

Training the New Labor Pool

by Libby Maurer

Don't start from square one—
use tools from SBCA to train
new employees in no time!



Expectations for housing starts to rise 20–30 percent in 2011¹ will hopefully yield an eventful spring for many component manufacturers. It could also mean bringing on new production workers for the first time in a couple years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects construction trades will add more than 800,000 new jobs through 2018.² Skilled or not, these workers will need specialized training to operate component manufacturing equipment safely. Not to worry. Put your energy into finding the right candidates and leave the training up to SBCA programs. Courses like SBCA's In-Plant Basic Training are ideal for newly hired shop workers reliant on manual skills.

In-Plant Basic Training for New Shop Workers

The process of training and acclimating new employees into a component manufacturing shop can be a time-consuming process. In-Plant Basic Training was designed specifically for these folks. One of the most important reasons to look into an entry-level training program such as In-Plant Basic Training is safety. You know the hazards of working in a truss plant very well. But don't take for granted that someone new to the industry will intuitively single out the danger zones. You have to point them out—often.

The production employees of Allensville Planing Mill of Pennsylvania take advantage of the program. Manufacturing manager Jerry Zeiders said it has become a very important part of the company's dedication to introduce new workers to the fundamentals of safety and quality control. "For companies that don't have any training in place, this offers a really good foundation. We think it's a great program on many levels."

Ten modules start with the very basics—Introduction to the Industry, Safety, Terms, Tools and Quality Control—and then continue on to address materials—Lumber and Metal Connector Plates. The last three modules cover Truss Design Drawings, Assembly, and Handling. Although new employees are the target audience, Basic Training could also be used as a refresher. Zeiders said the content is so good the company even made sure existing employees took the course when they first purchased it.

Simple: Each of the Basic Training modules is simply-worded and visual. "It covers a lot but it's not so overwhelming that a new person can't understand it," said Zeiders. This format is designed to increase recall and retention when workers are faced with practical application of the concepts. Available in English and Spanish, it's also ideal for workers facing a language barrier.

Flexible: The duration of the program is about two hours—the perfect amount of time to gather a group together in a conference room and review all the modules at once. Or, plan for workers to view a specific module just prior to hands-on training in the shop. It's your choice; you choose what works best for your scenario. Zeiders said new shop employees view the first five Basic Training modules on their orientation day. Then they spend several weeks getting hands-on experience in the shop. "They finish the next five modules within a couple weeks or at least before their 90-day review." By this point they've seen how truss plates and trusses are handled, and can apply the book training to practical experience.

Addresses Safety, Housekeeping & Quality Control: While the program emphasizes safety, users point to many other benefits. "I always talk about the 'Big 4': safety, housekeeping, quality control and cost," Zeiders said. "Basic Training does a really nice job of explaining that safety and housekeeping lead to better quality." Better quality products, he tells employees, help control costs.

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¹ National Association of Home Builders, nabh.org ² bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm#Labor%20Force

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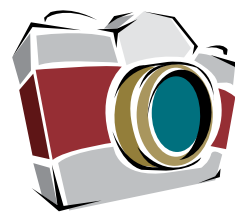
Training the New Labor Pool

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SCORE Requirement: In-Plant Basic Training is a required program for SCORE certification. All new production employees must take the course, and there is no exam. "There are so many good components to SCORE, and this is one of them. We're very serious about it," Zeiders said. Allensville is on its way to SCORE Achiever certification.

Get Foundational Training in Place Now

Springtime is an ideal time to incorporate new training programs because you have time to establish a system or schedule that works best for your operation. When work picks up and it's time to bring new folks in, the training program and process will be little more than part of daily business. At just a couple hours long, Basic Training is easy to implement and offers many benefits. Zeiders is committed to it, especially when the market picks up. "I'd be hard-pressed to find anything better." **SBC**



Parting Shots

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On January 28, the Ksor family of Charlotte, North Carolina moved into their new house. Habitat Charlotte was on site to document the special day. Marketing Director Phil Prince remembered those wet, muddy days in September when BCMC Build volunteers pulled together for the family. "Exactly four months ago yesterday we gathered on that muddy lot at S. Crigler St. at 5:00 am. Who could forget? The SBCA guys descended like a swarm of worker bees, and by the end of the day the bones of a house were in place."

Raising more than \$55,000 in cash and material donations, BCMC Build funded the home and provided the labor to frame it. The new homeowners are extremely grateful. "It goes without saying that Hnul and Ayui [Ksor] are beside themselves. The communication barrier is still there, but universal language of smiles and tears says plenty," said Prince.

BCMC Build will tackle two homes September 19-20 in Indianapolis. See bcmcbuild.com for more details and exciting new events! **SBC**

In Memoriam

Lowell "Tommy" Wood

Lowell "Tommy" Wood, 52, passed away on Saturday, January 29 from complications of a recent surgery in Memphis, TN. Tommy was an innovator in wall panel design and automation, known best for forming Intelligent Building Systems (IBS) in 1990. He retired from IBS in 2006.

Tommy, a loving husband, father, and brother, was a member of the Community Church Memphis. He leaves his wife of 26 years, Judy Wood; two daughters, Kaitlyn Wood and Ashlyn Wood; one son, Dylan Wood; four sisters, Carolyn Wood, Susan Wood, Linda Fowler and Beverly Gandy. Funeral services were held February 2 at Memorial Park Riverside Chapel in Memphis.

Memorials may be made to the American Diabetes Association at diabetes.org.

Above (left to right): Ken Kirsch, Tommy Wood, Rob Tucker and Leo Goheen

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