

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE (FORMERLY WOODWORDS)

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NAHB RESEARCH CENTER RESOURCES:

Sales Success with Builders: You've Got What It Takes

Letting builders know that your product exists is just the beginning of a successful marketing campaign—your advertising should show them what to expect from your product and company during purchase and installation, as well as throughout the life of the product.

Be sure that the product information you provide can appeal to a wide audience—this means supplementing technical information with easily understood language. Although builders are usually the primary decision-makers when it comes to structural building products, they can also be influenced by contractors, architects, engineers, framers, suppliers, code officials and home buyers. Once a builder has decided to use your product, they may want to share the information that they get from you with these secondary decision-makers. Also, don't assume that builders are the only ones seeking out your products—these secondary decision-makers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about products and are doing their share of investigating, primarily through the Internet. Marketing your business in the local markets you serve is becoming more important. Having the builder and customer know you can only help your sales.

The NAHB Research Center, the not-for-profit research arm of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), has conducted numerous focus groups and surveys as part of its HOMEBASE SERVICES to identify how builders make decisions about switching or adopting new products and materials. The following is what we have learned.

DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS

Builders want to be able to make informed decisions about products. Having access to technical information about your product helps builders decide that it is the right one for the job. This is the time to make your product stand apart! Providing builders with technical information helps them make educated comparisons and informed decisions. Be sure that they can easily find:

- Pictures and descriptions of your product that show how it is different from the competition.
- Specifications that describe height, weight, length, connections, cutouts for guides and hips. Provide installation examples with connection details.
- Cost information, or, if this is highly dependent on design specifications, examples that demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of your product or system. Does it save labor? Increase durability? Reduce callbacks?

STAND BY ME

Cost is definitely important to builders, but it's not the only factor they consider when making choices. Assuring builders that they can trust your product is an important selling point. Builders are always trying to reduce the number of callbacks they receive. They want to make sure that your product is durable and will not fail on the job or after installation. Make sure that builders know who you are and how to get in touch with you. Builders want to make sure that you can provide trusses on time, ready to install, labeled properly and in the correct order. If there is a problem, they need quick field repairs and replacement trusses—delays can slow down construction, costing builders time and money. Assure them that they have no need to worry by including:

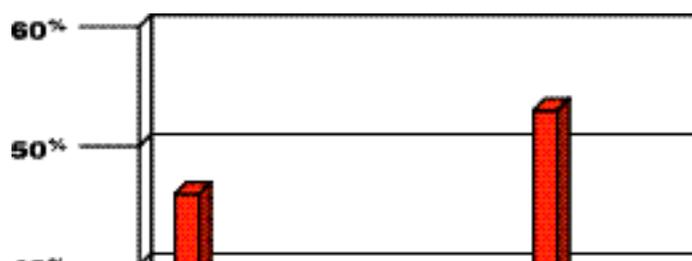
- Company contact information: No customer feels comfortable purchasing from a stranger, and builders are certainly no exception.
- Customer testimonials: Go ahead and let builders know how great you are! Many builders are reluctant to try new products that have not been tested by their peers. Complimentary testimonials by builders that have used your product will give added confidence to new customers.
- Test data: Provide builders with evidence that your product meets or exceeds necessary standards. (WTCA QC can provide data like this.)
- Certification information: If you participate, certification programs (like WTCA QC) add credibility to your product, again building customer confidence.
- Warranty information: Let builders know that you are confident enough to stand behind your product.

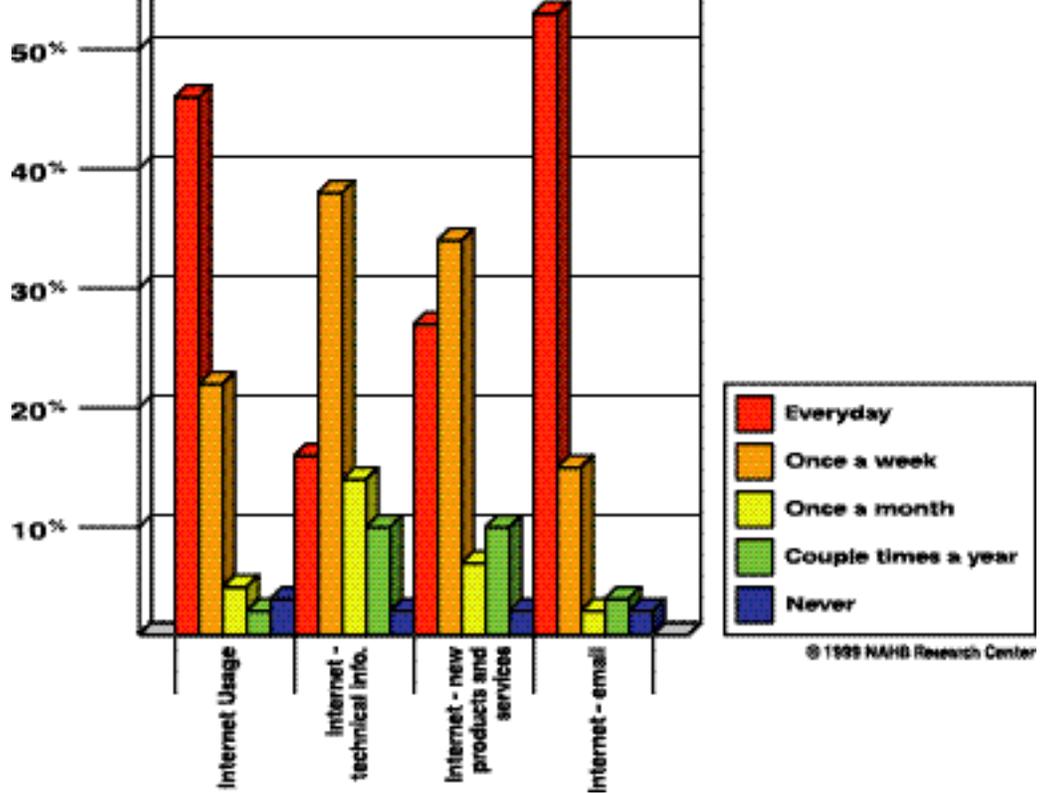
You may also want to conduct a survey of your builder customers and invite them to visit your plant to meet your designers and shipping supervisors. Many builders are unaware of the sophistication and precision that are employed when producing trusses and would be impressed by the process.

IT'S EASY!

Compared with site-built rafters, wood trusses are quick and easy to install. Don't forget to remind builders of this! The labor shortage is one of the biggest issues currently facing the industry. First cost is always important to builders, but they also want to know if your product can save them money on the jobsite. Ease of installation is a great selling point—include phrases such as "installed on time, on budget" in your promotions to appeal to builders.

Providing installation information also prepares builders for what to expect on the jobsite and allows them to share this information with their contractors. Provide detailed pictures and bilingual instructions whenever possible. Also, let builders know if you have experts available for technical assistance should they experience any problems. Because most builders do not have a technical or engineering staff, providing this service is a marketing advantage.





WHERE TO BUY

Now that builders know that they want to use your product, make sure they know where to get it. Builders often complain that they are not given contact information for local suppliers. Time is money to builders—even if they are convinced that your product is right for the job, they don't want to spend time searching for a vendor that will sell it to them. Many builders polled in a recent HOMEBASE SERVICES survey stated that they wanted information on where they could purchase the products they had chosen.

THE FINE PRINT

Builders do not want to feel that they are on their own once the product has been purchased. Advertise clearly how they can reach you if there is an issue that needs to be resolved. A great way to let builders know that they have your support is by providing a toll-free hotline with knowledgeable representatives that are available to provide assistance. Again, including warranty information not only assures builders and their customers that your product is reliable, it can also circumvent future disagreements and hassles.

ONE-STOP SHOPPING

The Internet is a fantastic way to make all of this information available and easily accessible. Many builders already see the Internet as a valuable resource for product information. In a recent HOMEBASE SERVICES survey, 45 percent of builders reported that they use the Internet for business every day. Many believe that the Internet is a quick and convenient way to find product data and contact information.

The Catalog of Building Products and Services (CBPS), which is distributed several times a year

by the NAHB Research Center's HOMEBASE SERVICES on CD ROM, is also available on the Internet through the Research Center's web site (www.nahbrc.org). The CBPS is a one-stop resource for building products. It was designed by builders to have the information they need to make informed decisions about products. The CBPS also makes it easy for builders to share information with their contractors, superintendents, sales staff and customers, guaranteeing that your product is well known and understood. WTCA has a section on this catalog, and all WTCA members are listed.

The NAHB Research Center and WTCA are working together closely to provide sound information to builders through WTCA's participation in HOMEBASE.

The NAHB Research Center seal is recognized throughout the world as a mark of product quality and an assurance of product performance. For more information about this or any related issue, call 800/898-2842.

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