

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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## Editor's Message



Technology: Learn to Get Ahead of Your Competition by  
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*"Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb." —Sir Winston Churchill*

The structural building components industry is driven by technology. The core product of the industry, the metal plate connected wood truss, is itself a "new" technology when viewed in light of building construction over the last few hundred years. Since the invention of the metal plate connected truss, we have constantly improved the tools and materials used to design and make structural building components, but we aren't finished yet. In fact, we seem to be increasing the pace of change in the technology we use to design and manufacture building components.

Why all the changes? In a word, it is "competition." Competition with other methods and among manufacturers to produce the products that our customers want, when they want them, at the price they will pay. To stay in the game one must keep up with this changing technology and employ those advances that make sense in their business. To be prosperous, one must get ahead of the competition.

How can you get ahead? Educate yourself. I'm not advocating going back to school. I am suggesting that you constantly search for better ways of operating your business. Talk to others both inside and outside of the industry. Educate your employees. [WTCA's Truss Knowledge Online \(TKO\)](#) is a useful site for your employees to improve their knowledge and skills in a wide array of subjects. Attend [BCMC](#) every year and you'll see first hand the rapid pace of change.

Most importantly, be willing to try doing things a new way. If you refuse to make the investment in trying something new, you will never get better. While you stay with what you know, your competitor will get more efficient. Let me tell you a little bit about what he or she may be doing right now.

He/she is trying out a new linear sawing system and discovering lower labor and material costs as a result. He/she is also trying to run a part of his factory without paperwork orders. How much paper do you use? He/she is keeping up with raw material, work-in-process and finished goods inventory in real time. He/she is experimenting with electronic seals and signatures. He/she is receiving and sending some drawings electronically along with exploring better and faster

ways of communicating with his/her and your customers. Are you surprised? Do you want to know why?

Make plans right now to attend BCMC in Charlotte, NC this October 6-8. Your competition will be there learning about new and better tools and methods. Don't miss the opportunity to talk to other people in this business about problems and solutions that you have. I am often surprised at the really good ideas I pick up from others.

While you are at the show soaking up all these ideas, be willing to share what you know as well. Consider staying for WTCA's Open Quarterly board meeting on Saturday, October 9. Your participation is essential in keeping WTCA useful. Without the direct involvement of new people in our association, we get stale and run the risk of failing to do the important work of being your collective voice. With your involvement, we can continue to advance the technology for the good of the industry, each member and our customers.

Consider two projects being contemplated right now that you can help steer and shape. First, we are considering creating a market reporting process on the lumber our members buy. The data reported would be based on the anonymous reporting of transactions conducted by members. How can such a tool provide members with reliable and timely feedback? Second, we are advocating that a standard data format be developed that can be used with manufacturing machinery and software to make building component communication easier. Every structural building component is basically a finite number of members with specific geometry oriented a specific way in a specific location joined by specific connectors with both members and connectors coming from specific stock materials. Surely we could agree on how this data could be stored for ease of use by a manufacturing machine or scheduling software, regardless of who the vendors involved might be.

Maybe you have perspective on these issues that could be valuable to our industry. I encourage your participation in all issues affecting our industry, not just those that are technology driven. Email your thoughts and ideas to [editor@sbcmag.info](mailto:editor@sbcmag.info).

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[SBC HOME PAGE](#)

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