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President's Message



MARY PAT KELLER

"Needed: A Wood Promotion Strategy for WTCA" by Mary Pat Keller

WTCA has a history of trying to educate the lumber industry about those issues that are important to component manufacturers. We are a niche industry and small in relation to the lumber giants. However, there are enough mills that produce the type of lumber that we use in trusses and components that we've become a much more significant customer to them. It makes sense that they should want to be more involved in assisting us in bringing our product to market. Why, then, does that

seem not to be the case?

Right now a lot of energy and, I might add, money is being spent trying to decide what should be done about the impending expiration of the Softwood Lumber Agreement. How does this help promote the use of wood in the marketplace? In my opinion, the quota and, I suspect, future filed countervailing duty suits only serve to promote volatility in price. I believe that price volatility remains the biggest disadvantage to greater wood use as our primary raw material in general and in component manufacturing in particular.

Another disadvantage that wood has is that it is combustible. We are always open to efforts by the lumber industry to work with WTCA to conduct testing and research in this area, which needs immediate attention. As component manufacturers who are geared up to use wood, it is our raw material of choice; however, if codes eventually make that impossible, we will have to look even harder for alternatives that perform to the expectations of both the market and the codes.

In a world where thirty-second sound bites rule, the Wood Promotion Network was established by the lumber industry to undertake a significant effort to combat the "New Steel" advertising. While it's impossible to ignore the impact that advertising has on the general public, it is important that the lumber industry does not stop there. The lumber industry needs to get to where lumber is being considered in the beginning of every project. Get to the architects, engineers and specifiers. Help the truss industry get the lumber message to the end user, our customer.

Unfortunately, the impression we have gotten over the last few years is that the lumber industry seems to think that it knows how to solve all of our problems for us, rather than with us. The best possible solution is to provide us with the tools and resources we need to get messages to our customer base. We work with these companies every day and know their wants and needs. We can be a great ally in a promotional effort if we are a significant part of the process.

However, we will be very little help if our input is not requested or is ignored, as we will not know what work we should undertake to add value to the process. (For more on this topic, see [“Building with Components Makes Wood More Than Good”](#).)

We have always been open to strategies that could help us expand the lumber industry's products in our marketplace. How can we work together to help this process along? In the absence of such strategies, the only criteria for the use of lumber in components will come down to price. I am convinced that components are the framing solution of the future. Economics and our customers' demands will dictate what material the components are made of.

Again, the question is, how can the lumber industry ensure that lumber is the material of choice in the future? We hope that it is by working closely with our industry and using the knowledge and experience we have in transacting business in our markets every day.

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