

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE (FORMERLY WOODWORDS)

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Executive Director's Message



"A Future with a United Spirit" by Kirk Grundahl

It is highly likely that this year we've focused more on the future than any other year heretofore. The reason seems to have to do more with Y2K than anything, although one seems to get a bit of an apocalyptic twist thrown in for good measure.

BCMC is always a great place to step back and take a fresh look at the future of our industry. In this spirit, let's consider for a moment what WTCA has on the horizon as well:

- The buzzword today in our industry and many others is consolidation. Who would have thought Chrysler and Daimler-Benz would merge? How about Weyerhaeuser and MacMillan Bloedel? What does this consolidation frenzy mean to our industry internally and externally? None of us really knows, but one can be sure that it means a changing economic landscape. It should be an exciting few years to be part of this industry.
- The labor pool is not expanding fast enough for any of us. We will need to cultivate additional sources of talent through liaisons with high schools, community colleges and universities. Using an aggressive local recruitment plan in conjunction with Truss Technician Training™ will allow you to grow your employees locally and promote from within.
- Industry automation continues. Walk through most manufacturing plants today in this country, and the one thing you will find is less people and more machines. As new and different suppliers enter our businesses, they will bring a fresh perspective on the improvements we can make in automation. Manufacturers that take advantage of their expertise will find competitive advantages that can be exploited to the extreme!
- Since we are finding out that there is no silver bullet to wipe away our problems, it is increasingly important to put a human face on the truss industry. As our industry grows and matures, we become increasingly visible, primarily because we represent a change in the way construction has been done. This means that we will be subject to greater scrutiny and possibly more regulation. This has been seen most dramatically when local communities require our industry to take specific measures as a result of the fire service's negativity toward the products we produce.
- The only way we can have a positive impact on local legislation is to be involved in the process. This means holding open houses, giving seminars and tours of our operations, and attending city, township and county meetings.
- The truss industry is a valuable community asset, and everyone in the communities we serve needs to know us. This is why WTCA is working so hard to strengthen
- our chapter base and help put on the Truss Technology Workshops™ that educate our markets

- on the how's and why's of our industry. Our future can be in our hands if we want it to be.
- The *Certified Framer* program is a venture that we are currently working on (NAHB Research Center is the lead organization in partnership with WTCA). This is a significant project funded by the U.S. Government under the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) initiative. Our goal is to have a certification process in place by the end of 2000. We think that this program has the potential to be beneficial to all involved in construction, and are quite excited that PATH has had the foresight to use government funds on a project that all participants feel is going to truly change the industry.
 - The *Smart Components*[™] operational plan has been under development this year under the guidance of the following team:
 - Ken Cloyd, President and CEO, California Truss Company
 - Barry Dixon, Vice President Marketing, True House
 - David Gould, Former President, Wood Structures Group
 - Craig Steele, President and CEO, Schuck Components
 - Kent Pagel, President, Pagel Davis and Hill, WTCA Counsel

Smart Components incorporates WTCA's vision for the future and follows closely on the heels of our very successful *Framing the American Dream*[®] concepts. We believe that the wood truss industry needs to develop the analytical methods to:

- Perform 3-dimensional full building structural analysis and design, using computer aided analytical techniques.
- Create, modify and develop new component concepts and techniques.
- Perform best-system economic analysis on the various component concepts created. This will allow for easy assessment of the economic viability of both the individual components that make up the system and the integration of these components for the completed building.

Visualize yourself in a virtual reality computer-based system where you could walk through the house creating the building's architectural look as you go—substituting components based on ease of use and economics, calculating flow of loads and structural capacity and finally arriving at the best cost structural framing system. Builders are increasingly demanding that we supply them with the best economic structural building solution for their framing needs. We are businesses that they rely on to provide them with the information and vision they need to meet their customers' demands for unique, stylish, yet affordable homes. In other words, we are the builders' framing consultant, and we are then in the business of finding the most economic component solutions for our customers' structural building application needs. Truss Technician Training[™] will become increasingly important to our industry's technical growth and will be necessary to make *Smart Components* a reality. *WTCA QC* is just beginning to find its place as our members use it for their in-plant quality control management systems. Those using it are finding the monetary benefits that our QC Committee has been saying were there for so long. Managing quality well will have increasing value in the future, and *Smart Components* will certainly take advantage of having these systems in place.

Building design and construction is a very complex process of interrelated professions tackling separate and distinct design and construction activities. Often our industry is required to fill the gaps in this process. This may mean we will have to change the way we currently transact

business. We may very well have to become the building designer of record and perform total building engineering and design services. The real challenge is going to be to resist the temptation to bury these valuable services in the cost of the trusses, and slowly but surely erode our ability to get paid for taking on the challenge and risks of performing complete building design. Our industry challenge will be to develop a strategic plan that fits into the significant changes taking place in design responsibilities.

All of us involved with WTCA have reason to be excited about our future because we have taken so many strides forward, and are poised to provide even greater value through positive change as we move in that direction. Can we accomplish all of this? We clearly can if we do not let the naysayers, the "self-promoters" and the inevitable politics that creep up on us get in our way. We can accomplish anything we set our mind to if we communicate well, speak the same language and are united in spirit and purpose. We will accomplish much because WTCA's membership is made up of tremendous people with incredible talent, and best of all we have that united spirit that will serve our industry well and will create the best possible "Solutions for 2000."

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