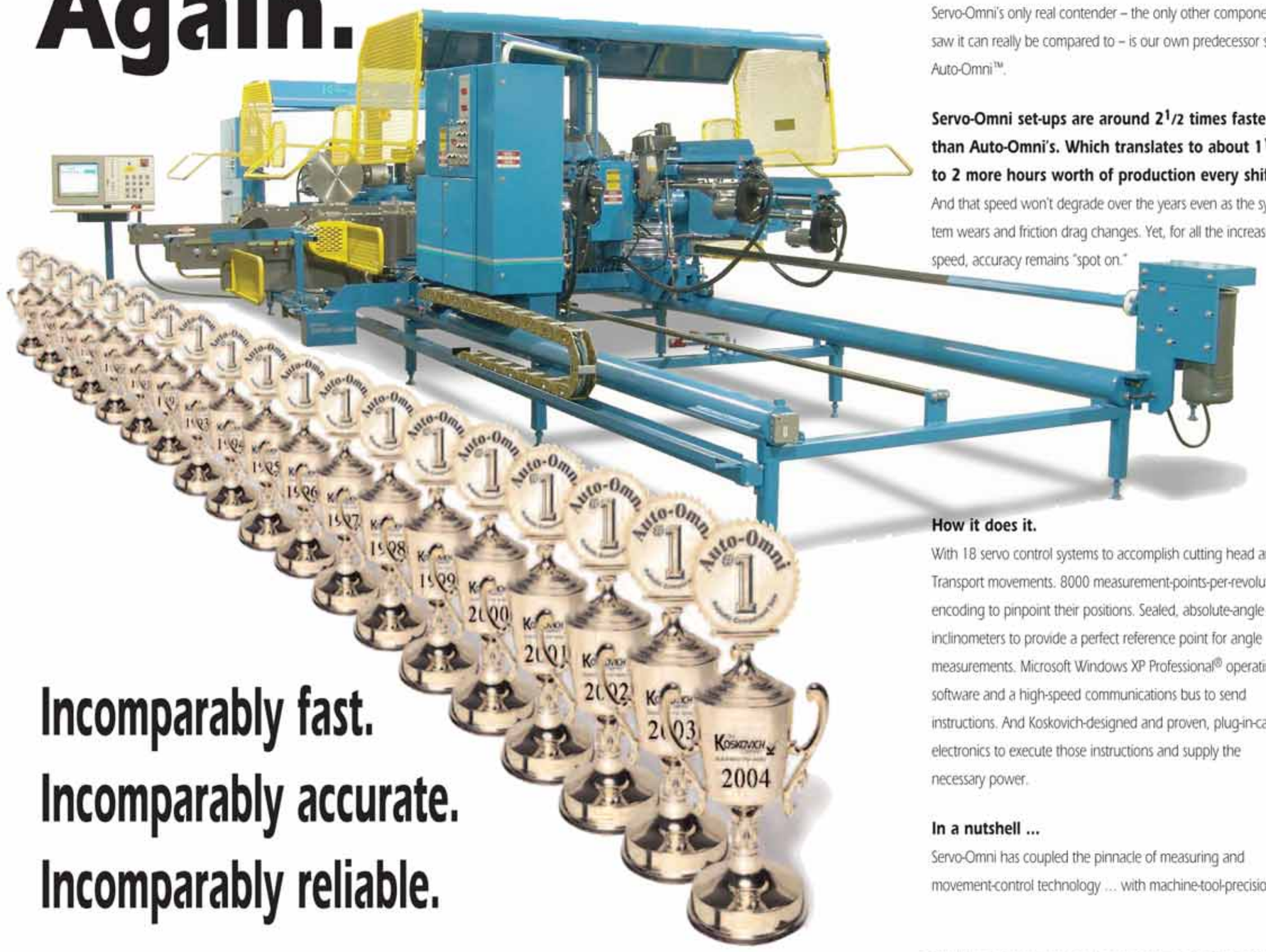
So, back to the question, "Where's my truss industry?" To all those that have gone before us, your truss industry is still here. It has grown into the component industry, but trusses are still the heart and soul of the industry founded on value. And, to all of those founders I would like to say thanks. Thanks for providing all of us an industry we can be proud of, an industry that is interesting and fun, an industry full of great people and a career choice that can take you anywhere. Thanks and look for us to nurture your idea and continue to improve and grow the industry and our association. SBC

Carl Schoening is Vice President of Sales & Marketing for Truswal Systems Corporation in Arlington, TX.

at a glance

- The founders of our industry are probably asking, "Where's my truss industry?"
- We must continue to sell value in order to keep this industry strong.
- One of the only possible negatives to selling more engineering and integrated services is if component manufacturers begin to dilute the value of components by not "up-selling" the value provided.

The winner. Again.



Introducing the new Servo-Omni Robotic Component Saw™ for cutting and marking roof truss components. If it was an athlete, contenders would be demanding a steroids test.

Actually, we'd have to be the ones demanding the test. Because Servo-Omni's only real contender – the only other component saw it can really be compared to – is our own predecessor saw, Auto-Omni™.

Servo-Omni set-ups are around 2 1/2 times faster than Auto-Omni's. Which translates to about 1 1/2 to 2 more hours worth of production every shift.

And that speed won't degrade over the years even as the system wears and friction drag changes. Yet, for all the increased speed, accuracy remains "spot on."

How it does it.

With 18 servo control systems to accomplish cutting head and Transport movements. 8000 measurement-points-per-revolution encoding to pinpoint their positions. Sealed, absolute-angle inclinometers to provide a perfect reference point for angle measurements. Microsoft Windows XP Professional® operating software and a high-speed communications bus to send instructions. And Koskovich-designed and proven, plug-in-card electronics to execute those instructions and supply the necessary power.

In a nutshell ...

Servo-Omni has coupled the pinnacle of measuring and movement-control technology ... with machine-tool-precision.

A lot of other things have changed.

Our technicians can now Internet access and perform diagnostics on customer saws right from our facility. Software upgrades are Internet-downloadable. Saw and operator performance can be monitored remotely in real time. And operators can select either English or Spanish.

One thing hasn't changed — the ability to change.

For over 20 years now, we've made performance enhancements available to our Auto-Omni customers in the form of field upgrades ... such that even our oldest Auto-Omni can be made as capable as a new one. This time – since modifications are so extensive that an Auto-Omni cannot be field-enhanced to a Servo-Omni – we're offering the "ULTIMATE UPGRADE." For a fixed price, we'll truck a Servo-Omni to a customer, bring their old Auto-Omni back to our facility, and remanufacture it into an essentially-new Servo-Omni ... ready to fulfill the next customer's "Ultimate Upgrade."

Which is why our Servo-Omni won't likely be losing its "winner" status any time soon.

We are, indeed, feeding our saws a never-ending diet of performance-enhancers. It's really not fair to contenders. By the time they get near where we were with a new model, we've already transformed into something better. There is, genuinely, no other saw like it. In a word, Servo-Omni is incomparable.

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The Business Side of Whole House Design

by Jay T. Deakins

A new builder demographic means increased profit for the component manufacturer. The key is for the manufacturer to sell value in each step of the project.

Congratulations! Your biggest customer just told you that in addition to roof trusses, they now want to buy all of their wall panels, floor trusses, engineered wood products (EWP), windows, doors, loose lumber and trim from you. Open the champagne; give your salesman a raise, pat everyone on the back. Now what does this really mean to you?

For starters, it means that your life just got a whole lot more complicated. Managed properly, your life also just got a whole lot more profitable. Managed improperly, this once in a lifetime opportunity might just put you out of business. Let's put that champagne back in the fridge for a few minutes.

A Little Background

Whole house design has long been the Holy Grail for designers of architectural, truss and wall panel software. The concept of designing an entire structure in one system and generating from that single design all the engineering data, material requirements, cost data and sell prices seems like a simple concept, but has been a long, tedious process coming to reality. People have been talking about whole house design for about as long as people have spoken about flying cars. It will be interesting to see which one truly comes to reality first; right now it looks like whole house design will be the winner by a nose. The good news is that while the engineering systems are still a few years away from truly seamless integration of the whole house process (i.e., roof engineering is done separately from the floors and walls and also maintained in a separate file from other elements), they are close enough today that it is relatively easy for a manufacturer to efficiently manage the entire process.

Where to Start

The starting point for the business side of whole house design is always converting a design or group of designs into a quote or sales order for a customer. Ideally, information will be imported into business software from a single design system. Right now, the information needs to be imported from multiple design systems. While this is less than optimal, it is a limitation which can be dealt with quite easily.

As data is imported into a quote or sales order from the design software systems, it must be arranged in a logical way so that the customer can understand it, and so that it will eventually convert easily into manufacturing and shipping orders. Typically, order detail is arranged into Phases—each Phase is an element of the job that will be produced and scheduled together. Typical Phases for a single family home would look something like this:

- 1st floor floors
- 1st floor walls
- 2nd floor floors
- 2nd floor walls
- Roof
- Loose lumber
- Hardware/interior trim
- Windows/doors

at a glance

- More and more component manufacturers are taking on whole house design due to the demands of their customers.
- The business side of whole house design starts with converting a design to a quote or sales order.
- Because part numbers and inventory levels increase significantly with whole house design, a well-managed material resource planning (MRP) system can be helpful.
- Since some builders set up payment plans according to a project's progression, the progress billing function of whole house design business software must be able to make deliveries without invoicing and create invoices without deliveries.

Getting the order arranged this way from the beginning is the key to managing the ultimate scheduling, costing and communication issues downstream. The actual number of Phase groups is not that important and will vary depending upon your specific product mix. The important part is that the order is arranged properly from the beginning so that items which will generally be delivered together are grouped together.

Once the line items are imported into the sales order in this fashion, it can be sent to your customer in a variety of ways. It may be rolled up into one line item, such as a house model and a price shown with no detail. It can also be broken out by Phase or, alternatively, each individual component can be priced. Regardless of how it is communicated to the customer, it is critical for margin analysis by business segment that each base level element of the order maintains a sell price and a cost. If the sell price of the entire structure is changed, it should change the sell prices of each line item by the pro-rata amount of the change. By enforcing this pricing integrity, you will maintain your ability to report on margin contribution for each individual element of your business.

Scheduling & Communication

Once a quote is accepted and changed into a firm sales order, it needs to be split by Phase so that it can be produced and shipped individually. If the Phases were set up correctly, it is simply a matter of having the business software create one individual sales order for each Phase. Each individual sales order will get its own production date and delivery date. A link must be maintained between each of these free-standing orders to monitor the project as a whole. Many manufacturers new to whole house design have struggled to maintain unified communication with their customer. Your customer doesn't want to get a call from your door guy, your window guy and your floor guy all in the same day to discuss the schedule. By maintaining separate, but linked, orders, you can centralize your scheduling as well as your communications with your customers.

Inventory Control & MRP

In the whole house world, part numbers tend to increase exponentially. A typical component manufacturer will have hundreds or maybe a few thousand individual SKUs with an emphasis on lumber in varying lengths, connector plates in various sizes, and maybe engineered wood products. A typical whole house company will have thousands and thousands of SKUs, including all of the parts stocked by a typical component plant as well as items such as insulation, trim, shingles, hardware, windows, and doors. The addition of all of these SKUs requires a well-managed MRP (material resource planning) system to assist with the purchasing process. MRP will take all of the bottom level inventory requirements generated by sales orders and subtract that from inventory currently on hand or on order. The result of this calculation is the net available inventory. Typically, the net available inventory is compared to a reorder point, which is maintained for each SKU. If the total net is less than the reorder point an order is recommended for that SKU. The second level of MRP is to do time phased MRP which takes into account when your requirement is actually due and the lead time of your supplier to allow you to order what you need, when you need it.

MRP requires that all of the requirements of the sales order be present at the beginning of the process. This requires all of the lumber and plates that make up each individual truss to be imported into the business system at the time the order is created.

Once we know what to purchase when, our next step is to lean out our inventory. Leaning out your inventory presents one of the best opportunities to save money in lots of ways. Everyone knows that inventory is expensive, but the true costs of inventory are often forgotten. The cost of inventory is far more than the actual financial carrying cost of the inventory. Inventory takes up expensive space and must be counted periodically (even when it never moves).

Start the inventory leaning process by running an aged inventory report sorted by number of days old. Anything that has been in place for longer than the specified number of days should be reworked, segregated into a "bone yard" to

Continued on page 64

not moving and eliminate or replace them. After leaning the top level of items that you actually sell, be certain to eliminate the raw materials which are used to produce the top level items which are no longer moving.

Special Order Items

An inevitable result of the increased inventory demands of whole house design is the requirement for special order items. Special order items are items that you will buy one time for a customer. Examples include hardware items with different finishes, trim items or light fixtures. When a customer has a requirement for a one-off item for a specific job, you will need to have your business system generate an individual purchasing demand for the item which needs to carry through any special descriptions that were entered into the sales order module. The purchase order must be linked to the sales order to communicate to the shipping people when the item arrives and to update the cost of the sales order line with the specific cost of this unique purchase.

Progress Billing

In the component business, there is typically a one to one relationship between shipments and invoices. If a load of any type is delivered to a jobsite, an invoice is sent to the customer. In the whole house world, there is often a disconnect between shipments and invoicing. Many developers will work deals with payments made as the project progresses. For example, you get paid 30 percent when the first floor is installed, 30 percent when the roof is installed, and 40 percent upon completion of the structure. The percentages and timing will vary, but this concept needs to be handled by your business system so you can separate deliveries and invoices. With progress billing, you send invoices upon reaching pre-arranged milestones. No invoices will be sent for your individual deliveries. Each delivery will reduce your inventory with a corresponding entry into a progress billing suspense account instead of cost of goods sold. Invoicing at your pre-arranged milestones will increase accounts receivables with a corresponding entry to a liability account specific to progress billing. Upon completion of the project, or at period end in recognition of a percentage completion, the progress billing suspense account and the liability account will be reversed to revenue and cost

Continued on page 66

The Business Side of Whole House Design

Continued from page 63

be sold at reduced prices, or simply thrown out. This process is much like cleaning the attic. Do not get emotionally attached to your inventory. It is not an heirloom. Use it or lose it. Once this process is completed the first time, make it a part of your process to review the aged inventory every thirty days. This discipline will keep you from gradually returning to your current situation.

Step two of the inventory leaning process is to review your sales and inventory usage figures to find items which are

The Business Side of Whole House Design

Continued from page 64

of goods sold accounts. When the progress billing is ultimately closed, a progress billing gain/loss account will be posted with the difference between what would have been billed without using the model and the amount actually billed. This account provides a key indicator as to how accurately material requirements are being estimated for each project. Properly structured, this progress billing model can also provide you with real-time feedback on jobsite quantity variances. For instance, if you estimate that you need 3,000 sticks of loose lumber to complete a project, progress billing can track your actual consumption as the project is built to alert you if you are going to have a problem.

Where to Go from Here

The resources required to be in the whole house business are greater than those required to simply manufacture components. By taking on the task of providing a complete structure, the opportunity exists to differentiate your product and services from a commodity into a greater value-added service. Developers are in the business of turning raw land into saleable homes as quickly as possible. They are looking for suppliers that can help them shorten the time involved in this process. A demonstrated ability to manage the complexities and shorten the life cycle of a project can be a wonderful marketing tool for your company.

A demonstrated ability to manage the complexities and shorten the life cycle of a project can be a wonderful marketing tool for your company.

The transition from component manufacturer to a company providing complete structures is one which creates an enormous opportunity to dramatically increase your revenues. The cost of this revenue-enhancing opportunity comes in the form of a significantly increased SKU count and tremendously more operational complexity. Increases in complexity always require improved processes and procedures to successfully cope with all of the moving parts. If you are willing to take this step to manage and improve your processes, your newly expanded business should provide an opportunity to significantly grow your profits.

Now, let's get that champagne out again... SBC

Jay Deakins is President of Deacom, Inc., producer of the DEACOM integrated accounting and ERP software system for manufacturers of prefabricated building components, building products, and materials. Contact Jay at jdeakins@deacom.net.

Education & Awareness Leads to

"Truss Truce"

by Libby Maurer

Has the fire service's animosity toward the truss industry finally run its course? Find out why a "Truss Truce" has been declared.

Are members of the fire service tired of carrying on the tradition of contention with the component industry? Recent events indicate they may be ready to bury the hatchet, replacing years of hostility and finger-pointing with facts and education.

Yes, exposing the history, structural function, design, and installation of trusses and other structural components seems to be a growing trend in fire service education. According to John Vardian of the Phoenix Fire Department, it's about time. Vardian, who spoke at the Illinois Society of Fire Service Instructors Conference in October, believes building classification training is the key to saving firefighter lives. Vardian told the group, "That building is telling you everything you need to know," noting all it takes is three to five seconds prior to entry to size up a building and identify its features. "Building construction is our life and death, but it is barely covered in basic firefighter training courses," he said.

In addition to supplemental building structure training, Vardian urged fire instructors to adjust the way they fight fires according to the trends in building construction since the 1950s. "We can't keep fighting fires like we did in the 1950s," he said matter-of-factly. "Building construction has changed, and we need to change our techniques accordingly." Vardian explained that the most effective way for firefighters to classify structures is by considering big leaps in construction technology and the introduction of new materials. For instance, from the 1930s through the late '40s, building construction primarily consisted of reinforced masonry blocks, he stated. From the early to late '50s, conventional framing (or "stick-built") replaced reinforced masonry as the most popular method.

"Building construction has changed, and we need to change our techniques accordingly."

Vardian isn't the only one extending the olive branch. Career firefighter Mark Emery's article printed in the June 2004 issue of *FireRescue Magazine* speaks for itself: "Truss Truce." His opening paragraph reads:

> *Trusses are strong, efficient reliable and predictable, and once you get to know them, pretty cool. For too long the fire service has vilified this structural engineering marvel. In this article, you'll discover what's really the most reliable, unpredictable and dangerous factor at any fireground operation.*

Wow, "vilified." But it gets better. Emery plays the affordable housing card to make a case for building components:

> *…you must acknowledge that without lightweight building construction, particularly trusses, many communities couldn't afford to have a modern fire department. Because of the high cost of conventional building construction, it would be too expensive to build strip malls, warehouse stores or multi-family complexes. Without lightweight building construction, most of us couldn't afford to buy a home. It's quite possible that the structure you're sitting in while reading this article wouldn't exist.*

Could this be true? Yes, he means it. The body of his article contains a litany of facts from the anatomy of a truss, the engineering behind it, the flow of loads

Continued on page 72

at a glance

- Recent events indicate that the fire service is promoting facts and education about building components.
- Phoenix Fire Department Captain John Vardian recently spoke about the number of firefighters retiring in the next few years and the need for increased building structure training and education.
- Captain Mark Emery wrote "Truss Truce," an article published in *FireRescue Magazine,* that dispelled many myths about wood trusses and building components.

"Truss Truce"

Continued from page 70

through a structure, and a reality check about what presents the most dangerous to a firefighter during a structure fire. He concludes with, "Is it rational to blame the building if a firefighter is killed by a failing structural component? Buildings don't think or make decisions."

It's a great time for a truce. Positive progress can never be made when one group demonizes another. Structural building components have never been bad actors in this play and now with the door open to working together, they can begin to be seen as the asset they are and we all can work toward minimizing the high risks that exist on the fire ground. Happy are the peacemakers. SBC

For full text of "Truss Truce," visit **Support Docs** *at www.sbcmag.info.*

WTCA-Illinois Participates in Fire Service Conference

John Vardian wasn't the only guest at the Illinois Society of Fire Service Instructors Conference that fall day in Peoria. Mike Karceski, President of WTCA-IL was granted permission to attend the seminar to build relationships and offer literature. Karceski didn't know what to expect. "I was prepared for them to be very critical of me and the organization I represent," he said.

Karceski was pleasantly surprised when the attendees approached him en masse, requesting information about plant tours and asking for a copy of ***The Fire Performance of Wood Trusses*** CD produced by the Carbeck Structural Components Institute (CSCI). "Being a truss manufacturer you are the enemy; some firefighters are very negative toward any construction, but the reality is that trusses and components are the predominate materials used in building construction," he said.

Karceski concurred with Vardian's opinion that firefighter training must catch up to modern building construction technology to save lives. "[The fire service] has to adapt, but they are not educated on trusses and components," he said. The instructors at the seminar seemed starved for any information Karceski could offer. "They were glad to learn anything because any information they can get their hands on is dramatically better than what they've gotten in the past," he said.

The positive response was a welcome change for Karceski, who hopes to continue to work with the Illinois fire service. "It is important that we keep in contact with these organizations because once you get your foot in the door, you start to develop relationships and work together," he said. And at the end of the day, Karceski was grateful to have observed the fire industry's culture. "I am mystified by all the different roles (firefighter, trainer, inspector, chief) and how they fit together. It is all very complicated, which is why it is important for WTCA chapters to continue their involvement and advocacy with them," he said. SBC

Adventures in Advocacy

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Taking the Pulse of the Nation's Leaders

by Sean D. Shields

Things have really gotten bad in our nation's capital. Back in November, a bunch of Congressmen were seen publicly slinging mud, attacking law enforcement officers, and causing physical harm to themselves and others. Not surprised?

You might be surprised to discover that the scene described above is in reference to the annual "Longest Yard" Fall Classic football game played between members of Congress and the Capitol Police to raise money for the memorial fund benefiting the families of law enforcement officers who serve to protect our nation's Capitol. Played in a torrential downpour, the game was apparently so rough that U.S. Representative Bill Shuster (R-PA) sustained a head injury that required stitches.

It is not surprising that the final score of this game involving members of Congress was 14-14. Stalemate. No winners and no losers. Judging by how evenly divided the American electorate has been for nearly the last decade, this appears to be the way citizens want their government to function: a no-win, no-lose style of lawmaking.

Case in point is the last quarter of 2005. Even though the Republican party held a rare triumvirate control over the White House, Senate and House of Representatives, a stalemate still prevailed on key provisions in federal spending bills. Why? The reasons are akin to a "perfect storm," the likes of which the Bush Administration hoped would never occur. In the last few months of 2005, our nation endured some of its worst natural disasters and vitriol in political discourse during the modern era. Not a good combination.

While the nation's economy appears to finally be heading in a steady and positive direction, the damage inflicted by hurricanes Rita and Katrina on the Gulf Coast brought the need for government involvement into sharp focus. The call for large federal aide packages to help in the rebuilding process eroded considerable support for much of the Administration's tax reform efforts.

Many other external events have also disrupted the priorities of the Bush Administration and Congressional GOP leadership on permanent tax cuts, immigration system reform, health care reform, and fixes to social security and Medicaid. Making progress on some of the issues during the election year of 2006 will be an even more difficult task.

What does this all mean for you and your business this year? One, some form of immigration reform is going to happen. The system is broken, and virtually everyone in Congress acknowledges it. The difference in enacting reform in 2006 instead of 2005 is that the outcome will likely be much less significant overall, yet it will focus primarily on "securing the borders" because this is an issue with which incumbents can win elections.

This may easily include an initial heavy-handed approach toward identifying and deporting illegal immigrants. Without a viable guest-worker program in place, this could have a seriously detrimental effect not only on your business, but on the economy. Our industry should approach this issue embracing change, pushing for a more fair and efficient reporting system, while simultaneously ensuring either some form of amnesty or guest-worker visa program to enable current workers to stay at their jobs.

The regulatory and tax burden placed on small business owners must also be addressed. The fact that small businesses are the workhorses of our nation's economy is not lost on most members of Congress. Even though recent reports by the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) indicated a decrease in the growing cost of federal regulations on small business, there is considerably more work to be done. In addition, helping small business creates another strong pillar on which incumbents can run.

Solutions will likely include further efforts to streamline various reporting requirements, and improve agency flexibility and responsiveness to small businesses striving to compete in an increasingly more global marketplace. They will also likely include further tax reforms regarding business property, capital expenses and investments. Our industry should continue to support any efforts to reduce the cost of federal regulation or ease the tax burden on businesses. This will allow those funds to be more effectively invested in further growth and employment, generating greater economic activity.

Finally, the health care system and associated insurance costs will need to be addressed. With over 20 million working adults unable to obtain or afford health insurance, and between one-forth and one-half of all uninsured adults unable to see a doctor when needed because of the prohibitive costs, members of Congress know this is a hot-button election issue.

Solutions will likely help business owners to afford and offer health insurance plans and/or plans that provide greater coverage for their employees. Our industry needs to have a strong voice in support of creative solutions like association health plans (AHPs), which allow small business owners the ability to pool together and take advantage of the same regulatory status, purchasing clout, economic scale and administrative efficiencies that many large corporations currently utilize.

In 2006, the WTCA Legislative Committee, with your help, will endeavor to host not only the annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC in May, but also a series of Congressional district meetings throughout the year. All in an effort to build stronger relationships with key members of Congress and gain a voice for our industry on these very important issues. In addition, members of the committee and WTCA staff will work with various federal and state regulatory agencies to minimize the enforcement burden of existing laws.

Looking forward, many things on Capitol Hill remain uncertain. However, by mid-November of this year, Democrats and Republicans will have played out their game of national elections. They'll be muddy, bloody, and some will likely need stitches. But I can at least guarantee it won't end with a tie score. SBC

Housing Starts

Housing starts bounced back in November, increasing 5.3% to 2.123 million (SAAR). The single-family sector was also strong, increasing 4.8% to 1.808 million SAAR, while multi-family was up almost 8%. Permits increased 2.5%, suggesting continued strength in the near term.

U.S. Housing Starts
Millions - Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR)

U.S. Totals	Nov	Oct (rev.)	% Change
Starts	2.123	2.017	5.3%
Permits	2.155	2.103	2.5%
Single Family			
Starts	1.808	1.725	4.8%
Permits	1.710	1.707	0.2%
Multi Family			
Starts	0.315	0.292	7.9%
Permits	0.445	0.396	12.4%
Starts and Permits By Region:			
NE Starts	0.181	0.163	11.0%
NE Permits	0.198	0.189	4.8%
MW Starts	0.373	0.332	12.3%
MW Permits	0.373	0.369	1.1%
S Starts	0.989	1.002	-1.3%
S Permits	1.018	1.009	0.9%
W Starts	0.580	0.520	11.5%
W Permits	0.566	0.536	5.6%

Analysis & Outlook: As mentioned in last month's report, most of the analysts have concluded that the housing market has peaked, but nobody knows how fast it will cool. As seen in the November data, there is still plenty of life left in the housing market. This is remarkable considering that the 30-year mortgage is up to 6.3%, still at historically low levels, but almost 100 basis points higher than a year ago. There are some concerns regarding this housing market: (1) inventory of new homes for sale is almost 500,000, while existing homes for sale is approaching 3 million units—both are records; and (2) housing affordability is becoming a problem—NAR's housing affordability index fell to a decade-low 116 in October (i.e., the nation's typical household had 116 percent of the income needed to purchase a home at median existing home prices). And, as mentioned in previous reports, the twin deficits (budget and trade) are getting worse. The good news is that foreigners keep supporting our spending habits (by buying T-Bills, etc.), and as long as this continues, the dollar should be alright. If foreign investment stops, interest rates will have to increase to keep the dollar from sliding too fast, which would of course impact housing.

A recent report suggests housing is not as overvalued as many would have us believe (see **Support Docs** at www.sbcmag.info). If you consider inflation adjusted prices on a per square foot basis, the real price per square foot today is about the same as 50 years ago. Although there are other issues to consider (e.g., income growth/quality of homes today vs. 50 years ago) it appears that maybe this bubble issue is a bit over rated. Some parts of the country have experienced more rapid price increases and are more vulnerable to a slowdown, but the nation as a whole looks pretty solid. SBC

This housing starts report is provided to ***SBC*** on a monthly basis by ***SBC*** *Economic Environment* columnist Al Schuler. Visit www.sbcmag.info for more economic news.

Builder Banter

Steel Work, Roofing Rank among Most Dangerous Jobs

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released the 2004 national census of fatal occupational injuries. Of the ten most dangerous jobs, structural iron and steel workers ranked fourth and roofers came in seventh. Although 2004 was one of the safest years on record, the total 5,703 fatal injuries occurring on the job increased slightly from 2003, when 5,575 fatalities were recorded. The 2004 census also indicated that the number of fatal injuries for Hispanic and older workers rose substantially. [Source: *Rural Builder,* Oct. 2005, p. 10]

Drug Use in the Construction Industry

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Substance Abuse Information Database web site, (www.said.dol.gov), a federal government survey showed that among full-time construction workers between the ages of 18 and 49, more than 12 percent reported illicit drug use during the month before the survey was conducted; almost 21 percent reported illicit drug use during the previous year. One California-based contracting company asked 180 employees to volunteer for a drug test. Of the 80 volunteers, 24 percent tested positive for one or more illegal drugs (primarily marijuana and cocaine). Workers who abuse substances tend to be less productive, more likely to be involved in workplace confrontations and violence, unreliable, and steal from their employers and others at a higher rate than their non-using co-workers. Safety on the jobsite is also a top concern for employers dealing with drug-using employees. According to a report from the National Safety Council, users are not the only ones affected by their on the job drug abuse. In fact, 80 percent of those injured in "serious" drug-related accidents at work are not drug-abusing employees but innocent co-workers and others.

Solution: Drug and alcohol testing has proved highly effective in deterring substance abuse and identifying workers who need help. Testing is legal in every state, although a handful of states regulate it. Rapid-result, on-site testing has become a popular alternative to traditional lab-based testing, especially for safety-sensitive industries such as the construction industry. A construction company can significantly reduce the time it takes to conduct a test by using rapid-result testing. The results are available within minutes and, depending on the product, rapid-result testing can be as accurate as the screening technologies used in laboratories. In addition, most rapid-result testing devices cost much less than a lab-based test. [Source: *Professional Roofing,* Nov. 2005, p. 25]

Builder Sentiment Cools Further In December

Confidence of single-family home builders slid further in December from its summer peak, yet remained well within the positive range, according to the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) for December. The overall HMI declined four points from a slightly revised November number to 57, while the component measuring builder expectations for future sales held firm at 65.

"Many builders sense some tapering off of single-family buyer demand, but remain reasonably confident in the ongoing strength of their markets," said NAHB President Dave Wilson, a custom home builder from Ketchum, ID. "They obviously are reacting to higher interest rates and energy costs, along with some buyer resistance to high house prices."

"As expected, the housing market appears to be coming off the recent record pace of home sales," said NAHB Chief Economist David Seiders. "Our surveys indicate that three out of every four builders are experiencing some buyer resistance to current home prices, and many are offering certain concessions to buyers in order to help maintain sales volume. NAHB's forecast continues to anticipate an orderly cooling down process for single-family sales and production in 2006." [Source: NAHB press release, 12/19/05, www.nahb.org.]

Housing Market Index 2005 (HMI)

The HMI is a weighted, seasonally adjusted statistic derived from ratings for present single family sales, single family sales in the next 6 months and buyers traffic. The first two components are measured on a scale of "good" "fair," and "poor," and the last one is measured on a scale of "high," "average" and "low." A rating of 50 indicates that the number of positive or good responses received from the builders is about the same as the number of negative or poor responses. Ratings higher than 50 indicate more positive or good responses.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
70	69	70	67	70	72	70	67	65	68	61	57

Source: National Association of Home Builders

Agriculture Buildings Growing, Other Trends Develop

Farm building trends are changing. Smaller farms have to expand in order to keep up, and with agriculture operations growing every day, the need for efficiency is crucial. Not only are farm buildings increasing in size but also in complexity. They are no longer just for the animals: they often include offices and living quarters and tend to be more aesthetically pleasing than ever before.

Another trend involves farmers themselves. Many have enough knowledge to act as their own general contractor, allowing them to save a significant time and money investment. Therefore, construction companies are often hired solely for the construction portion of a job.

Many construction companies find it beneficial to be flexible and willing to construct farm buildings; when commercial construction is slow, farm construction can supplement commercial building activity. And because commercial and agricultural building is very similar, crews that work on commercial jobs can just as easily do farm projects. Although they are similar, agricultural facilities do have special needs because animals can be rough on a building, so the materials must be extra resistant to moisture, mold and rust. [Source: *Rural Builder,* Oct. 2005, p. 32] SBC

Email ideas for this department to builder banter@sbcmag.info.

In Memoriam

Paul D. Lenauer

Paul D. Lenauer, 42, of Pioneer Industries, LLC in Owensville, MO, passed away suddenly on October 24, 2005.

After working for a number of years in the printing industry, Paul, along with his brothers Chris and Matt, purchased Pioneer Truss Company and Pioneer Home Center in 2000. According to Chris, not only was Paul in charge of purchasing all of the lumber for the trusses and lumberyards, he also implemented the quality control checklist for the set-up persons and sawyers on the computerized saws.

"From the beginning Paul played various roles that contributed to the success of Pioneer Industries," he stated. "The employees absolutely adored him." The fact that the company started with 80 employees and has doubled in size is a testament to Paul's contributions to the business. Brothers Chris and Matt continue to operate Pioneer Industries.

Not only was Paul a great businessman, he was also a skilled advocate and trainer. He gave half-day truss manufacturing training seminars at the Pioneer plant for the Army's Engineering School of Fort Leonard Wood, MO. In addition, Paul was instrumental in bringing about changes in the State of Missouri regarding Workers' Compensation. He met with Missouri State Representative Charlie Schlottach on several occasions to discuss changes that needed to be made on tort reform and within the Workers' Compensation program. He was asked to testify at the Missouri capitol regarding Workers' Compensation and the changes that occurred in 2005.

In his free time Paul was an adventure seeker. He loved to spend time with his family, travel, ride horses and canoe. "He floated every river in the area," recalled Chris. "He once even canoed down the Everglades." A favorite family pastime was taking long trail rides together on their horses.

Paul is survived by his wife, Jill; two daughters, Haley and Lyla; and a son, Jackson. Paul was preceded in death by his youngest daughter, Violet, who passed away three years ago due to health complications.

Norman L. Garlock

Norman Garlock, 58, of Clermont, FL, passed away November 21, 2005. He was born on March 29, 1947, in Mt. Union, PA.

Garlock was the Director of Sales for CBS Builders Supply, Inc. According to CBS President Lawson Wolfe, he contributed a lot to the company throughout the 13 years that he worked for CBS. One of his greatest accomplishments came at a time when the company was in need of sales. Garlock implemented the concept of team selling, which has been very successful for the company and is still being used. Garlock's forte was drawing in customers. "Norm was the best salesman I've ever met. He was bright, and understood the importance of profit, but was also quite a character," recalls Wolfe. "People at the company sometimes jokingly called him 'the hunter' because he went out, did the hunting and found the business."

Garlock was a successful businessman due to the fact that he was loved by everyone. According to Wolfe, "Everyone wanted to be around Norm when he was around. Everyone. People probably loved Norm because he loved people. More than anything else, he loved working with people, and his job gave him that opportunity. He would just as soon work as anything else…except maybe play golf."

To Wolfe, Garlock was not only an employee, but a friend. "CBS is a family owned company, and he is as close as it comes to family. Two of his sons still work for us, and there is a lot of Norm in both of them, so in some ways it is like he is still with us."

Garlock graduated from Penn State University and was a member of the Alumni Association. He was an avid golfer and a member of the U.S. Golf Association. He served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam Conflict.

Garlock is survived by his wife, Diana; his children, Tim (LeahAnn), Troy (Jamie), Bradley and Amber; and his grandchildren, Jessyca, Chandler, Collin and Liddy. He was preceded in death by his grandson Trevor. SBC

Submissions to "In Memoriam" can be emailed to editor@sbcmag.info. Photos are encouraged and will run as space allows. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

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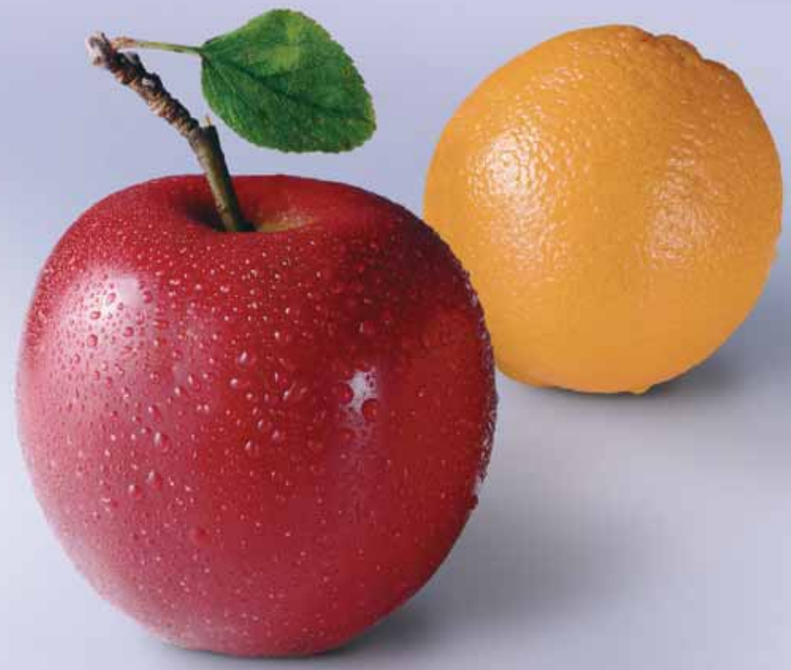

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Chapter Corner

For more information about WTCA Chapters and how to become more involved, contact Anna L. Stamm (608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com) or Danielle Bothun (608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com). Contributions to Chapter Corner, including pictures, are encouraged. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

Chapter Spotlight

20 Years & Going Strong: The West Florida Chapter's Building Officials Seminar

by Anna L. Stamm

On November 10, 2005, the West Florida Chapter hosted its 20th Annual Building Officials Meeting at the Robbins Engineering Truss Testing Facility in Tampa. Though the event is another ten years older than that, it has been a steady feature in consecutive years for "only" the past 20. Once again, it was a great success!

This year's educational seminar was a Truss Technology Workshop (TTW) on How to Read a Truss Placement Diagram and How to Read a Truss Design Drawing delivered by WTCA staff. Naturally, the companion publications from WTCA were distributed to all attendees. Quizzes were interspersed in the presentation, too, which helped focus the issues at hand and added to everyone's enjoyment. The highlight of the event, however, was the truss testing demonstration (see photo below). A broken and repaired truss was put on the rack and tested to the limit. The building officials were encouraged to put their knowledge and assumptions to the test and guess when it would fail. As the component manufacturers suspected—the truss did not fail until about three times the design load was applied. This testing demonstration again proved that it is one of the best ways to show the strength, reliability and quality of our products!

Special thanks go to Robbins Engineering for co-hosting the presentation with the West Florida Truss Association and to Simpson Strong-Tie Company for providing lunch for the attendees. Once again, the chapter demonstrated that it is going strong and so are its efforts to educate the building official community. SBC

Chapter Highlights

Mid Atlantic Wood Truss Council

Once again, the Mid Atlantic Chapter held its fall meeting in Pennsylvania at Williamson Restaurant in Horsham. At the board meeting preceding the membership meeting, much chapter business was covered. Membership recruitment efforts will continue and the chapter will urge the larger companies in the area to become more involved. Some architects are still referencing HIB-91 instead of BCSI 1-03, so the chapter will compile a list and mail a letter to them explaining why they must now call for BCSI instead. Even though turnout at this year's Atlantic Builders Show was lower than the chapter desired, it will return in 2006 and ask for an better time on the schedule for its presentation. The chapter's presentation in December for the Pennsylvania Housing Research Center was discussed too. The board members also reviewed the recent laws in a few small Pennsylvania towns on labeling buildings with truss construction and will continue to monitor these developments. The next board meeting will be held via teleconference on February 9.

The main topic for the membership meeting was the facts on fire performance. The myths surrounding the fire performance of metal plate connected wood trusses continue to spread, so individually and as a chapter we must continue to voice the true facts. These myths are behind the movements to restrict the use of trusses and structural building components. The chapter has begun offering educational seminars to building and fire officials, but there is still more work to be done to get the word out. The chapter's WTCA staff representative Ryan Dexter delivered a short presentation that explored what people are saying and how members can respond to each "argument." He also gave an update on the latest educational work being done by the Carbeck Structural Components Institute.

Minnesota Truss Manufacturers Association

The Minnesota Chapter held its fall meeting on November 17 at the Holiday Inn St. Cloud. Members discussed many educational and code-related items. It is expected that the State of Minnesota will either adopt its version of the IBC/IRC 2003 in mid-2006 or, since the 2006 editions will be out by then, it might wait and adopt the IBC/IRC 2006 later in the year or early 2007. The chapter will host a booth at the first annual AMBO Educational Institute (Association of Minnesota Building Officials) on February 6-10. A chapter logo and membership pamphlets will be designed, and several members volunteered to man the booth.

There was considerable discussion of the chapter's Structural Committee meeting with AMBO and BAM (Builders Association of MN) and the WTCA proposal to TPI regarding Truss Design Drawing issues. The members attending indicated unanimous support for improvements to the presentation of information on truss design drawings as indicated in the draft. Another issue coming out of the Committee meeting was

Continued on page 82


The recent NFCMA meeting included a roundtable discussion with building officials.

Kozlowski, P.E. of Apex Technology outlined the changes due to the implementation of the FBC 2004, ANSI/TPI 1-2002 and the adoption of ASCE 7-02. Guest Thomas Goldsbury of the City of Jacksonville led the discussion on the beta-testing of electronic seals and signatures. It is being implemented in Duval County and things are going well.

Under chapter business, the members present nominated a new chapter representative to the WTCA Board of Directors. Mark Rose of Manning Building Supplies will take over the seat as soon as his nomination is ratified by the WTCA membership. The date of the next chapter meeting was moved from January 19 so as not to conflict with the Alpine Workshop. It will be held on January 12.


SCCMA members agreed that education should be the chapter's primary focus.

Chapter Corner

Continued from page 80

an effort to change the agricultural exemption. It is of no interest to BAM, but it is of interest to the state insurance group and AMBO, so it may be successful in the long term.

The next chapter meeting will be held on February 16 at Kelly Inn of Plymouth. This will be the annual meeting and will include elections.

North Florida Component Manufacturers Association

The North Florida Chapter invited local building officials to its fall meeting for a roundtable discussion on the Florida Building Code and other issues in the marketplace. Chris Rizer of Builders FirstSource and Michael Kozlowski, P.E. of Apex Technology outlined the changes due to the implementation of the FBC 2004, ANSI/TPI 1-2002 and the adoption of ASCE 7-02. Guest Thomas Goldsbury of the City of Jacksonville led the discussion on the beta-testing of electronic seals and signatures. It is being implemented in Duval County and things are going well.

Under chapter business, the members present nominated a new chapter representative to the WTCA Board of Directors. Mark Rose of Manning Building Supplies will take over the seat as soon as his nomination is ratified by the WTCA membership. The date of the next chapter meeting was moved from January 19 so as not to conflict with the Alpine Workshop. It will be held on January 12.

South Carolina Component Manufacturers Association

At its chapter meeting in November, the South Carolina Chapter agreed to hold its next meeting in conjunction with the North Carolina Chapter. The date and place selected were March 15 in the greater Charlotte area, with a presentation by WTCA Legal Counsel Kent Pagel. Members agreed it should be a great meeting. The chapter's WTCA staff representative Barb Speer reviewed the recent WTCA policies and meeting updates, and she delivered a presentation from the Annual Meeting at BCMC which outlined WTCA's programs and successes over the past year.

Group discussion followed, regarding posting chapter meeting minutes online, the publications co-op and a Chapter Representative to the WTCA Board of Directors. Chapter President Mike Redmon was nominated for the Board position. It was also agreed that a South Carolina chapter publications co-op would be set up and all chapter members would be notified.

Discussion next focused on what issues the South Carolina members are facing and that the chapter might tackle, including educational issues, field issues, building inspector training, jobsite training, and code adoption. The group agreed that education should be the chapter's primary issue, especially getting bracing information to reach the framing crews and superintendents in the field. To be effective, the information should be presented in Spanish. Although the BCSI bracing materials are bilingual, several members noted that framing crew members may not know how to read the materials, even in Spanish. Mike McCloud suggested that an audio CD would be the best approach. The CD should summarize the "Four Steps to Safe Truss Installation" TTW and be no more than 20 minutes long if possible. This could be brought into the field and presented to framing crews using a boom box or even a CD player in a truck. B1 could be the handout used to coincide with the presentation. Staff agreed to pursue this project.

The group also considered delivering educational presentations to building officials or homebuilders associations. This could be in the form of a "Lunch & Learn" presentation at an association meeting or something sponsored by the chapter with an invitation to various groups to attend. The group concluded that it would take Horry County (Myrtle Beach) as a practice exercise and see what kind of opportunities are available there for giving an educational presentation.

Truss Manufacturers Association of Texas

At the Texas Chapter Board meeting in November, the following dates and locations were approved for the 2006 chapter meetings: January 19 in San Antonio at La Margarita Restaurant; April 20 in Spring Branch at the River Crossing Golf Club; June 15 in Austin at Cool River Restaurant; and September 21 in Austin at the River Place Country Club. To improve attendance, all members will be mailed a flyer along with stickers to adhere to their calendars. The chapter is also preparing a presentation for the WTCA Open Quarterly Meeting in San Antonio on March 1-3 and is starting to consider ways to host a chapter activity at the Building Component Manufacturers Conference in Fort Worth on October 4-6. The following individuals were nominated and approved unanimously as the Chapter Officers for 2006: President - Ben Doyle, Vice President - Paul Johnson, Treasurer - Shaun Allen, and Secretary - Gary Walls. Also voted onto the Board of Directors were Tony Gonzales and Garry Tebbins. The officers and directors will be recognized at the membership meeting on January 19.

Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association

The Wisconsin Chapter held its fall meeting on November 10 in Fond du Lac. The meeting focus was WTCA Legal Counsel Kent Pagel's presentation on "Successfully Negotiating an Acceptable Customer Contract." This included reviewing a proposed purchase order/subcontract agreement, examining agreement provisions, and learning to address problematic contract provisions with new best practices. Kent also showed a demo of ORisk, the Online Risk and Liability Management program coming soon from WTCA. The audience was

Continued on page 87

Calendar of Events

Check out WTCA's web site at **www.woodtruss.com** for the most current calendar information.

January

- 24: Mid South Component Manufacturers Association (MSCMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA-National, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 24: WTCA Ohio Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA-National, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 25: WTCA-Northeast Chapter Meeting, Holiday Inn, Worcester, MA. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 26: Joint Meeting of the Alabama (ACMA), Georgia (GCMA), Tennessee (TTMA) and Kentucky (WTCA-KY) Chapters in Chattanooga, TN with guest speaker WTCA Legal Counsel Kent Pagel. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 26: WTCA-New York Chapter Meeting, NRLA Educational Center, Rensselaer, NY. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.

February

- 2: Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association (WTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Gene Geurts at 920/336-9400 or ggeurts@richcostr.com.
- 8: Chapter Teleconference. All members are welcome to participate! For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or email astamm@qualtim.com.
- 8: Southwest Florida Truss Manufacturers Association (SWFTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Jim Swain at 239/437-1100 or jimsw@carpentercontractors.com.
- 8-12: Truswal Systems 2006 National Manufacturers Conference, Cancun, Mexico. For more information, visit www.truswal.com.
- 9-11: Alpine Engineered Products Executive Retreat, Aruba. For more information, visit www.alpeng.com .
- 9: West Florida Truss Association (WFTA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Rick Cashman at 727/585-2067 or rcashman@ffptruss.com.
- 14: 2006 MSR Lumber Producers Council Conference, Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, Quebec. For details, go to www.msrlumber.org.
- 16: Minnesota Truss Manufacturers Association (MTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Jim Scheible at 763/675-7376 or jim_scheible@trussabc.com.

March

- 1-3: WTCA Open Quarterly Meeting, San Antonio, TX. Contact Stephanie at 608/310-3721 or swatrud@qualtim.com. All are welcome. SBC

Industry News & Data

Visit **www.sbcmag.info** for additional industry news & announcements!

Consumer Price Index

[an index measuring the change in the cost of typical wage-earner purchases of goods and services expressed as a percentage of the cost of these same goods and services in some base period - called also cost-of-living index]

Expenditure Category	Changes from Preceding Mo. Sept	Oct	Nov	Compound annual rate 3-mo. ended Nov 05
All Items	1.2	.2	-.6	3.5
All Items Less Food & Engery	.1	.2	.2	2.4

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment Rate

Aug	4.9%
Sept	5.1%
Oct	5.0%
Nov	5.0%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Producer Price Index - Customized Industry Data

An inflationary indicator published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to evaluate wholesale price levels in the economy.

Engineered Wood Mem. (exc. truss) Mfg.	Sept	Oct	Nov
Eng. Wood Mem.	123.6(P)	122.4(P)	122.4(P)
LVL	128.1(P)	126.4(P)	126.4(P)
Other	122.9(P)	121.7(P)	121.7(P)

(P) = preliminary

Truss Mfg.	Sept	Oct	Nov
Truss Mfg.	120.9(P)	121.7(P)	122.0(P)
Wood Trusses	118.4(P)	119.2(P)	119.4(P)
Primary Products	118.4(P)	119.2(P)	119.4(P)
Secondary Products	113.6(P)	113.3(P)	116.3(P)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Producer Price Index General

% changes in selected stage-of-processing price indexes

Month	Total	Ex. Food & Energy
Aug	0.5(r)	-0.1(r)
Sept	1.9	0.3
Oct	0.7	-0.3
Nov	-0.7	0.1

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Consumer Confidence Index

The Consumer Confidence Index is a measure of consumer optimism toward current economic conditions. The consumer confidence index was arbitrarily set at 100 in 1985 and is adjusted monthly on the basis of a survey of consumers. The index considers consumer opinion on both current conditions (40%) and future expectations (60%).

Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	%Change
103.0	97.7	103.1	106.2	103.2	105.5	87.5	85.2(r)	98.9	13.9%

Source: www.consumerresearchcenter.org

U.S. Prime Rate

Month	2005	2004	2003
Aug 1	6.25%	4.25%	4.00%
Sept 1	6.50%	4.50%	4.00%
Oct 1	6.75%	4.75%	4.00%
Nov 1	7.00%	4.75%	4.00%
Dec 1	7.00%	5.00%	4.00%

Source: Federal Reserve Board

NOVEMBER 2005 ISM BUSINESS SURVEY AT A GLANCE

	Series Index	Direction Nov vs Oct	Rate of Change Nov vs Oct
ISM Manufacturing Index (formerly PMI)	58.1	Growing	Slower
New Orders	59.8	Growing	Slower
Production	60.6	Growing	Slower
Employment	56.6	Growing	Faster
Supplier Deliveries	58.3	Slowing	Slower
Inventories	49.3	Contracting	Slower
Customers' Inventories	43.5	Too Low	Slower
Prices	74.0	Increasing	Slower
Backlog of Orders	53.0	Growing	Slower
Exports	59.2	Growing	Faster
Imports	54.1	Growing	Slower

For an in-depth explanation of this summary, go to www.ism.ws/ISMReport/ROB122005.cfm.

Stay Connected!

Chapter Teleconferences are a great way to keep informed about issues that affect the industry as well as to network with other component manufacturers. Join these upcoming calls:

February 8 • March 8• 1 pm ET

Call Anna for details at 608/310-6719.

Industrial Production Index

The industrial production (IP) index measures the change in output in U.S. manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities. Output refers to the physical quantity of items produced, unlike sales value which combines quantity and price. The index covers the production of goods and power for domestic sales in the United States and for export. It excludes production in the agriculture, construction, transportation, communication, trade, finance, and service industries; government output, and imports. The IP index is developed by weighting each component according to its relative importance in the base period. The information for weights is obtained from the value added measures of production in the economic censuses of manufacturer and minerals industries, and from value added information for the utility industries in Internal Revenue Service statistics of income data. The weights are updated at five-year intervals to coincide with the economic censuses. The current index base year is 1992. (r=revised)

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Industrial Production Total Index (% change)	0.3(r)	-1.6(r)	1.3(r)	.7
Capacity Utilization Total Industry (%)	80.3(r)	78.9	79.8(r)	80.2

Source: Federal Reserve Board

Announcements

SIMPSON STRONG-TIE CELEBRATES GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Simpson turns 50 in 2006. The company is celebrating its half-century mark by honoring its customers and employees for their contributions and long-standing support.

"We have great respect for those that helped us reach this milestone," says Barclay Simpson, chairman of the company. "We are fortunate to have such supportive, loyal customers and a dedicated team of employees who continue to inspire us to offer the best products and level of service." [Source: Press Release, 11/29/05. For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/simpson.htm.]

INTERNATIONAL PAPER NAMES ADRIAN BLOCKER GENERAL MANAGER OF WOOD PRODUCTS

Adrian Blocker has been named general manager of International Paper's Wood Products business, reporting to IP President Rob Amen. In his new position, Blocker is responsible for leading the company's manufacturing, marketing, sales, supply chain and distribution of high-quality lumber, plywood, poles and engineered wood products used for residential and commercial construction in North America. [Source: Press Release, 12/4/05]

MITEK INDUSTRIES INC. ANNOUNCES NEW MACHINERY PLANT TO EMPLOY 165 PEOPLE

MiTek Industries Inc. announces the construction of a new 177,600 square foot machinery manufacturing plant on a 10-acre site in the Fountain Lakes Commerce Center in St. Charles, MO. Initially, the new plant will employ approximately 165 people. All of those associates will relocate from MiTek's current machinery plant located in Earth City, MO, which will be used for another division of MiTek or be sold. This new facility will have more room for research and development, an additional 24,000 sq. feet of office space, and sufficient land for up to 65,000 square feet of future plant expansion as the business grows. Construction is expected to be completed during the summer of 2006. [Source: Press Release, 11/18/05. For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/mitek.htm.]

DEACOM ANNOUNCES 2ND ANNUAL COMPONENT MANUFACTURERS ROUNDTABLE

Deacom, Inc. recently announced its 2nd Annual Component Manufacturers Roundtable will be held on May 18-19, 2006. All customers within the building component manufacturing industry are invited to attend the event in Wayne, PA. [Source: Press Release, 12/16/05]

2006 MSR LUMBER PRODUCERS COUNCIL CONFERENCE

The 2006 MSR Lumber Producers Council Conference will be held Tuesday, February 14, 2006, in Montreal, Quebec. This year's conference will be a one day event hosted at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal preceding the annual Canadian Lumbermen's Association convention (CLA), which kicks off February 15. [Source: Press Release, 12/3/05. For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/msrlpc.htm.]

In Print & on the Web

FAQ BROCHURE ADDRESSES LUMBER "BLUE-STAIN"

The Southern Pine Council has just released a new FAQ brochure that provides key information about blue-stained Southern Pine lumber. *Facts about Blued Pine* addresses common questions such as: What makes the lumber blue? Does it affect strength properties? Does blue stain cause decay? Can stained lumber be pressure-treated?

Readers learn that over the next few months, lumber cut from windfelled, reclaimed Southern Pine timber may contain blue stain, a natural but harmless discoloration. This publication explains that blue stain is not mold, does not pose any health risks, and does not affect lumber strength.

Complemented with full-color photos, the *Facts about Blued Pine* brochure is now available in hardcopy or online as a PDF download at www.southernpine.com/blued. To order a copy, send an e-mail to info@southernpine.com and request publication #275. [Source: Press Release, 11/21/05. For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/spc.htm.]
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Visit **www.sbcmag.info** for additional industry news!

Classified Ads

Bilingual Production Manager Wanted
Spates Fabricators, a leading Wood Truss Manufacturer since 1976, is seeking an innovative, forward thinking, people oriented manager with extensive truss experience to develop, establish and lead our newly equipped, state of the art, mfg operation. Excellent Compensation/Benefits Package. Email résumé to: employment@spates.com and visit www.spates.com/employment.html for complete details.

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Director of Operations
Midwest custom open wall wood frame building systems company is looking for a director of operations to lead its plant, logistics and field operations. Candidates must have a minimum of 10 years experience in managing building component manufacturing and field logistics operations. Send résumés to P.O. Box 290 Schofield, WI 54476-0290 or fax them to 715/359-4005.

Engineering Manager
Midwest open wall, wood frame building systems company is looking for an engineering manager. Must have 10 years experience in all facets of residential building engineering and have worked in a component manufacturing environment. Responsibilities will include oversight of all design and structural engineering, as well as engineering systems development. Send résumé to P.O. Box 290, Schofield, WI 54476-0290 or fax to 715/359-4005.

Opportunities at OptiFrame
OptiFrame Software, charged with creating the industry's preferred whole house design software solution, is seeking experienced Associates to join our team. Competitive salaries & excellent benefits package (incl. 401K matching). Detailed job descriptions available on our website. Only résumés posted to: www.optiframe.com will be accepted (no phone calls). We are a joint venture between Trus Joist, a Weyerhaeuser Business, and MiTek, a Berkshire Hathaway company. EOE

Customer Service: Our Software Support team is looking for Associates to support users of OptiFrame Software. Work with customers to research and resolve issues, including software installation, configuration set-up, overall operation, bug detection, etc. Industry or residential construction experience is required.

Product Team - Engineering: Our Product Management team is seeking design engineers with industry or residential construction experience to document engineering methodologies and develop software requirements. BS in Civil/Structural; 2+ yrs. exp., EIT or PE preferred. Expertise in lateral design of wood structures; practical application knowledge of ASCE7 is a plus.

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Chapter Corner
Continued from page 83

amazed by the details they did not know and how much at risk they might be.

Following the presentation, the members turned to the committee reports and chapter business. Under the topic of education, student pricing of TTT online training for tech school students was mentioned. The attendees discussed having the chapter sponsor a scholarship, but since the tech schools are regional, it was felt it would be more appropriate to have local component manufacturers consider their own sponsorship programs. There were no known code issues, except that there seemed to be a more relaxed attitude at the plan approval stage for sealed truss design drawings. No one was aware of a published date for the implementation of the 2006 codes.

The major discussion addressed the possible topics for the upcoming meetings in February and May. A state representative of the NAHB will be contacted for a market report in February and the DOC will be contacted for a code official to present a code status seminar at the May meeting. Meeting locations may be adjusted to take into account speaker travel. The chapter also decided to change the start time for meetings from 2:00 to 1:00, and the board meeting from noon to 11:00. The date of the next meeting was changed from February 9 to February 2 so it would not conflict with the Truswal Conference.

Wood Truss Council of North Carolina

The North Carolina Chapter held its fall board and membership meetings on November 15 in Greensboro. At the board meeting, the chapter's educational efforts were discussed. Jack Parker is continuing to be involved with the Department of Insurance, Building Inspectors, and Fire Chiefs concerning wood trusses in construction. He will be attending a planning meeting for Fire Chiefs Conference, and the chapter hopes to get time on their agenda. WTCA-National has some material available for presentations which may prove useful. Ways to continue improving attendance and involvement in the chapter were discussed, and it was agreed that having guest speakers and subjects of interest to manufacturers on the agenda is a good start. A motion was made to post meeting minutes on the web site. After some discussion this was passed.

The guest speakers at the membership meeting were Officers D.C. Justice and N.R. Landreth from NC Highway Patrol, Motor Carrier Enforcement Division. Included was an overview of the permitting process and the applicable laws concerning load acceptability. At the conclusion of the excellent presentation and Q & A session, members decided to continue their contact with the Highway Patrol, and to explore further meetings with Tammy Denning (from the permit office) and others concerning interpretations of the guidelines for shipping.

Blue-stained lumber was discussed. Although the stain is not a structural defect, the blue-stain may be a sign of lumber sawn from trees felled by the recent storms on the gulf coast, and members should be aware of this fact and take it into consideration when checking incoming lumber.

The next meeting will be on March 15. It will be a joint meeting with the South Carolina Chapter, and the topic will be Risk Management with WTCA Legal Counsel Kent Pagel as guest speaker. The joint meeting will be held in the Pineville/Charlotte area with an informal lunch at 12:00 and the meeting to start at 1:00 p.m. New officers will be elected at this meeting also. SBC

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Parting Shots

Share your stories and photos with us! Send submissions to **partingshots@sbcmag.info**.

Proving once again that time marches on, the staff of ***SBC*** would like to take this opportunity to say "Happy 50th Birthday" to someone special. While you may not recognize him without the grey hair, frameless glasses and khaki pants, this gentleman has been passionate about the component industry and the future of building materials since he was knee-high to a grasshopper, which was only a few days before this picture was taken!

Now, we're happy to report, his sense of style has matured right along with his knowledge of the industry. As staff, we rely on him for direction, support and encouragement, which he's always more than willing to provide. So, congratulations on surviving your first half century, Kirk, we wish you many more years of health, wisdom and solid-colored pants! Happy Birthday!

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