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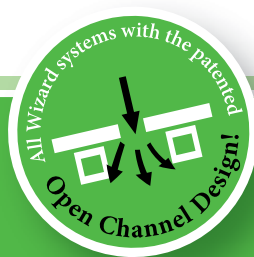
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Editor's Message

Reap the Benefits of Design Phase Involvement

by Steven Spradlin

Why you should get out and talk
to architects and engineers.

Over the past several years SBCA has developed quite a few programs and publications that are very beneficial for promoting building component design and specification. I've found that the best way for these programs and services to be used is for individual manufacturers to meet with their local design professionals. There is no better place to get involved in projects than in the design phase.

The article on page 12 demonstrates this. Thanks to a lot of planning and organization in the design phase, a Habitat home in the Sacramento area qualified for the highest level of LEED certification—Platinum! The best part? There was no need to use FSC certified lumber in the trusses or components! Check out some of the advanced framing techniques that were used.

I encourage component manufacturers to stretch themselves and get out into the architect and engineering communities to use the resources available to help market their companies and product lines. Being involved or specified in the design process will reap more rewards than you might imagine. Take this example. Lately in our market we're seeing between seven and ten general contractors bidding on large commercial projects. Just one visit to an architect or engineer for a specific project can give you the opportunity to get in the door of those seven to ten prospects. It can be a monumental achievement from one simple visit to a local professional design entity.

For the specifiers you already have a solid relationship with, maybe a set of reference materials would interest them. SBCA packaged its best resources for design professionals into a nifty kit. For under \$200, architects and engineers get more than \$450 worth of SBC tools including access to SBCA's Online Resource Library, Component Technology Workshops for CEUs/PDHs, industry publications and all the benefits of SBCA membership! Learn more about the Design Professional Subscription here: www.sbcindustry.com/dps. This is an excellent product for marketing our industry.

On page 9, you'll find a letter submitted by Ben Hershey, who held my position as SBCA President last year. I agree that he has a valid concern about the cost of certified wood and Chain of Custody. Simple economics will ultimately determine the choices our customers make; rest assured especially in the current business environment they will choose the least expensive building material. There comes a point when the "greenness" of a product doesn't matter. It's the cost that will prevail. I hope we will see the day when wood and steel are treated equitably in green building programs.

Finally, I encourage you to read the article on page 18, "Component Manufacturers, Lumber Producers Address Lumber Quality." Despite beginning to emerge from this highly challenging business cycle, our industry is faced with another challenge—securing quality raw materials at an affordable price. Our products are only as good as the materials we build them with. I think any time we can hear the buyer and seller sides of an issue, we're a step closer to finding solutions. I commend the lumber producers and component manufacturers for sharing their feedback with **SBC** staff. I am encouraged that we are making and will continue to make forward progress on the issue of lumber quality. **SBC**

Do you have an article idea for a future issue or a topic that you would like to see covered? Email your thoughts and ideas to editor@sbcmag.info.

at a glance

- ❑ A Sacramento Habitat home achieved LEED certification without FSC certified lumber. See how on page 12.
- ❑ Check out Ben Hershey's point of view on the cost of certified wood on page 9.
- ❑ Get out into the architect and engineering communities and use resources from SBCA to help market yourself.

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COMPONENT MANUFACTURER OPINION:

Cost of Certified Wood Raises Concern

Dear Lumber Producers:

I think we can all agree that lumber is one of the greenest products on the market today. Today we have well-managed forests and by most estimates we have more trees growing on the Earth today than we did 25 or more years ago.

Now, let me get to my point; where did lumber producers get off the proverbial bus when it comes to USGBC (United States Green Building Council) and its LEED rating system? Many forest certification systems exist, including FSC, SFI, CSA, ATFS, and PEFC and it appears that a majority of the mills producing lumber in Canada and the United States are, in fact, certified to one of these systems. But what is often overlooked is the cumbersome and costly process of Chain of Custody. You can stamp all you want that your product is FSC or SFI certified, but without that piece of paper, the Chain of Custody is broken and my customer, the building owner, will not get the appropriate credit.

Let me share a real scenario that is beginning to happen in the marketplace today.

I had a recent meeting with one of my customers discussing LEED certification on their building. Our company is both FSC and SFI Chain of Custody certified. He wants his building to achieve LEED certification. I prepared my quote and showed him my base price for components made with regular lumber, and then I showed him the price for FSC lumber (an additional 25%). Note that the additional 25% would apply to engineered wood products as well. Needless to say, he was not happy with the price increase and talked about switching the project to steel which was about 18% more than my regular lumber pricing to him.

How did that happen? Well, those of us who are FSC certified had to spend money with the folks at FSC to have Chain of Custody certification. Couple that with the cost of certifying the forest the mill produced the lumber from and surprise, you get higher cost lumber. All of this added cost for lumber already produced from a managed forest. And what would be the difference be if my customer did decide to use steel? There would be no additional charge for LEED certification because steel is a recycled content material that LEED automatically awards credits for and there is no cumbersome Chain of Custody requirements with steel. Excuse me? I am not here to debate the environmental aspects of wood vs. steel. I merely am questioning where the lumber producers have been throughout this entire process and how they allowed the USGBC body through FSC and other agencies to price certified wood out of the marketplace.

Why have lumber producers and various organizations spent so much money educating architects and engineers on the benefits of using wood? The industry has spent millions of dollars already on the WoodWorks program using money from the softwood lumber agreement and contributions from producers and associations. It appears to me that this money has been completely wasted if USGBC is not going to make it cost competitive to use wood in the commercial structures they are trying to promote. Yet I understand the importance of marketing wood and wood products to architects and engineers. In the scenario above, the lumber industry is causing our customers to think about moving toward steel given the higher cost of wood. It's more like EconomicsWorks! It does not take a rocket science degree to know that developers and owners are not going to pay an additional 7% just to earn LEED points.

Where is the visible and vocal fight from lumber producers trying to get USGBC to accept wood as stamped and stop this money making charade of Chain of Custody? I have often wondered why the lumber producers have never done more to tell their story to the American public about how we grow trees today and put down this Gore-type myth that we are robbing the forests of trees. I had

the opportunity to visit the Weyerhaeuser Mount St. Helens Forest Learning Center and was amazed at the quick response to replanting 18 million trees that were lost during the volcanic eruption. Surprised? You should be. Where is the education of this? Somehow the lumber industry, even with all the money it has spent on its association marketing programs, lost its voice trumpeting the good things its industry does starting with the use of the whole tree and managing the forests that are harvested from. You, the lumber producers, need to stand up and start fighting for what is right and promoting wood as the green product it is. Otherwise, while we like working with steel components as well, our customers will be increasingly pushed in that direction.

So where do you start; my thought is you need to be at the table now with LEED and change the requirements to allow wood that is stamped with the various forest certification programs and credit awarded accordingly without the added costs of Chain of Custody. If you cannot do this, then why should component manufacturers continue to fight to use FSC, SFI or other certified wood? The industry should also be working to get more seats at the table. Look at the makeup of the USGBC and FSC governing boards; I do not see any of you at that table helping to guide or set policy. SBCA has taken the position that we should not need Chain of Custody certification for our products given the major value of building system engineering. We believe that wood is an inherently green product. We further believe that a greater number of points should be awarded for optimum value engineering in the LEED-NC rating system for new commercial structures as has been done in LEED for Homes. We applaud LEED for awarding substantial points for advanced framing techniques.

Our company has taken the time and money to be FSC and SFI Chain of Custody certified and to have individuals trained in the LEED program. We believe we need to be involved in these activities if we are going to stay current with our customers' needs. But keeping current on green programs does not take away the difficulty of trying to sell customers wood that is significantly more expensive than it should be. You hear our voice, but where is yours? If you want to see continued use of wood in commercial applications like WoodWorks promotes and not see these structures move increasingly to steel or other applications, then the lumber industry needs to start being heard. Ours cannot be the lone voice in the lumber construction wilderness questioning why social policy is suddenly a money-making proposition for FSC.

I hope you hear the frustration in my voice; I am an advocate for supplying our customers with the lumber necessary to meet the growing green standards being advocated for in building construction. But the current producer-to-market distribution of green certified lumber is not working. I am committed to working, and want to work, with the lumber producers to help affect policy, but you need to reach "across the aisle" and work with me/us/our association to help your lumber buyers' voice be heard with USGBC and other creators of green rating systems. This is not a time to worry about which association is controlling the talking points or the turf. It is more important to understand that the component manufacturing industry needs lumber producers' voices to be heard on this issue.

Sincerely,

Ben Hershey
President, Alliance TruTrus • SBCA 2010 Immediate Past President

May 2010

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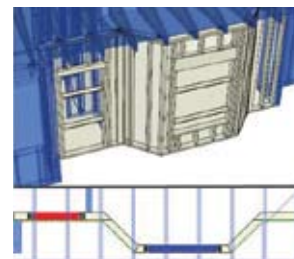
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