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Why Fix It If It Ain't Broken — Expanding into Cold-Formed Steel Trusses by Michael de Ovando

As we know, the wood industry is everything but broken, so why fix it? The wood industry in the construction market has been a way of life for Americans; it's a part of the American dream. But like everything in life, things tend to change with the times. Change does not necessarily mean elimination, but rather improving or even complementing.

The use of cold-formed steel (CFS) framing has increased in an unprecedented way in America over the last few years. CFS may be considered by many wood distributors and manufacturers to be a direct competitor. On the contrary, CFS components can be a great product to market; they can create a profit center and complement the wood construction industry.

The use of CFS components in the commercial, institutional, and to a certain degree, the multifamily construction industry has become the main focus of designers and engineers. There are numerous advantages to CFS components over the more traditional steel structural elements that are used in noncombustible applications, such as design flexibility, cost effectiveness, installation labor savings and the ability to be much more architecturally creative. These are exactly the same sales approaches wood truss manufacturers used to advance the wood truss industry about 40 years ago.

Thanks to this phenomenon, wood component distributors and manufacturers can really benefit by incorporating CFS components as one of their product lines. This will help manufacturers reach a significant share of the local and/or regional construction market. At the same time that roof trusses, floor trusses and wall panels are sold, the component manufacturer/distributor can also benefit by selling the array of accessories that come with the CFS industry.

In today's market, we are fortunate to have reliable suppliers that can offer those companies interested in getting to the CFS construction industry the opportunity to expand and exploit this segment of the market. For instance, this industry has progressed to the point that the toolmakers have developed tools that can be used easily and quickly, making steel component construction very efficient.

Finally, finding knowledgeable labor to do the job in CFS steel is much easier today because standards have been developed that make the material easier to understand and apply, and more of the commercial market overall is using CFS products. This increase is due to the hard work of the American Iron and Steel Institute, the Steel Framing Alliance, the Light Gauge Steel Engineers Association, the Steel Truss and Component Association, and the NAHB Research Center for developing the standard guidelines and training curriculums needed to increase the level of knowledge about this industry.

Why fix it if ain't broken? Well, there may be no need to fix anything, but there are big reasons

to expand!

Michael de Ovando has been involved in the design, engineering, and marketing of cold-formed steel framing systems for nearly 25 years. He was introduced to the industry in 1977 when he won a contest in Mexico City, using cold-formed steel products to construct the most efficient and economic low income housing possible. De Ovando currently serves as president of USA Frametek in Austin, TX.

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