

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Director's Message



Terror. Adversity. Leadership. Resolve. United Spirit. Success. by Kirk Grundahl, WTCA Executive Director

I am writing this column the weekend after September 11, 2001. It goes without saying that we hope never to see a day like this again and will take whatever action we can to help in this extended time of need. I realize that almost two months will have passed before you read this, but I believe that we will never, and can never, lose sight of this day.

A compelling interview that I saw very early in the aftermath struck me as profound and very applicable to our industry. The question the interviewer asked was, "Why did we have an intelligence breakdown?" The response, "Well, you have to understand, we have several government agencies involved in gathering and processing intelligence data. These agencies do not cooperate very well with each other because they believe that if they cooperate, their budgets may be reduced because somebody will find out they are not needed. They may not get the high profile jobs, they may not get the credit for the success, or they will not be the ones in charge...."

This same type of sentiment was also expressed in an online article from The Wall Street Journal on October 6: "George Tenet, the director of central intelligence, issued a directive shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks declaring an abrupt end to business as usual in America's intelligence community. In the strongly worded memorandum, dated Sept. 16 and titled "We're at War," Mr. Tenet told senior officials at the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies that it was time to end past squabbles over turf and to begin immediately to coordinate their efforts and share information in the new war against terrorism. Mr. Tenet's order called for an immediate end to peacetime bureaucratic constraints on the C.I.A. while demanding improved coordination and information sharing throughout the government's national security apparatus. The agency must give people the authority to do things they might not ordinarily be allowed to do. If there is some bureaucratic hurdle, leap it."

This would have surprised me if I had not had similar experiences with other government programs. Money, authority, power and prestige can all get in the way of working together. In the case of September 11, it may have had a permanent and lasting effect on all our lives.

On a much less important scale, the identical situation happens in the world of association work. This point of view can only be seen clearly if you're involved in the day-to-day operations of an association. Money, authority, power and prestige (in other words, protecting your turf) get in the way of developing a united approach, under a specific strategic plan, to meet a given objective. Rarely do associations work together to fully meet a common strategic objective. The

same can, at times, also be said of the membership within an individual association.

What does this mean for our industry specifically? It is time to unite as members, as chapters, as a Board of Directors, as an Executive Committee and as staff. We must encourage and support our industry's suppliers that unite with us and support us as we achieve the common objective of advancing the structural building components industry to reach its full potential.

Our goal in everything that we do must be to ensure that components are the future of framing and that everyone affiliated with our industry will benefit from our hard work. We will stay focused on structural building component construction because that is where our expertise lies, and we will not allow ourselves to get pulled away or distracted from our mission.

Our best chance of realizing our full potential is to define a united objective that fully uses the talents and expertise of our members, our staff and those suppliers and supplier organizations that see the opportunities in this and desire to join us. If we can strip away the bureaucratic constraints, we can truly succeed in making components synonymous with framing. I know we can if we so choose; I hope we will.

“I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.”—Helen Keller

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