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Director's Message



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"Whose Job Is It Anyway?" by Kirk Grundahl, WTCA
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This year I have experienced some significant reinforcement in the following lessons:

- **Lesson #1:** Taking the time to be involved, offering a simple and thoughtful message, being persistent, being consistent and developing working relationships is far more important than any monetary contribution for you to have a significant impact in the legislative process. That is not to say that political contributions are not important—they are. They are even more valuable once the relationship is established, and an important issue needs to be tackled.
- **Lesson #2:** Several times I have heard this thought running through our industry: "We do not need to get involved in industry activities, that is what we have WTCA for." This idea is very dangerous. Groups with agendas contrary to the structural components industry will "eat our lunch" if we think this way. WTCA, in its current form, can be only one thing to our membership: An intricate support system of information, concepts, processes, presentation materials, brochures, articles, advertisements and staff who will serve you enthusiastically once you make the commitment to get involved and become a proactive grassroots leader. This is the entire point of "Putting a Human Face on the Truss Industry." WTCA cannot and will never be able to do this work for you, but we can support you all day, every day, and help you help your business and our industry succeed.

Now you say, "Well that is fine and dandy, but the concepts, while logical, are too difficult for me to implement. How do I do this without being overwhelmed?" One of the things that WTCA staff takes pride in is implementation of work, so we hope we have some ideas that will work to support you in this area.

In order for anything to get accomplished in a company, someone has to be responsible for the activity. Given this, the following activities should become part of the formal job description and focus of some person or persons in your organization. If everyone in your organization is stretched thin, this may mean hiring someone to handle these responsibilities.

ACTIVITY #1

Since local, regional and national legislation can have a huge impact on your business and you may not even know about it, setting periodic (semi-annual or annual at the very least) meetings with your state and U.S. legislators will build relationships. Learn their specific position on the

issues that are important to you. Invite them and/or one of their staff members to your plant. If you feel that they will represent you well, then participate in their campaign and/or provide a campaign contribution. You may want to make a contribution even if you do not think they will represent you well, since this should provide you with greater access to your legislator to make your voice heard. Your governor's office is another beneficial place to build a relationship. All governors have a Department of Commerce that would be very interested in hearing from you periodically. Developing a relationship here may have the side benefit of learning about programs that the state has set up to help businesses, like employee training grants, business development tax breaks, etc.

ACTIVITY #2

Because building and fire officials, specifiers and builders are key cogs in the wheel of construction, it is very important to spend time with them to understand their issues and to educate them on our industry and its issues. Each group has a local association that holds meetings that someone in your organization should attend to listen, learn and then become active. Once this person has developed a relationship, his/her influence pertaining to structural building components will be invaluable. Eventually the opportunity will arise to provide an educational presentation. An immediate call to WTCA will help you walk through this process and make it as easy as we can make it for you to provide one of our Truss Technology Workshops. We have spent a great deal of time and energy on these programs and keep learning and refining them.

ACTIVITY #3

Often framers and related subcontractors do not have local associations, so a different approach is needed to reach them. However, if there is a framing association (gypsum installers, plumbers, HVAC, or electrical workers may be more likely to have a local association) in your local area, it is a very good idea to be involved. The real question is how to reach this group if no association exists? The best idea we have heard is "toolbox talks." This is a very simple concept where the typical approach is to buy donuts or sandwiches and beverages and get to the framers using your product during their break period. During a break period you can go through a single topic quite easily (maybe two), but you need to stay very focused and cover each topic thoroughly. This is precisely why WTCA has developed its Truss Technology in Building series of flyers as a support system. I think you will find that this is a very good sales and marketing activity, as well as an important risk management activity.

ACTIVITY #4

Getting together with competitors may not seem valuable to your company. However, when you think about this in terms of monitoring the market for hot spots and sharing general marketplace information on legislation, who the industry's friends are, the direction local related associations are going, etc., it becomes an invaluable resource to advance the industry and take action when it is appropriate. It is also a good time for manufacturers to ask questions and learn more about the support services that WTCA has to offer. WTCA's Chapters epitomize the concept that by working together, our industry's progress on key issues can be much quicker and easier than in any other way. It is precisely this quickness that makes these Chapters successful in the

legislative process. A chapter allows individual businesses to learn about legislative issues early and gives members a way to initiate grassroots action. WTCA Chapter members assert industry positions and stop legislative challenges by having a positive, unified presence at the local level.

If these four activities—meeting your legislators, attending local association meetings, giving “toolbox talks” to framers and attending chapter meetings (and there are probably more)—are not part of someone's job description in your organization, there is little doubt that your company and our industry is missing an opportunity to have superior marketplace information, better industry-wide strategies and improved risk management.

VALUE FOR YOUR DUES DOLLARS

As everyone will remember, this is the year that we increased dues. The decision we had before us was to increase dues or reduce the services that everyone had come to expect from WTCA. As we had hoped for and anticipated, the dues increase provided a huge benefit to your association and allowed us to continue to build the foundation of support work that you have come to expect.

A number of key services that we took on this year likely would not have been undertaken if we hadn't increased dues. Instead, we are able to report the following successes:

- We have had great success in working with our membership on legislative issues regarding the impending changes in softwood lumber trade and the relationship the U.S. has with Canada that will have a huge impact on truss industry markets.
- We have spent significant time working with TPI on the consensus standards to ensure that the component manufacturer's perspective is carefully considered.
- We have continued to work on our Truss Technology in Building series of publications that serves as marketplace education and risk management tools for our industry.
- We have built a bridge with an important industry supplier association—Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association (SLMA). This relationship shows excellent promise as we seek to understand market fundamentals. It will hopefully provide all of you with opportunities to make changes in the way you transact business that will ultimately improve your bottom line.
- Chapter support services have flourished. This is not a high profile activity but takes a great amount of time and energy to ensure that all of the chapter details are taken care of and progress continues to go smoothly. One example is all the detail work that staff does to support a local Truss Technology Workshop.
- We have been able to continue the work in the QC testing area and improve a QC standard that the industry could not continue as the existing standard bears very little on the performance of trusses in the field.

We appreciate the support that all of our members have given to WTCA over the last ten years. We are looking forward to continuing to grow in ways that will make all of our members proud, and in doing so unite and strengthen our industry and each of your businesses.

SBC HOME PAGE

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