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STRATEGIES FOR LUMBER/BUILDING MATERIAL DISTRIBUTION PROS

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OCTOBER 2021 \$10 U.S.

ANCHOR LUMBER

EMBRACING THE NEXT
GENERATION

IN DEPTH: FASTENERS

IN THE WORLD OF FASTENERS, SUCCESS
LIES IN RECOGNIZING THE DETAILS

REAL ISSUES. REAL ANSWERS.

WHAT IS FAIR COMPENSATION?



ALEX MCGEHEE, PRESIDENT OF ANCHOR LUMBER



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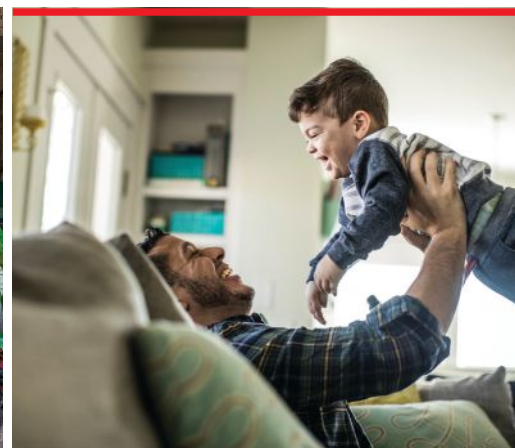
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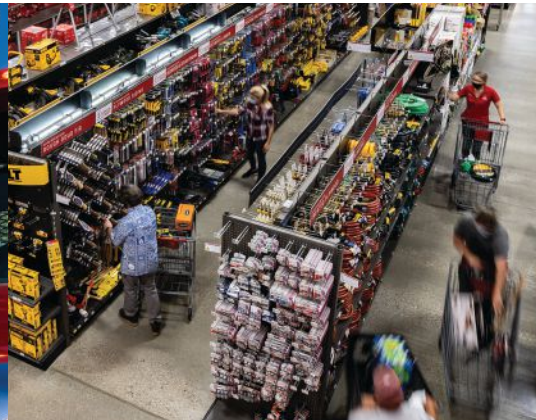
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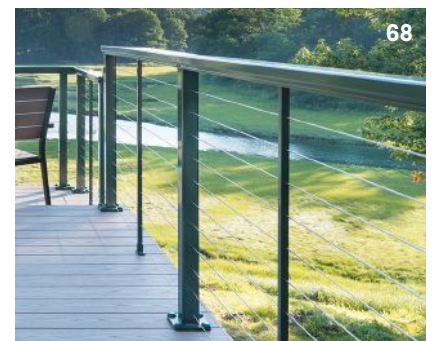
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First we went above.



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Embracing disruption

“Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future.”

— John F. Kennedy

Along with some members of the LBM Journal team, I spent much of last week in Denver at a conference for publishing and media companies. The timing wasn't ideal: 2021 has turned out to be our busiest (and biggest) year ever. Plus, it's just a few weeks before our own event, the LBM Strategies Conference. When I mentioned this trip to a friend, he asked why we would take time away from work during such a busy time. My answer was that at least some of our success is a direct result of our attendance at industry events like this.

Here are just a couple of takeaways from that event. (Though publishing isn't the same as the LBM industry, see if any of this sounds familiar.)

- As we've gotten busier, our small staff is stretched even thinner than before, so we need tools that will help us work better and smarter. We found a couple of software companies whose platforms are lightyears beyond the legacy system we've been on since we launched in 2003. After talking with publishers, our team is excited to leverage these powerful new tools when we make the switch later this year or early next year.
- Just as the LBM industry is having issues with material shortages, the publishing industry is battling unprecedented paper shortages and price spikes. Conversations with a couple of printers who sponsored this event gave me the insights I needed to have a more informed talk with our long-time printer.

Yes, some work piled up while I was out of the office, and yes, there were unanswered emails, voicemails, etc. But my teammates and I returned to our offices re-energized, with fresh ideas and insights about serving our audience and our advertisers better and smarter. I have no doubt that one year from now, we'll look back in amazement at how we managed to get by using the tools we used back in 2021. It won't be easy, but it will be good.

Since joining the LBM industry back in 1990, I've become a big believer in the power of conferences and other networking events. The friendships that are forged and strengthened, the knowledge that's gained, and the fresh perspectives from talking with peers is well worth the time out of the office and the price of travel.

By the time you read this, LBM Strategies Conference 2021 will likely be over. If you're open to getting away, seeing what's new, learning new things, and meeting new people, visit LBMJournal.com and click on Events. Then, if you haven't already, mark your calendar for the International Builders Show, February 8-10 in Orlando.

Here's to spending time beyond our comfort zones, embracing disruption, and using what we learn to serve our companies, our employees, and our customers.

— Rick Schumacher
Executive Editor & Publisher



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What Treated Wood should be chosen for Backyard Projects? The Answer is Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood

BY BELINDA REMLEY

Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood. It is a name synonymous with innovation, quality, and beautiful backyards throughout North America. And it's no wonder. After all, the outdoor living revolution began with Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood about five decades ago in the suburbs of Chicago.

It was a simple experiment. Would homeowners want to use treated wood products to enhance their outdoor living? The answer came in the boom that started with simple decking projects and has blossomed into elaborate outdoor living spaces that are dreamed up by homeowners and built by professionals. And during that time, weekend warriors have discovered that they can add to their outdoor living experience with simpler builds such as raised bed gardens, picnic tables, and fences.



A: Decks made with Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood are found throughout North America and are sources of enjoyment, relaxation, and enhanced outdoor living.

B: Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood is ideal for do-it-yourself projects such as this planter bar. A plan is located at wolmanizedwood.com

C: Raised bed gardens are the second most popular backyard project, only behind decks in demand. Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood is perfect to create garden beds that will last year after year.



"Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood has been used in countless outdoor projects throughout North America," says Matt Roughen, Head of Marketing North America for LSI Wood Protection. "It is our flagship brand most people know and also equate with quality treated wood products that will enhance their backyard projects. It's real wood that is fortified to last."

The preservative in Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood has evolved over decades to its current form, Wolman® E copper. "We developed copper azole more than 20 years ago when we saw the industry looking for a preservative that did not contain arsenate," explains Matt. "We wanted to continue producing a long-lasting product that would still feature the natural beauty of real wood."

What makes Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood the preferable choice for homeowners and contractors today?

It is safe to handle and easy to work with.

- Common tools such as a drill, a level and a saw are all that homeowners need to create beautiful projects.

It is readily available and can be found at many retail lumberyards.

- If a builder is short a few pieces or decides to add something, a quick trip back to the lumberyard allows the project to stay on track.

It is made from the most renewable resource available to the building industry.

- Grown on managed forest lands, most trees mature to harvest in about 25-30 years.
- There is more forest land in North America than even existed in early 1900s.

Effective Wolman® E copper azole preservative extends the life of the wood.

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Projects made with Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood are easily maintained.

- Can be cleaned, brightened, stained and painted.
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To learn more and see terms and conditions, visit www.wolmanizedwood.com.

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Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood is more than just a beautiful, natural, durable product - it also allows for infinite customization with paint, stain and accessories. As trends change, a new color is an inexpensive way for homeowners to stay en vogue.

Choose wood -
It's flexible, timeless,
and always in style.



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It's okay to learn the new ways

MY 20-YEAR-OLD SON, who recently started a new job at a custom cabinet shop, told me that there is a guy at his work who no one wants him to train with. They don't want the new kid training with the old guy because, as my son says, "Bob doesn't believe in digital measurements."

Bob is great at his job, even a rookie 20-year-old can see that. Bob has been there since the shop opened 30-some years ago and from what I hear, most days the place couldn't run without him. However, the fact that he prefers a decade-old tape measure over a digital saw fence read-out isn't something that management wants the younger employees to model. Bob has his place in the organization and has a wealth of information to share; he just likes people to do things the way he's always done them.

My son shared this story with me the same day I conducted a phone interview for this month's cover story on Alex McGehee at Anchor Lumber. I talk to a lot of people like Alex who own their own lumberyards. Some might say that a few of the people I talk to who are in Alex's position are somewhat set in their ways. That may or may not be true, but if it is who can blame them? Their ways have made them the successful businesspeople they are today.

Yet when I got off the phone with Alex, a part of the conversation stuck with me so much that it later became essential to the Anchor Lumber story. Alex admitted that he's not always sure that the ways he learned to do things are still the best ways to get things done. In fact, maybe some of the younger people in his organization have come up with even better ways to do things. Namely, Alex was talking about his son, Sam.

Having his son in the business has opened Alex up to what he called a generation gap in knowledge. Seeing things through his son's

eyes has improved his business, Alex said, but it only happened once Alex had accepted that what he was taught by his father may not be the best way to do things now, some 40 years later.

Usually when people say there is a generation gap in knowledge, they're saying that the young people don't know how to do things the old way. But imagine the reverse of that scenario—that sometimes maybe the older generation doesn't know how to do things the most efficient way or with the most optimized tools.

It's refreshing to hear Alex's take on the knowledge gap in our industry—that essentially, it flows both ways. You can read more about him, his family, and Anchor Lumber on page 54. Alex's philosophy reminds me of something Rick Davis says from time to time. To paraphrase: "These millennials—they want to work smarter, not harder, they want flex time to spend with their young families, they want to be social—it's like they're human or something!"

You can find Rick's column addressing "order instigators" on page 30 of this issue. It serendipitously seems to fall into this theme of learning new ways to do things. So does Thea Dudley's column on page 34 about being new to a credit team, Shane Soule's column on page 38 about operating your fleet of trucks to peak efficiency, and a commentary from Cassie Fosher on page 14 about hiring in the changing LBM landscape.

My hope is that you'll learn (wherever you may find yourself along the knowledge gap personally) a little something new in each issue of *LBM Journal*. And if you've got some knowledge that you think our readers can benefit from, please let us know. We're all learning new things every day.

— James Anderson
Editor



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MAKING BETTER BUILDING PRODUCT PURCHASING DECISIONS

How Comparative Study Results Can Help Improve How You Select and Sell Products

When it comes to purchasing building materials, manufacturers are increasingly investing in third-party comparative studies to help prove how their products are engineered to provide benefits over competitive materials. With more resources available, building material distributors can sell better and enhance their reputation by doing their due diligence in researching study results and how products compare to competitors when it comes to durability and installation efficiency.

LP Building Solutions is one company who is taking advantage of the study resources available to the market and responding to distributors' demand for proof around how their products are made to be more durable than other siding materials is LP® SmartSide® Trim & Siding.

Recently, LP SmartSide partnered with RSMeans, an industry leader in construction cost estimates for over 70 years, to conduct a time and motion study that would produce credible claims. Why? John Gomes, Manager of Professional Services at RSMeans, explains, "When people hear RSMeans, they trust it because we have built a reputation in the construction industry as a neutral third-party company delivering accurate data. Our work helps to equip companies of all kinds with essential information to make the best purchasing decisions."

The study tested LP SmartSide Trim & Lap Siding products against fiber cement trim and siding products to see which demonstrated better installation efficiency. The study showed that LP SmartSide Primed Lap & Trim products outperformed fiber cement in key efficiency metrics such as 30% faster installation and 7% less scrap. With this information, LP was able to provide current and potential distributors with proven results to help inform their purchasing decisions and helped arm them with facts to better educate their customers.

When distributors are comparing materials they are buying or selling, "third-party studies like this are particularly valuable," says Gomes. He continues, "With neutral third-party results, builders have a trusted resource that allows them to see how products performed when tested in the exact same conditions. This helps eliminate the potential for bias."

When companies like LP invest in these types of studies, it highlights the importance they place on education and transparency. Juan Urquiza, Technical Sales Manager at LP, says, "Third-party studies add a layer of credentials that is highly respected within the construction industry." Reputable building material distributors want trusted products, and time and motion studies reinforce trust with customers.

Ultimately, when it comes to selecting products, all building material distribution professionals who look for products backed by third-party data will be at an advantage when buying and selling their products efficiently. Tested products can positively impact their end customers' bottom lines and reinforce trust within the brand. As seen in the RSMeans study, having proven results for competing products can offer a new perspective on how important credibility is when it comes to manufacturers and their products.

For more details on this study, visit: <https://lpcorp.com/proven-productivity>

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Making transparency work in the LBM industry

BY MATT MEYERS

WHAT IS IT ABOUT BEING transparent? It has become the everyday, every deal, statement that is made as easily as saying hello or shaking hands. The promise of being transparent has become so overused that it is seemingly almost an admission of being less than transparent, or not honest at all. For if you do business honestly, why would you need to state your desire to be transparent? It's a false positive or a positive falsity. Take your pick. So, perhaps it should be less of making the transparency pronouncement, and more about an explanation of what result may come to the business, the partner, or the client by virtue of a transparent business dealing.

In the lumber and building materials industry, we need to better examine how we use transparency for mutual gain, and in so doing, alleviate the sour connotation it has in the industry. When used in dealing with material suppliers and intermediaries, it incites an immediate negative reaction. In the lumber and materials industry, the typical use of the word means "you show me your costs, so I can dictate how much margin you make when you sell to me."

Historically, national builders beat the transparency drum in an attempt to reduce cost, a zero-sum game where transparency given by suppliers becomes the stick to whack prices to the lowest common denominator—"you give me transparency, I gain, you lose." The fact is that not all transparency is the same. It's like the difference between Transparency with a capital T and transparency with a small case t. When being transparent gives an unfair advantage or causes an unfair loss, then transparency isn't working and perhaps, just isn't necessary.

This leads us to the case for 'Beneficial Transparency' which exists in the form of "When we create transparency among ourselves, we have potential gains." An example is a data cooperative where collective data becomes transformational operating leverage and insights, yet not necessarily to the detriment of suppliers.

Another example is a shared supply and demand plan, where price discovery is informed by the value of product availability in time and not a thinly traded spot market; supply and demand planning reduces operating cost and increases profit.

Technology, with a capital T, has proven itself an outstanding driver and purveyor of transparency. The first transparency gains come from automation of price discovery. Think of price discovery in real estate (Zillow), equities (Robinhood), or shoes (Zappos)—these enterprises used transparency of accelerated discovery to the benefit of their

platforms. Losers in tech-enabled transparency have perpetuated their value on opacity.

Whether you spell transparency with a capital or lower-case T, really doesn't matter. But making transparency work for you and your business always will.

One real positive in the industry, and a very specific one too, is transparency around lead times. When you know how long it's going to take the mill to send you product, you have something to plan around, that helps you and helps the mill. This type of transparency is beneficial to both parties. You can negotiate your price off of the delivery time; you can both plan better; and you can both execute your business better, because you have transparency on a key variable: "When will this material be available?" That's different from transparency that focuses on "What is your cost? Let's compare. How do I control your margin?" Transparency on lead time can improve both of our businesses. It allows us both to win and succeed.

When unique value is being created, it will always remain. Even transparency through the explosion of digital technology doesn't change the dynamic that unique value can outlast transparency. Just look at the role of the travel agent. The agents that provide a unique value will benefit. If you want to fly from Seattle to Boston, for example, you check Expedia or the airline sites to find your flight and purchase your ticket. But if you want to spend three weeks on safari in Africa, you call a travel agent or a touring company/guide to help coordinate the plans. In this case, technology-driven transparency really changed an industry (travel by the likes of Orbitz, Travelocity, and Expedia), but where unique value could be found, that travel agent value remained.

An important reality about transparency in the lumber and building materials is that it already exists, yet is overlooked. Many of the companies in the industry are publicly traded and, therefore, have reporting requirements by the SEC that, by definition, are intended to bring transparency to these businesses and the ecosystem. A simple review of financial statements and filings sheds light on the costs and margins of the business.

When faced with the numerous complexities of business, best practices will always point toward accountability. And this is the truest essence of transparency. Taking ownership of making decisions that ensure a business's viability and the shared success of customers and partners. Transparency is not a mandate; it is a choice and should be an enhancement to your strategy and operations. ■

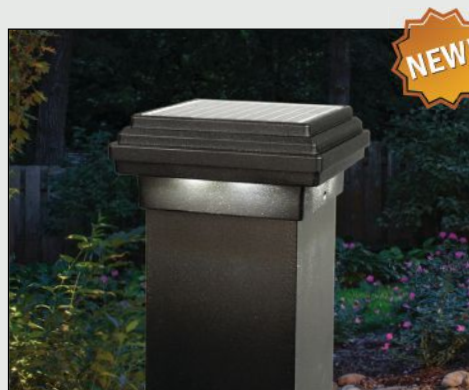


Matt Meyers is the founder and CEO of Yesler Marketplace, software developed to eliminate extra transactions and extra material movements in the building materials supply chain.



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Three tips for building the right team in a changing LBM landscape

BY CASSIE FOSHER

AS BUSINESSES HAVE STRUGGLED to keep up with the workload of the post-COVID economic rebound, LBM dealers in many markets have found it challenging to recruit and retain quality employees. But the trouble doesn't end once the team's roster is complete. Once the offers are accepted, it can be even harder to take the time to train the new hires, especially during a busy year.

While ramping up to adequate hiring and training levels, other business operations are taking a backseat. How you structure your team of new hires can help minimize these problems while also ensuring the new team is properly trained.

Things to consider when building your team: Building a solid team will help every area of your business. If you can find strong leaders and capable employees, your business will thrive. There are three keys to hiring a strong team that will help you keep up with business and innovate for the future:

1. Hire independent workers
2. Don't wait around when you find a good candidate
3. Look at the culture within your organization

INDEPENDENT WORKERS

One of the worst things you can do for your business when you already have a lot on your plate is to hire a team that needs babysitting. There are several ways that this can manifest itself.

The first type of team you need to avoid is the one that needs supervision to do quality work. When you set your team on a task, you should be confident that your employees will do quality work—even if you aren't there to oversee them personally.

Second, some teams lack integrity unless a supervisor is watching them and holding their hands. They will cut corners to save time, which ultimately harms both your business and that of your customers. A team with integrity will do the right thing even when nobody is watching.

You should build a team that shows passion for the work they're doing. A lack of passion results in laziness, missed deadlines, and shoddy work. So, while you're hiring, keep in mind how candidates convey a passion for the work they do.

Handholding takes an enormous amount of time, which only draws your resources even farther away from more crucial tasks. If you make sure to build independent, passionate teams, you can dedicate your precious time where it's needed most.

DON'T WAIT

As a recruiter, one of the most common mistakes I see in hiring is when companies wait to seal the deal with a candidate they want to hire. They think they can take their time before making an offer and wrapping them up, but today's job market simply doesn't allow for waiting around.

Job candidates have more options than ever before, so waiting a couple of days before making an offer can make a huge difference. If you're quick on the draw, you have a much higher chance of making a great hire.

Also consider that waiting around to see if someone better comes along could cost you a great candidate. You will either end up settling for someone who's just okay or leaving the position unfilled. Put simply, when you see a candidate you want, wrap them up quickly.

BE CULTURE FOCUSED

Culture has become one of the main focuses of potential candidates when they consider joining a new company. What are the core values of your organization? What do you do in the community? What does your employee longevity look like? These are questions that every potential candidate is asking.

If you have strong answers for those questions, you're like to attract best in class professionals who fit you.

At the end of the day, we spend more time with the people we work with than we do with our own families. People want to enjoy the group they work with and the organization they work for. ■



Cassie Foshier is vice president, partner, and executive recruiter for SnapDragon Associates. She's worked for the firm since graduating from Plymouth State University in 2013.

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UPDATES

PEOPLE

Weyerhaeuser has appointed **Travis Keatley** as senior vice president of Timberlands.

Judith Reinsdorf has been appointed to the **Cornerstone Building Brands** Board of Directors.

Jacob Speight named VP of sales at **Firestone Building Products**.

Chelsea Building Products has named **Jeff Martin** Northeast regional sales manager.

Ron Woznick has joined **ODL** as the company's new CFO.

Jeremiah Windle has been promoted to East Coast sales manager – Lumber and Building Materials at **SPAX**.

Envision Building Products, with its integration of **Fairway Architectural Railing Solutions**, has promoted **Rick Gebhart** to director of sales, **John Purvis** to senior divisional manager, **Charlie Haines** to Southern Division manager, **James Clark** to Midwest Division manager, **Kyle Warwick** to Central Valley Division manager/Fastener Category manager, and **Tom August** to Northeast Division manager.

ASSOCIATIONS

The **American Building Materials Alliance** (ABMA), a newly-formed federal legislative and regulatory affairs committee dedicated to providing advocacy efforts on behalf of the LBM industry, held its first official meeting Aug. 26.

The **Lumbermen's Association of Texas** honored **Bart Graves** and **Aaron Elliot** with member of the year awards at its 2021 annual Convention & Expo on Sept. 14 in Frisco, Texas.

INDUSTRY

Building Industry Partners has formed a new component manufacturing platform. **American Laminations** was developed in partnership with building industry veteran Ted Rock of **North American Specialty Laminations**.

Simpson Strong-Tie and **Hundegger** have announced a joint indirect investment in **North America Hundegger** equipment sales and service partner, **Hundegger USA, LC** to support mass timber and component manufacturing.



TRAVIS KEATLEY



JUDITH REINSDORF



JACOB SPEIGHT



JEFF MARTIN

Simpson Strong-Tie has donated \$25,000 to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund for the Haiti earthquake and \$15,000 for the California wildfires.

Royal Building Products will sponsor the **National Association of Home Builders** Remodeling Index.

Four Southern Pine sawmills—all members of the **Southern Forest Products Association**—are recent recipients of the 2020 Sawmill Safety Award. The winning mills are: **Almond Brothers Lumber Company** – Coushatta, Louisiana; **West Fraser** – Mansfield, Arkansas; **Weyerhaeuser** – Millport, Alabama; and **West Fraser** – Opelika, Alabama.

Cameron Ashley Building Products was voted a 2021 Best Place to Work in South Carolina by SC Biz News.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

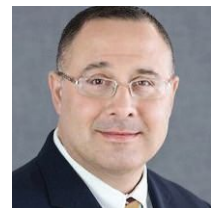
SRS Distribution has agreed to acquire **Aloha Roofing Supply**, a distributor in Kauai, Hawaii.

GAF will acquire **FT Synthetics**, a British Columbia-based manufacturer of synthetic underlayments for the steep slope roofing industry.

Woodgrain is expanding operations with the acquisition of **Independence Lumber**, which has sawmill locations Virginia and North Carolina.



RON WOZNICK



PAUL KANE

CO-OPS & BUYING GROUPS

Paul Kane has been named **LMC** senior VP of finance and technology.

Do it Best Corp. announced 20 hires or promotions at its corporate office this month, including the following in the LBM department: **Mike Jones** as Western LBM sales manager, **Floyd Stilson** as building materials trader, and **Rebecca Sell** as LBM sales support coordinator.

DISTRIBUTION

Ace Hardware plans new California distribution center in Visalia, California. The new facility will occupy more than 1 million square feet.

Humboldt Sawmill and **Allweather Wood** have partnered with **Aspen Pacific** for international sales.

Harvey Building Products, a manufacturer of new construction and replacement windows, patio doors, and entry doors, is celebrating its 60th anniversary.

Send news and updates about your organization to James@LBMJournal.com

NAHB ANALYSIS SHOWS GAINS FOR CUSTOM HOME BUILDING

The National Association of Home Builders has shared analysis of census data that indicates custom home building posted the second-best quarter since the Great Recession during the Spring of 2021.

There were 54,000 total custom building starts during the second quarter of the year. This marks a 15% gain from the second quarter of 2021, a comparison affected by the declines in economic activity in the spring of 2020. Nonetheless, over the last four quarters, custom housing starts totaled 187,000 units, a 4.5% gain from the prior four-quarter total.

Despite these gains, the market share for custom home building has declined as other forms of home building have expanded more rapidly.

CONSTRUCTION INPUT PRICES DOWN SLIGHTLY IN AUGUST

Construction input prices declined 0.6% in August compared to the previous month, according to an Associated Builders and Contractors analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Producer Price Index data. Nonresidential construction input prices fell 0.4% for the month.

Despite the monthly decline, construction input prices are still 20.8% higher relative to a year ago. Nonresidential construction input prices expanded 21.6% during that period. The price of natural gas has experienced the largest year-over-year increase, rising 132.2%, followed by the aggregate price of steel mill products, which increased 123.1%. Iron and steel prices have nearly doubled over the past year, increasing 95.2%. The prices of unprocessed energy materials and crude petroleum were also up, rising 79.2% and 74.8%, respectively.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOV 15-17 EPICOR INSIGHTS LBM USER CONFERENCE | San Antonio, TX
epicor.com

DEC 8-9 NORTHEASTERN RETAIL LUMBER ASSOCIATION (NRLA)
128th LBM EXPO | Providence, RI
nrla.org

JAN 11 WISCONSIN LUMBER DEALERS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Wisconsin Dells, WI | nlassn.org

FEB 1-2 NORTHWESTERN LUMBER ASSOCIATION (NLA) EXPO NEBRASKA
La Vista, NE | nlassn.org

FEB 3-4 NORTHWESTERN LUMBER ASSOCIATION (NLA) EXPO IOWA
West Des Moines, IA | nlassn.org

FEB 8-10 INTERNATIONAL BUILDERS SHOW | Orlando, FL | buildersshow.com

FEB 11-14 DO IT BEST SPRING MARKET
Indianapolis, IN | doitbestonline.com

FEB 21-23 LBM ADVANTAGE 2022 ANNUAL BUYING SHOW
Kissimmee, FL | lbmadvantage.com

MAR 7-8 NORTHWESTERN LUMBER ASSOCIATION (NLA) EXPO NORTH
St. Cloud, MN | nlassn.org

TOUGH CALL ANSWERS

ANSWERS TO OUR AUGUST TOUGH CALL SURVEY:

THE DELIVERY DILEMMA: JAMIE VS. OPERATIONS

YOUR TOP SALESPERSON PERSISTS IN MAKING DELIVERY PROMISES THAT YOUR OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY TEAM CAN'T POSSIBLY MEET. HERE'S HOW READERS WOULD HANDLE THIS TOUGH CALL.

SURVEY RESULTS FROM LBMJOURNAL.COM

1.8%

STAY THE COURSE. The last thing you want to do is limit Jamie's sales. Let him do his thing, and work with your operations and delivery team to deliver on his promises.

17.8%

WARN JAMIE. Tell Jamie that making promises the team can't keep is hurting the company and his customers. Either he follows the scheduling rules like everyone else, or he'll lose accounts.

68.7%

FIX IT. This is the kind of situation that separates true leaders from mere bosses. Bring your team together on this, and get them to work together on a solution that makes sense.

11.7%

OUTSOURCE. If limited delivery capacity is slowing your sales, the obvious move is to outsource some of your deliveries during peak periods. The added cost will be well worth it.



NAHB: FEWER HOMES BUILT WITH THREE-CAR GARAGES IN 2020

A majority of new homes that completed construction in 2020 included two-car garages (67%), according to NAHB analysis of 2020 Census Bureau Survey of Construction data. There is clear uniformity for parking options in new homes completed across the Census divisions: two-car garages were the most popular parking option for completed homes in all divisions.

The option for three or more car garages was most popular in the West North Central division with 46% of completed homes opting for this parking option. The South Atlantic division had the highest share of two-car garages with 75%. One-car garages were most popular in the New England division (23%), while "other" which includes carport, off-street parking, and other parking facilities was the largest share in New England (17%).

The 2020 data indicates that as the size of completed home increases, the share of one-car garage or "other" declines. At the same time, the share of completed homes with two or more garages increased as the square footage of the house increased. The "other" category is the largest share of homes with less than 1,200 square feet at 68%, but as the square footage of the home increases, the share of homes with "other" parking options, declines to 2% in homes larger than 5,000 square feet. The percentage of completed homes with a one-car garage is at 17% for homes between 1,200-1,599 square feet, the highest share in its category. The proportion of completed homes with a one-car garage is the lowest at 1% for homes larger than 5,000 square feet.

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Ventilation Products

GAF Cobra®
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We protect what matters most™



¹Although Master Flow® Attic Exhaust Vents count as an eligible accessory product in the GAF Attic Ventilation Category, they are covered by either the Master Flow® Powered Ventilation Products Limited Warranty or Master Flow® Ventilation Products Limited Warranty, depending on the product.

NAHB INTERNATIONAL BUILDERS' SHOW RETURNS TO ORLANDO IN 2022

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) has officially opened online registration for the 2022 NAHB International Builders' Show (IBS), the largest annual light construction trade show in the world.

IBS will take place in person at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, Feb. 8-10, where it will again co-locate with the National Kitchen & Bath Association's (NKBA) Kitchen & Bath Industry Show (KBIS) for Design & Construction Week (DCW). The two shows are expected to host more than 1,000 exhibiting brands spanning over 800,000 net square feet of exhibit space, for the largest annual gathering of the residential design and construction industry.

"We look forward to welcoming our attendees back to Orlando for the housing industry's premier event," said NAHB Chairman Chuck Fowke. "This show offers all the top products, connections and education opportunities in one place. IBS 2022 gives attendees a front seat to the latest trends, business solutions and industry connections and is an event that you won't want to miss."

Attendees with an All-Access Pass registration will have access to 110+ education sessions led by renowned experts on a wide range of industry topics. For a deeper dive into specific industry topics, attendees can participate in Pre-Show Master Workshops, in-depth, 3-hour intensive programs held on Feb. 7, the day before the show officially kicks off. These workshops are part of pre-show education and will be open to all registered attendees for an additional fee.

IBS attendees will have the opportunity to experience new show floor destinations, including the New Product Zone, featuring the latest products and cutting-edge market solutions; the Home Tech Zone, featuring in-demand tech products and interactive demos; and innovative emerging solutions in the IBS Start-Up Zone. Attendee favorites, the High Performance Building Zone, the IBS Jobsite Safety Zone and

the IBS Home Technology Solutions Pavilion in collaboration with CEDIA will return in 2022.

The 2022 show will kick off on the morning of Feb. 8 with Opening Ceremonies and that evening will host the Official IBS House Party. Other events throughout the week include the Young Pro Party Wednesday night at Ole Red, followed by the IBS Closing Concert Thursday night.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to tour NAHB's official IBS show homes, The New American Home (TNAH) and The New American Remodel (TNAR). The homes are designed to showcase innovative building tech-

nologies, emerging design trends and the latest building products. The showcase products in the homes are provided by members of the NAHB Leading Suppliers Council.



The NAHB International Builders' Show is not open to the general public. Building industry professionals and their affiliates are invited to register by visiting the show's website at BuildersShow.com. For the latest health and safety guidelines, please visit Buildersshow.com/health.

BUILDER CONFIDENCE TICKS SLIGHTLY UPWARD IN SEPTEMBER

Builder confidence inched up in September on lower lumber prices and strong housing demand, even as the housing sector continues to grapple with building material supply chain issues and labor challenges. Ending a three-month decline, builder sentiment in the market for newly built single-family homes edged up one point to 76 in September, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI).

"Builder sentiment has been gradually cooling since the HMI hit an all-time high reading of 90 last November," said NAHB Chairman Chuck Fowke. "The September data show stability as some building material cost challenges ease, particularly for softwood lumber. "However, delivery times remain extended and the chronic construction labor shortage is expected to persist as the overall labor market recovers."

"The single-family building market has moved off the unsustainably hot pace of construction of last fall and has reached a still hot but more stable level of activity, as reflected in the September HMI," said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. "While building material challenges persist, the rate of cost growth has eased for some products, but the job openings rate in construction is trending higher."

NEW SINGLE-FAMILY HOME SIZE IS RISING

An expected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is a need for more residential space, as people use homes for more purposes including work. The National Association of Home Builders reports that recent data confirms this impact on the market is occurring in an increase in single-family home size.

According to second quarter 2021 data from the Census Quarterly Starts and Completions by Purpose and Design and NAHB analysis, median single-family square floor area increased to 2,297 square feet. Average (mean) square footage for new single-family homes increased to 2,540.

Since Great Recession lows (and on a one-year moving average basis), the average size of new single-family homes is now 5.5% higher at 2,502 square feet, while the median size is about 8.5% higher at 2,280 square feet.

Home size rose from 2009 to 2015 as entry-level new construction was constrained. Home size declined between 2016 and 2020 as more starter homes were developed. Going forward we expect home size to increase again, given a shift in consumer preferences for more space due to the increased use and roles of homes (for work, for study) in the post-Covid-19 environment.

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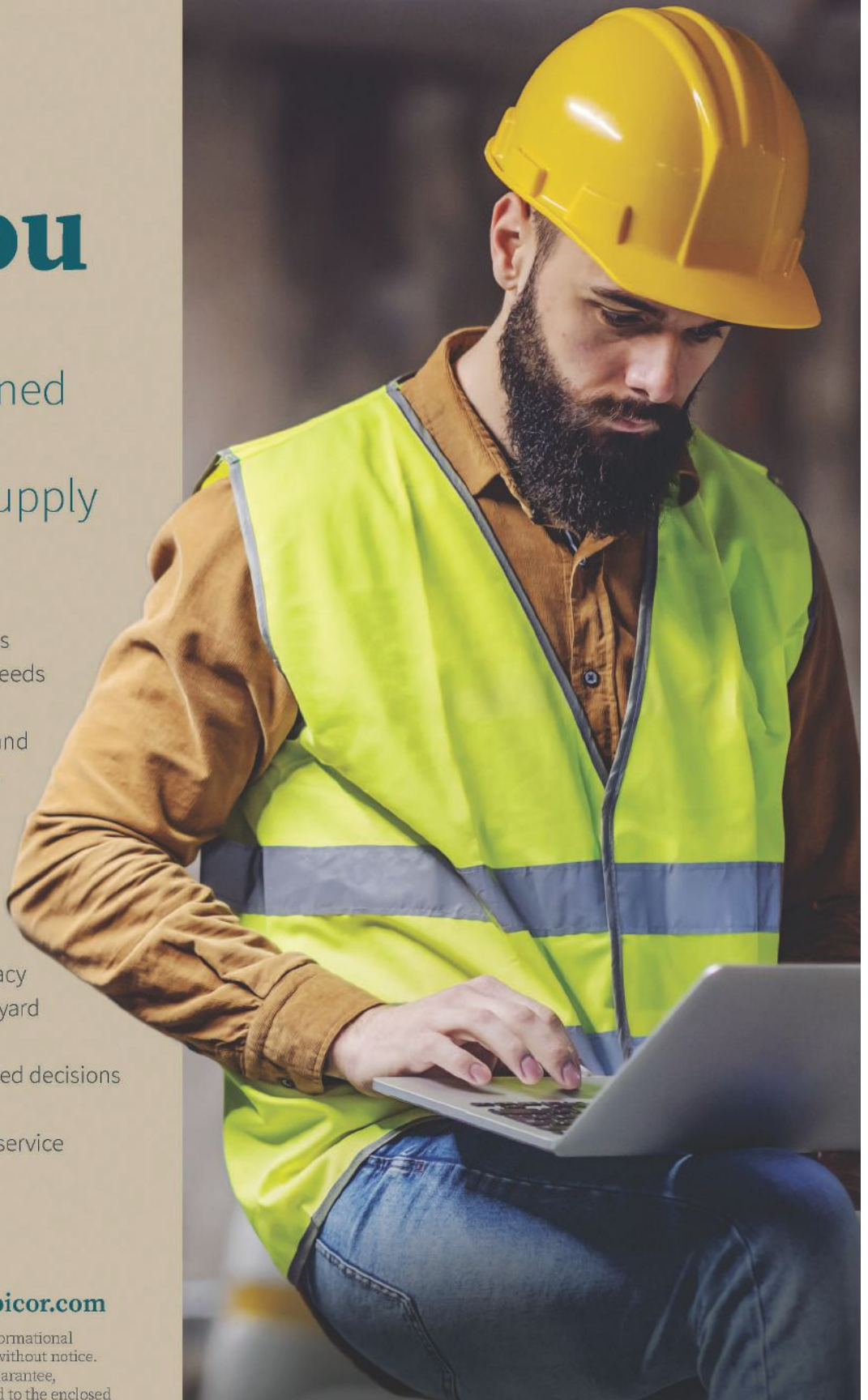
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CONTRACTOR CONFIDENCE DIPS AS CONSTRUCTION BACKLOG INDICATOR FALLS

Associated Builders and Contractors reports that its Construction Backlog Indicator fell sharply to 7.7 months in August, according to an ABC member survey. The reading is down 0.8

months from July 2021 and down 0.3 months from August 2020.

"Both contractor backlog and confidence have begun to fade," said ABC Chief Economist Anirban Basu. "Higher materials prices and labor costs have conspired to put more projects on hold. In many instances,

expanding costs have rendered projects infeasible. "That said, it is still the case that contractors collectively anticipate sales, staffing levels and margins to rise over the next six months," explained Basu. "The expected pace of improvement has softened, however."

BY THE YARD NEWS FROM LUMBERYARDS AROUND THE COUNTRY

US LBM ACQUIRES MID-CAPE HOME CENTERS AND NORTHERN BUILDING SUPPLY

US LBM has acquired Mid-Cape Home Centers, a building products and home improvement company with six locations in the southern coastal region of Massachusetts. With the addition of Mid-Cape, US LBM now operates 25 locations across New England. US LBM has also acquired Northern Building Supply, a full-service building products distributor and retailer which operates two locations in northern Michigan.

HANCOCK LUMBER TO ACQUIRE NEW HAMPSHIRE'S WINNIPESAUKEE LUMBER

Hancock Lumber has announced plans to acquire Winnepesaukee Lumber, an independent, family-owned building materials supplier that has operated in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire since 1985.

BELLETETES AMONG NEW HAMPSHIRE'S TOP FAMILY BUSINESS

Belletetes, a home improvement retailer based in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, has earned two distinct honors from Business New Hampshire magazine. The company earned a spot in the top 10 of the Top 100 Private Companies, and also was included on a list of the 20 fastest growing companies, according to *Business New Hampshire*.

RIVERHEAD BUILDING SUPPLY ACQUIRES MOZZONE LUMBER IN MASSACHUSETTS

Riverhead Building Supply, an 18-unit family-owned lumber and building materials dealer with locations in New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, has announced the acquisition of Mozzone Lumber Company in Taunton Massachusetts. The acquisition is Riverhead's first location in Massachusetts.

CENTRAL VALLEY BUILDERS SUPPLY NAMED ONE OF THE BEST WORKPLACES

Central Valley, an LBM 100 building supply company, has been ranked among the Best Places to Work by the *North Bay Business Journal*. This marks the third consecutive year that Central Valley has received this recognition.

HAWAII'S HPM BUILDING SUPPLY CELEBRATES 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HPM Building Supply, a fifth-generation, family-founded building industry retailer, manufacturer, and supplier, is celebrating 100 years. After a century in business, HPM is now a statewide organization, with branches and services on every major Hawaiian Island and 14 locations across the state. HPM is also 100% employee-owned by their more than 400 owner-employees, who share in the company's success.

STINE PAYS IT FORWARD FOLLOWING HURRICANE IDA

Stine Home and Yard continues to donate to communities in need following Hurricane Ida. Recently Stine donated \$5,000 in merchandise to the Southwest Louisiana Home Builders Association.

SHAW/STEWART LUMBER CO. ACQUIRES KRUSE LUMBER

Minneapolis-based Shaw/Stewart Lumber Co., supplier of building materials and millwork solutions for construction professionals, has acquired Kruse Lumber in Rochester, Minnesota. Brian Hodge, president of Kruse Lumber, and Del Krusenstjerna, president of Shaw/Stewart Lumber Co., made the joint announcement.

BUILDERS FIRSTSOURCE ACQUIRES CALIFORNIA TRUSFRAME

Builders FirstSource has acquired California TrusFrame, the largest independent truss manufacturer in California, for \$179.5 million.

R.P. LUMBER REBRANDS STOCK + FIELD LOCATIONS

R.P. Lumber Co., Inc., has announced the rebranding of all 22 Stock + Field locations it acquired through the bankruptcy process this past spring to their new name, R.P. Home & Harvest.

84 LUMBER NAMED TO INC. MAGAZINE LIST

84 Lumber, the nation's largest privately held building materials supplier, has earned a spot on the 2021 Inc. 5000 list for the second time.

84 LUMBER DONATES \$100,000 TO HURRICANE IDA RELIEF LIVE ON ELLEN

84 Lumber, the nation's largest privately held building materials supplier, appeared on The Ellen DeGeneres Show to surprise New Orleans area nurses with a \$100,000 donation to help rebuild their homes after Hurricane Ida.

BUSY BEAVER BUILDING CENTERS OPENS NEW STORE IN MT. PLEASANT, PA

Busy Beaver has been a Mt. Pleasant mainstay for the past 25 years, and on Aug. 13 the company opened the doors to a much larger store. At 55,000 square feet, the store is one of Busy Beaver's largest among its 24 locations across Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia.

DEALERS, GOT NEWS?

Send info on your company's new location, anniversary, expansion, local recognition, honors and awards, new hires, promotions, or other news to James@LBMJournal.com.



LBM CENTURY CLUB HONORS 100-YEAR-OLD BUSINESSES

The LBM Century Club was founded on the simple belief that companies that have been around for 100 years deserve to be recognized. Launched in 2016, the LBM Century Club has grown to 188 members, with more coming in each month. In all, the companies have provided 23,481 years of combined service to their communities.

2021 INDUCTEES:

ALKI LUMBER & HARDWARE Seattle, WA	est. 1921	KREMPP LUMBER COMPANY Jasper, IN	est. 1918
BETHEL MILLS, INC. Bethel, VT	est. 1781	LAMB LUMBER CO., INC. Lake Placid, NY	est. 1919
BIG C LUMBER Granger, IN	est. 1921	LEACHMAN LUMBER COMPANY Des Moines, IA	est. 1921
BROWNSTOWN LUMBER CO. Brownstown, IL	est. 1909	LELAND L. FISHER, INC. Rockville, MD	est. 1894
CARHART LUMBER CO. Wayne, NE	est. 1921	MCDOWELLS BUILDING MATERIALS Vinton, IA	est. 1864
EJ STEPHENS COMPANY, INC. (NOW UNION LUMBER) Albany, MS	est. 1902	NATIONAL LUMBER CO. Baltimore, MD	est. 1919
ELLIOTT LUMBER, INC. Oxford, MS	est. 1917	OLDHAM LUMBER COMPANY, INC. Dallas, TX	est. 1921
FOSTER LUMBER YARDS, PART OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY FAMILY Vallejo, CA	est. 1920	PRESTON FEATHER BUILDING CENTERS Petoskey, MI	est. 1915
HOLMAN SUPPLY COMPANY Moultrie, GA	est. 1920	RUCKER LUMBER INC. Boston, NY	est. 1921
HPM BUILDING SUPPLY Hilo, HI	est. 1921	STEWART BUILDER SUPPLY Brentwood, TN	est. 1921
KEIM HOME CENTER Charm, OH	est. 1911	For a complete listing of LBM Century Club members, visit LBMJournal.com/century .	

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ZIP SYSTEM® SHEATHING AND TAPE HELPS ACHIEVE TIGHTER ENVELOPE WITH AN INTEGRATED APPROACH



Will King, a custom homebuilder and owner of Alabama-based High Cotton Homes, is devoted to bringing clients' dreams to reality, even focusing his work on customizing projects to accommodate special requests such as pool houses and high-end barns. He relentlessly pursues new information about building science and materials for better building. Through his research, he began following manufacturers and builders with a similar pursuit for better building and acknowledges how they have shaped his business and approach to building.

For example, he explained his switch from traditional sheathing and housewrap to Huber Engineered Woods' ZIP System sheathing and tape for easier and more effective enclosure protection.

“Getting proper air sealing is difficult with traditional methods,. All other variables the same, our blower door tests got much, much better using ZIP System sheathing and tape as our air and water barrier.”

Will King,
Owner, High Cotton Homes

“Getting proper air sealing is difficult with traditional methods,” Will said. “All other variables the same, our blower door tests got much, much better using ZIP System sheathing and tape as our air and water barrier.”

ZIP System® sheathing panels are made of high-performance engineered wood panels. The unique design incorporates a resin-impregnated membrane manufactured into the panel for dependable water-resistive-barrier performance. The proprietary ZIP System™ tape is an acrylic tape that has been extensively tested for long-term adhesion, flexibility and exposure and is backed by the 180-day Exposure Guarantee and 30-year limited warranty¹, as part of a complete ZIP System sheathing and tape assembly.

Will uses ZIP System sheathing, tape and liquid flash products for an integrated approach to his air and weather barriers in both roof and wall assemblies.

ZIP System® building enclosures are designed to meet a need for greater installation efficiency. Engineered to provide structural durability *and* reliable protection against water intrusion while also creating a continuous air barrier in one, easy-to-install system, our products can be used in numerous combinations to help building teams find the right fit to advance their builds with an integrated roof and wall structural solution.

“The ease of installation has made ZIP System a hit with my subs, who were tired of being ‘hounded’ about repairing flashing and housewrap details.”

Will leverages his switch to a more dependable, integrated enclosure system as a selling point to his homeowners. He advocates that achieving a tight envelope promotes lower heating and cooling bills.

“At first, I was concerned about cost and budget,” Will said about ZIP System® products. “But that concern proved to be groundless. We save labor and it balances out. The air seal I’m looking for requires more time and training without ZIP System products.”

Using evidence such as blower door tests at the rough stage and reports of energy bills from completed work, he helps customers and other builders in his community understand the benefits of a tight seal. While he may be introducing new concepts and unusual “green-looking” ZIP System builds to the neighborhood, Will is confident about moving forward.

“I think, if you’ve been doing the same thing for 20 years, you’re doing it wrong,” Will said. “Evolving our building practices helped us gain the momentum we have now.”

To learn more about ZIP System building enclosures, visit ZIPSystem.com.



Tom Ellerbrook is director of sales for FastenMaster. Over the last 10 years, he has led a team of more than 30 salespeople throughout the U.S. and Canada. FastenMaster's pull-through sales approach drives brand awareness and advocacy with professional contractors and channel partners in the LBM Industry.

Q: With new construction and residential remodeling still strong in many markets, what do you see as the biggest opportunity for LBM dealers?

A: Education, Education, Education. LBM dealers are in a unique position to educate their pro customers on topics ranging from how to successfully run a small business to new products that will save them time on the job. It's difficult to differentiate yourself on the products you supply, so differentiating the services you offer is a prime opportunity. As an LBM dealer, what are you doing to add value to your pro customer and their business beyond the retail transaction? Educating the pro and helping them improve their business will gain you loyal, lifelong customers who will keep coming back for new ideas and the latest information.

Q: The flipside of that question, the biggest challenge?

A: In the short term, supply chain issues will continue to cause problems for manufacturers, dealers and ultimately the pro customers. It will continue to be critical that communication stays strong between the different parts of the supply chain process. In the long term, recruiting and retaining talent will continue to strain our industry, and LBM dealers are in the center of this challenge. Diversity in the labor force at LBM dealers will become more essential to maintaining a productive team over the long term.

Q: What advice do you have for dealers who are trying to navigate supply chain challenges?

A: If I had the answer to that question, I wouldn't have to answer the rest. I'd be getting a job with the highest bidding LBM dealer in the country right now! Communication and trust. Communicate with your vendors and trust that they're doing everything within their power to get you the product you need. Over-communicate with your customers so they can plan accordingly, and you can build trust with them. It's important to remember that we're all in this together.

Q: What one or two product trends are having the biggest impact for your company and your dealer customers?

A: We've seen a huge growth in composite decking as outdoor living spaces are getting much higher use due to COVID-19 lifestyle changes. Contractors are looking for premium solutions to enhance the value of customer homes. At the same time, they want products that are faster and easier to install to compensate for smaller and less experienced crews. Plus, these products must deliver those benefits without compromising performance.

Q: Today's construction fasteners are more specialized and sophisticated than ever before. What innovations should dealers watch for from FastenMaster?

A: We're focused on improving the businesses of professional contractors. From our people to our products, that's always been our mission, so we're constantly testing the boundaries of our product offering and looking for new and innovative ways to make it a reality. We will continue to improve the productivity of contractors by introducing threaded fasteners that do the job both faster and safer than bolts, metal connectors, and other traditional fastening methods. From new fasteners and tools to groundbreaking innovations, we're excited about what's to come from FastenMaster in 2022. ■

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Keys to hiring and keeping top talent

BY BILL LEE

HIRING GOOD PEOPLE is only half the battle. The other half is keeping them, especially in a relatively strong housing economy in which quality people are difficult to attract.

When I interview a newly hired employee, it's sometimes like listening to a bride who recently returned from her honeymoon. What happened to all the bouquets of flowers, the love notes, and impromptu candlelight dinners that were so much a part of the dating process that convinced her that she was marrying such a thoughtful man? Much of the romance seems to slowly disappear soon after newlyweds settle into the routine of marriage.

The same scenario often occurs when owners or managers bring in a sharp new employee that they have been romancing for several months trying to persuade him or her to leave their current job and join a new management team.

After completing a warm and professional hiring process with management, the new employee's first day on the job can be a real shock. More times than not, the new hires report for work only to be greeted by a sea of quizzical looks from veteran workers who had no idea that they were scheduled to arrive.

Bringing a new employee into your company carries a lot of responsibility. How the onboarding process is handled is critical. A new employee's initial impression of the company and the company's first impression of them can make a big difference in attitudes and performance long-term.

If managers will discipline themselves to follow a few well-thought-out procedures, they can create an environment that will increase the comfort level of both the new employees and their existing staff.

1. Send a packet of information on your company, well in advance of the new employee's first day on the job. This packet might include information on company policies, insurance, profit-sharing, and an organizational chart.
2. Provide samples of your advertising material and anything else you believe will familiarize the new hires with the company.
3. Advise the new employee's co-workers of his or her arrival date, but be careful not to oversell the new employees' credentials. (Existing employees are naturally a bit insecure anytime someone new comes on board, so over-selling can cause the new hire to be perceived as a somewhat of a threat.)
4. See that the new employee's workstation is prepared for their arrival. There's nothing more frustrating than arriving on that first day on a new job and find that you have no desk, no place to sit, no computer, and no materials to work with.
5. Hand new employees an activity schedule that you have planned for their first couple of weeks on the job.
6. Assign a different co-worker to take your new hires to lunch each day, at least for the first week on the job, and include the co-workers name and job title on the activity schedule.
7. Assign each new employee a mentor who has been around long enough to know the ropes. Be sure to select the mentor carefully. Choose mentors who are respected by their co-workers and who will unselfishly help the new employee's orientation period become as pleasant as possible.
8. If the new hire is from outside the area, be sure to arrange for his or her spouse to receive a welcome to the community. ■



Bill Lee is a respected sales and business consultant in the LBM industry. For more information, contact Bill at leeresourcesinc@gmail.com



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Be an order instigator

BY RICK DAVIS

IT SEEMS THE HIGHEST insult you can pay to a salesperson is to be an “order taker.” If that is true, then the opposite of being an order taker is to be an order instigator, something all sales organizations should have recognized during this unprecedented period of logistic nightmares.

First, let me begin by saying that I’ve never favored the criticism of the order taker. If someone gives you an order, you should absolutely take it! The best salespeople in our industry aren’t constantly begging buyers to do business, but instead have established the trust that leads them to have orders dropped into their lap. That’s a good thing.

All those kudos to veteran order takers aside, we have learned something new in the current environment. The highest form of sales leaders is becoming the order instigator. It is the key to avoiding problems in the future. The old days of giving buyers two- to three-week lead times have evolved into the new world of four- to six-month lead times.

The implications of the new lead time reality and logistic challenges are vast. First, the improper timing of an order can delay a project by months instead of days or weeks. Second, leaving an item off an initial order means a long-term problem that could take many weeks instead of days to resolve. Third, the implications for the buyer go way past a costly delay. It means disappointing a customer, losing subcontractor commitments, and more.

There is a method to avoid costly delivery delays for your buyers and the answer is to become an order instigator. This means no longer delivering lead times and waiting for the buyer to a) remember the lead time you quoted and b) properly manage the ordering process. An order instigator observes the flow of building permits and job site progress.

Instead of waiting for an order to be placed, the order instigator tells the buyer when it’s time to place the order.

You may ask how a salesperson does this without being seen as a pushy, obnoxious con- niver. The answer is simply to offer the buyer a choice by letting the builder know... “one of two things can happen in eight weeks when you need your products. The first is that my branch has the goods prepared for delivery when and where you want them. The other is that you call me and ask me to put out the fire caused by not getting an order on time. I’ll make the calls and still likely not be able to help. We’ll all be frustrated while we do our best to cope. So, of those two options, I recommend the first one, which means we should finalize the details of your order perfectly before the end of this week.”

Considering the multiple products and scheduling challenges a contractor copes with, isn’t it really the salesperson’s responsibility to ensure that the product they sell gets the proper administrative attention? Isn’t this the best way to help contractors cope in these times of absurd logistical challenges? Isn’t this how a great salesperson establishes a reputation for thoroughness and consultative credibility?

In truth, this concept is nothing new for me. It is what a good salesperson should have been doing all along. The only difference between today’s market and the one of yesterday is that surreal delivery lead times have revealed a performance deficiency rather than created it. Good salespeople are order instigators at all times. It just so happens that today’s market provides the opportunity to proactively manage expectations at a time when buyers are seeking guidance.

Be an order instigator for all times. It’s the key to establishing credibility and long-term business relationships of unbreakable loyalty. ■



Rick Davis, president of Building Leaders, is a premier sales trainer in the building materials industry. His latest book, *Sales Economics: The Science of Selling*, is now available at buildingleaders.com. Rick can be reached at rickdavis@buildingleaders.com

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Selling our industry

BY RUSS KATHREIN

THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN A BUSY ONE for our whole industry. Everything seems to be in short supply. Finding the right people to help you grow your business—or just maintain it at its current level—has also been an ongoing challenge. But there's an even bigger timebomb ticking away, and it's something we all need to address if we want to survive.

Every aspect of our industry is getting older and closer to retirement. To make matters worse, we lost our next generation of leaders when we went through the Great Recession. To trim expenses, we laid off our newest hires, our supervisors, and our newer salespeople. It made financial sense at the time, but now we're realizing we "ate our seed corn." These were the people who would have grown into our management teams right now.

So, we have a double whammy in terms of recruiting. First, we need to figure out how to replace a whole bunch of experienced veterans as they retire. And second, we need to attract young people into entry-level positions so they can start their careers. From my personal experience and observations, we're too often going about it all wrong. We're spending too much time chasing a limited pool of well qualified candidates. I get it. It would certainly be easier to replace that soon-to-be retiree with someone with similar experience. But they're just not out there.

That leaves us with attracting a younger generation to our industry with the intent that these individuals will be able to advance quickly into leadership positions. This sounds like an attractive opportunity for a motivated young person starting out. Yet what are we doing to attract the best and brightest who can become our future leaders?

Whether it is on the lumber or hardware side, or the retail, wholesale, or manufacturing side, we have a lot to offer them, including incredible growth opportunities, a strong industry culture, a quality of life, and a quality of people who make it all worthwhile.

Our industry opportunities are immense. How many businesses can you work your way up from the bottom rung of the ladder to be CEO? A career in our industry does not tie you down to one geography. Whether you're a salesperson, truss designer, or location manager, these are easily transferable skills to take you anywhere you want to live. For a young person looking to start a career, having geographic options now and for the future can be a big draw.

The industry culture is still based on relationships and trust. We place more value on a handshake agreement over a legal document. Yet, we don't mention this when we are describing our industry. We don't talk about how cool it is to know and trust somebody for 20 years who you may have never physically met.

In our industry, the quality of life offered is much better than most. While you may work for a company that has retail hours or you may have customers who want to contact you after hours, you are not expected to be on call or attend conference calls at all. You aren't expected to be on call for virtual calls at all hours, and you can actually shut off work and spend time with your family. Additionally, you have opportunities to travel to other markets and learn how others run their business via industry conferences and roundtables.

The last advantage I don't feel we sell enough to future associates is the quality of people you will meet, work with, and even compete against. Most stay in this industry because they like what they do and enjoy the people they work with. It doesn't matter if you are a lumber person with a bunch of hardware people, you will immediately find common ground in your shared values and experiences. You will make lifelong friends and have a fulfilling career.

Now's the time to be planting those seeds with a new generation of workers. Our industry has a lot to offer, and we'll be better positioned for the future if we start promoting those opportunities in every conversation. ■



Russ Kathrein is with the LBM Division of Do it Best Corp. based in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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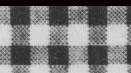
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How to get buy-in when you're new to the credit team

BY THEA DUDLEY

Dear Thea,
I am managing a credit department by decision paralysis. I am trying to do my job but frankly every time I turn around, I am second guessed, sent back for more information, or worse told that they are going to think about it and get back with me and then I don't hear about it again. Everyone thinks they know more about my job than I do. At this point I am not even sure why they hired me. How can I do my job if I'm not allowed to do my job?

— End of My Rope in Elgin

Dear Rope's End,
Tie a tight knot and hang on. Change takes time. You are not only changing what they know to be true about credit granting, securing, and collecting, but also changing their entire credit culture. You are ready; whoever hired you apparently is not.

First thing first: Manage your expectations. If you thought you were going to show up and everyone would recognize your mad credit managing skills, you were deluded. Next, manage everyone else's expectations of you. A few things to keep in mind:

1. You don't have all the answers.
2. Don't even try to fake it.
3. Don't disrespect your predecessor.
4. Watch people. Find out why they do what they do.
5. Practice active listening, ask questions and take notes.

Don't change things immediately. Everyone is happy to see someone new, they are positive, glad you are there and excited to see what you bring to the table...until you begin to set the table. Take the time to learn the current processes. Read everything you can about the company you are now a part of, including sales guides, policies, the website, etc. Seek to understand the culture of the company.

Assess any resources that you have: outside resources, internal resources. Make notes of those you can go to and for what. Identify your obstacles. Keep taking notes.

Put a "first 90 days" plan together. Prioritize it into strategic areas: People, processes, your market, the company, and key products. Set benchmarks for yourself in that 90-day period.

Don't feel pressured to walk in with all the answers or a complete strategy. Why? Because it could be wrong, incomplete, or it could lack buy-in from the rest of the team.

When your 90 days are up, prepare for your next steps. Outline a strategic plan for your department. What do you want to tackle first? What did you identify as a priority? Why? Again, set measurable goals for yourself to accomplish in the next 90 days.

Keep in mind that change, however small, is tough for some people. Keep from spooking the herd by listening and learning. Oh, and snacks. Bring lots of snacks and bring the good ones. That helps assure people are happy to see you. ■



With more than 30 years of credit management experience in the LBM industry, Thea Dudley consults with companies on a wide range of credit and financial management issues. Contact Thea at theadudley@charter.net



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Roll-up acquisitions: How they work

BY JOHN WAGNER

I PROMISED MYSELF I would not use the over-used term “synergy” in this column. It was a mighty struggle! See if I won by reading on.

The term “roll-up” describes a financial engineering process used by private equity and strategic investors, where multiple smaller companies, typically in the same market sector, are acquired and merged.

The goal of the acquirer and participating companies in the merger is to increase the ultimate exit value of each member company and the new company by creating greater *synergy*... oh, let's call it *scale*, along with improved market share, and enhancing the ability to deliver cost *synergy*... oh, let's call it *savings*, that will produce improved EBITDA margins for the combined entity. These attributes can result in a higher selling price at close for the combined entity, more so than if the companies were sold separately, one at a time, to multiple buyers. In today's LBM market, independent LBM dealers are selling for approximately a 5X multiple of adjusted EBITDA. From the perspective of the original selling prices, the combined entity of a roll-up can sell for an *effective multiple* of 8X or 9X a few years hence, if it performs well.

The typical acquirers of roll-ups are private equity groups (PEGs). PEGs will start with a “platform company” and then add “bolt-on” acquisitions to complete their roll-up objectives for a particular market segment, such as retail lumber dealers or truss/component plants. Since private equity groups seek to quickly acquire dominant market share on a regional or national basis, the constituent companies in a roll-up—*once combined*—must represent meaningful market share and improved *synergy*... oh, let's call it *profitability*. But, most importantly, it also means that the combined companies will be in a better position to compete and serve their customers with improved purchasing, product offering, marketing, and financing.

The biggest challenge of any roll-up is finding the constituent companies that will be a good fit and that, once combined, will be worth more than its parts. It also means that the companies coming together must understand that

some changes will be required to achieve this objective. Those changes could include new unified software systems, new purchasing procedures, new marketing programs, and *synergy*... oh, let's call it *efficiencies*, to be found in a unified “back office.”

Roll-over shares: There's a catch with roll-ups. The target companies usually don't get all cash for their companies at closing when the roll-up is formed. Sellers will generally be required to put some skin in the game. PEGs often require that a portion of the purchase price be represented by shares in the new company (NewCo) created by the roll-up. This share type is called “roll-over shares.” Often, a minimum of 20% of the deal's value could be represented by roll-over shares. With patience and prudent management, the roll-over shares can become valuable as the NewCo grows over time, potentially with other bolt-ons. As an example, let's say a PEG acquired three independent LBM dealers for a total of \$45 million. Each owner rolled 20% of the purchase price into the new entity, or \$9 million. While the PEG paid \$45 million for the transactions, \$23 million was equity (a.k.a. cash), and \$22 million was borrowed by the PEG, as senior and subordinate debt. In this scenario, because they took roll-over shares (and not all cash for their businesses) the three selling owners combined would own their percentage of 28.1% ownership in the new entity, and the buyer would have a 71.9% ownership. These percentages will change as additional LBM dealers are acquired.

Individual negotiation. The purchase prices for each member are confidentially negotiated with each LBM dealer. The only entities that need to see a company's financials are the investment banks representing the sellers and the PEG buyers, only sharing the financials once the roll-up is completed.

Roll-ups are ideal for owners who want to stay in the game, but take some chips off the table. They reward those committed to finding *synergy*... oh, let's call *collaborative opportunities*, and taking a “second bite of the apple.” ■

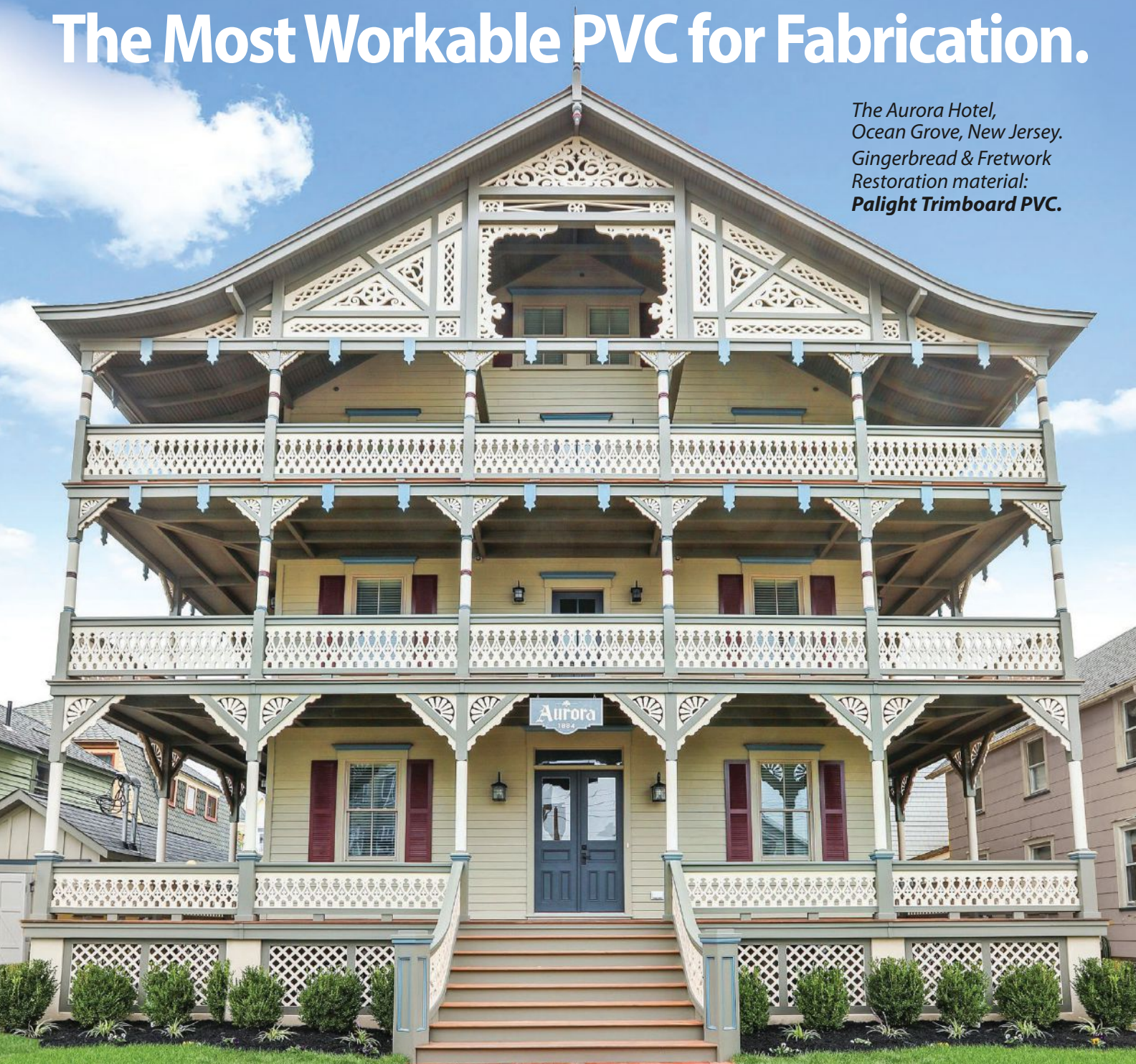


John Wagner is a managing director at 1stWest Mergers & Acquisitions, which offers a specialty practice in the LBM sector. Reach John at j.wagner@1stwestma.com

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Fleet efficiency 301: Keep the tires turning

BY SHANE SOULE

LUMBERYARDS are basically in the business of distribution and shipping. It's not only the greatest value we offer, it's also our biggest variable expense. We only make money when our trucks are out making deliveries. We can't make deliveries without accruing miles on our trucks, and we aren't accruing miles on our trucks when they aren't moving.

Current market conditions mean an increased opportunity for growth, and delivery has become our industry's major bottleneck. A knee-jerk response is often to buy/rent more trucks and hire more drivers without the real awareness of how often our current fleet is underutilized. I learned this firsthand at my time with Zeeland Lumber and Supply in Zeeland, Michigan. We experienced rapid growth and all the challenges associated with it, including meeting an increasing order log demand. We had multiple yards with different types of logistical challenges, and we knew we had an untapped potential to get more out of our fleet. Other companies had taken on this challenge, and we heard of them dropping average turnarounds to a tight 18-23 minutes. We didn't know what our average turnaround was back then, but we struggled to find any single turnaround to clock that fast, so we embarked on our own journey of improvement.

We consistently heard that the "truck turnaround guru" in our industry was Scott Morrison, so we hired him to get us started. During his first visit we immediately learned just how much opportunity we had to gain by doing time studies with our current fleet. We knew that our yard with the most revenue was also the one with the biggest logistical challenge of being spread across multiple city blocks. It was averaging 88 minutes of turnaround time. We measured that as time in the yard from the time the truck returned to the time it left for the next journey. Scott had us create a "truck turnaround team" that set a quarterly goal to improve our processes around improving this metric. Within 3 months we dropped our turnaround time from 88 minutes down to an average of 49 minutes.

This yard had 18 semi-trucks with an average of two turns a day, so we saved 23.4 hours a day and 117 hours a week. If you do the math, that equated to adding almost three drivers and three truck/trailer combos! Over time, we got this turnaround time down even further into the mid 30s, and since I know they continue to work on this, it may even be in the 20s by now. The company's other (less spread out) yards got their turnaround times into the mid 20s, and that represented more than a 50% improvement. Where should you begin? Here are some things to focus on as you get started.

1. Create a focus team: As with any lean project, if you don't assign people and processes to focus on improvement, you will not see improvement. Assign a dispatcher, a yard lead, an operational leader, AND A SALES REP. Yes, a sales rep too, and they all meet regularly to create and monitor an improvement action plan.

2. Measure your average turns: If you are a smaller yard, you can do this by having drivers text in-and-out times for manual tracking in an excel sheet. If you are a larger yard and have GPS units and software, you can automate this through your geofence hits and have them upload into your journey software to create smart-views for review.

3. Set goals and celebrate your improvements: It's important to recognize marginal improvements along the way because there will ALWAYS be more improvements to strive for. Small wins add up to big value, especially when there's a big fleet involved. The 39-minute improvement (created in 90 days) in my example equated to approximately \$15,000 a week!

The ROI on improving your turnaround metric has a tangible and proven payback model. Start small with the three steps above and grab all the low hanging fruit first. Then when you hit a plateau, bring in a lean consultant like Scott Morrison to take you to the next level. Investing in this before you invest in new equipment and people keeps your tires turning. ■



Shane Soule consults with LBM and component companies to increase productivity and profits, and improve the experience for both customers and team members. Reach Shane at shane@shanesoule.com

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MVR MONITORING: ENSURING YOUR TEAM IS DRIVING SAFELY

Distracted driving and unsafe driving practices have continued to fuel commercial auto risks for years now and fleets in the lumber industry are no exception. With distractions related to technology continuing to grow and more trucks on the road to meet increasing demand for lumber and building supplies, this risk exposure is only growing within our industry.

According to data from *Automotive Fleet* magazine, the annual accident rate for commercial vehicles is roughly 20%. Furthermore, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), 4,119 people died in large truck crashes in 2019, a concerning figure given the high quantity of large trucks on the road in the lumber industry.

Fortunately, lumber and building material dealers can take steps to reduce the risks to their drivers and their business. It all starts with good hiring practices and Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) monitoring.

THE VALUE IN REGULAR MONITORING

MVR monitoring is becoming more common in the workplace because it offers hiring managers the opportunity to carefully review and study potential fleet drivers before hiring them.

MVR monitoring systems maintain records of any incidents on a driver's record. Reported incidents could include driving under the influence, accidents, speeding tickets and other safety violations that may place others on the road at risk.

Before hiring any new employee, fleet managers should take the time to carefully study the MVRs to ensure potential hires have a history of safe driving. In fact, standard practice is to review a driver's MVR a few times a year to check for any issues. That said, a fleet manager interested in really reducing the company's fleet risk exposure should consider investing in a continuous MVR monitoring program. These programs track driver behavior and data in real time, offering businesses the opportunity to keep track of their driver's records both in and outside of work. If a company driver has a violation during work hours or even has one in their personal life, fleet managers will know through the MVR program. The tool allows fleet managers to immediately identify any safety deficiencies in their staff and address them accordingly whether that translates to employee termination, reinforced training to correct the behavior or something else.

ADDRESSING DANGEROUS DRIVER BEHAVIOR

In the event a fleet manager identifies an at-risk driver through continuous MVR monitoring, they should immediately remove that driver from their rotation and begin the process of retraining. A thorough retraining process can help curtail dangerous driving habits and promote a culture of safety in the workplace.

Additionally, there are several other steps fleet managers can take to improve driver safety at their businesses, including:

- 1. Building a fleet safety policy:** Lumber businesses should consider building out a thorough fleet safety policy, which would detail hiring policies, driver safety guidelines, consequences for distracted driving incidents or accidents and more. A well-constructed policy can help establish a strong safety culture.
- 2. Regular training:** Fleet safety training should be a regular initiative at any lumber and building material dealer. Reviewing basic safety guidelines and emphasizing the importance of avoiding distracting driving, as well as other potential risks can help reduce the chance of an incident.
- 3. Keep track of driving habits:** Beyond MVR monitoring, there are several tools businesses can use to track their drivers. For example, at PLM, we offer a partnership with LifeSaver Mobile, a company dedicated to reducing distracted driving rates. Their mobile app constantly runs in the background while drivers operate the vehicle. Any time the driver attempts to access their phone, the app logs the attempt. It then scores drivers based on their distracted driving behavior, which can help fleet managers assess if drivers need retraining.
- 4. Use the CSA:** The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has an easy to access portal available for relevant businesses that tracks fleet safety data. This portal, named the CSA, takes note of any driver violations, including issues with load securement, tires, engines, substance abuse or hazardous materials, and keeps any driver citations on record. Fleet managers can use this tool as another means of tracking their team and ensuring everyone is driving safe.

For continuous MVR monitoring, PLM offers excellent resources to our insureds at a discounted rate through our partnerships with driver risk management industry leaders Samba Safety and iiX. Each program offers insightful tools for fleet managers to recognize poor driver behavior. For example, Samba Safety offers insureds the opportunity to take advantage of the DriverScore program, which grades drivers so fleet managers do not have to take the time to review the entire MVR.

As rising commercial auto accidents continue to threaten businesses across the lumber and building materials industry, proactively addressing the risk through MVR monitoring can significantly improve fleet safety. By partnering with a niche insurer, who understands these risks and has the tools to address them, business owners can better understand how to protect their fleets, as well as others on the road. With more than 125 years of experience in the space, PLM can help you not only protect your fleet with the help of a continuous MVR monitoring program and comprehensive insurance package, we can help lumber and building material dealers operate their business safely and profitably.

For more information on fleet safety, check out our loss control guide at:
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PLM’s Senior Loss Control Rep, Rachel Gamblin, on-site at an insured business in Paso Robles, CA. Special thanks to Dana & Sean O’Brien at “A Place to Grow” for hosting the photo shoot.

This month's Real Issues. Real Answers. survey is a variation on a theme from our September issue, in which we asked about creating a "sticky" workplace where people wanted to come to work—and stay long term. This month, we dove a little deeper into the process of attracting top talent when a Minnesota dealer asked exactly how "competitive" wages need to be to get the right people in the door. Thanks to more than 100 dealers who completed our brief email survey, and a special tip of the hat to those who chose to comment and share their insights.

The reader who suggested this month's question started out by stating that the starting pay in his market has climbed so much that he doesn't even know what is fair anymore. And beyond that, what is fair not only for the employee, but also the employer?

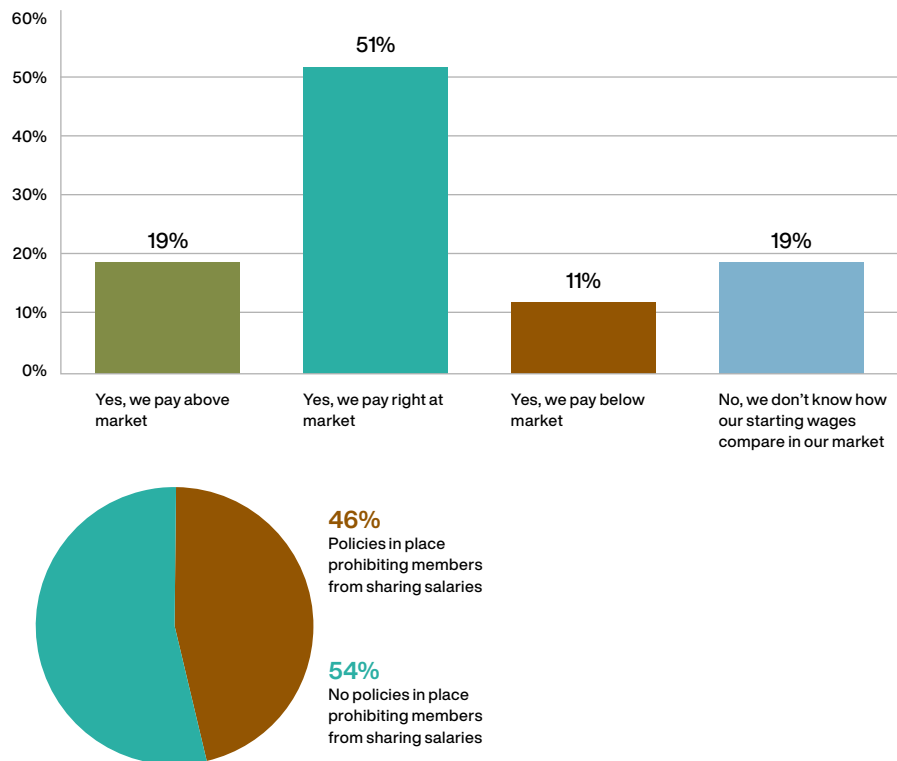
WHAT IS FAIR COMPENSATION?

BY LBM JOURNAL READERS



First, we asked how many readers really know how their wages compare with similar companies in the market. It turns out, around half of those surveyed said that they indeed do pay market wages. Just short of 20% say they pay above market, while an equal number admitted that they don't really know how their starting wages compare. Just 11% stated they are aware that they pay below market wages.

Part of the issue with paying fair wages to new hires is that what is fair to a new person may not be fair to a seasoned employee. Indeed, it's hard to start a wet-behind-the-ears newbie at \$16 an hour when that's what you're paying someone who has been in the role for five years. Some dealers, in an effort to keep salaries under wraps, have policies in place that prohibit staff members from sharing their salaries. However, fewer (46%) have such policies than the 54% who do not.



Finally, we asked those surveyed to weigh in on the exact question we received, which was:

“When it comes to happy, satisfied employees, it's clear that money isn't everything, but it is relevant—especially for attracting new hires. The problem is that the competitive starting wage in our market is far higher than we're used to and can be dangerously close to what we're paying established, loyal employees. I'd love to hear what other dealers have to say about what is 'fair' compensation (for both employer and employee) based on one's level of experience, and how they're navigating this increasingly fine line?”

RESPONSES FROM LUMBERYARDS AND SPECIALTY DEALERS:

“Most of our seasoned employees understand that new hires are hired at higher pay that is closer to their pay level, but there are a lot of extra benefits that they receive that the new hires cannot get until they stay with us for a longer period. Our new hires, hourly rate is about \$2 per hour less than some seasoned employees, but with our benefit program, the longer you stay the more you are taken care of.”

“Pay experienced employees for their value and performance. Pay new hires what the market dictates. If navigating this fine line is an issue, then establish a 'no discuss' policy about compensation.”

“We do pay more than most of our competitors, but we are in an area where just a short drive away there is a high-salaried market. We try to offset the disadvantage by offering good benefits, good hours, and more overtime. We also do not over-hire. We base our employee needs on how much productivity we get from our present employees. We explain to them that overtime and salary increases are benefits we can provide by being more productive, and by having just the right number of employees.”

“Employee retention is our bottom line. Great employees make a great business.”

“I wish we had a good answer. We are struggling with the same issues. Those on staff that are privy to wages are starting to feel disenfranchised, as they are not seeing these increases themselves.”

“We cannot compete with the multi-million and billion-dollar businesses when it comes to a benefits package. We are not large enough to have cheap insurance offered to us or us to our employees. Fair compensation would mean what drives the market and unfortunately it is what we have to pay sometimes to get someone to show up to work.”

"This is something we are dealing with right now. We are looking for help but will need to bring the wages up for our currently established employees. We talk about this every day and are in the process of making changes. I am very interested in how this will be answered by others who have figured this out."

"With business so busy and the need for people so important, we have tried to not only increase wages but add some incentives as well. Attendance and being on time accrue some opportunities for employees as an example."

"We have discovered that we must hire at what are the comparable union wages in order to attract new hires. If that pushes up against your longtime, loyal employees, then raise their wages up. A few extra dollars go a long way toward attracting and keeping the best people."

"Work environment plays a very big part in this. You can get people to come to work for less if they need a job, however, to keep them you must have a family-friendly place for them to come to. Show them that you care about them and their families. We pay under what other retailers in our business pay and are fully staffed."

"We have revised our starting wages across the organization with an emphasis on yard staff and drivers. When we increased starting wages, we adjusted the existing personnel proportionately."

"The problem we are running into is our starting wage for someone with no experience is below what other industries in our area are paying. If we do get a promising younger employee in, once they realize the number of things they need to be 'experts' about they say 'no way' for the pay we can offer."

"We raised our starting wages for warehouse and driver positions two years ago. This did create some issues as it pushed newer employees much closer to veteran employees who spent many years earning at entry level. In the end we looked at every employee and made decisions on their compensation based on their current contributions as well as their overall potential. We still have some work to do but the reality is everyone has to pay more for loyal and talented employees."

"This has been a philosophy change impacting the way we go to market for labor. We had previously increased our base rate by \$2/hour a year ago when we realized we were lagging. Given the competition for labor...any labor... we have now increased by another \$3/hour, sending an unprecedented wave of increases outside the employee's annual review. Now we will be faced with an increment above the new rate at an employee's review. It was this immediate increase, or we would lose operations employees to convenience stores, out-rating us by \$2/hour. While this is all fine and good during a significant upturn in sales, when the dust settles, the largest income statement line will not only eat into our bottom line, but consume it."

"The days of 'Here's the time clock, there's a pair of gloves, drive that forklift, and don't be late' are long gone. Today's workforce is cut from a different cloth, and it's up to us, the employers, to find ways to attract, motivate, and retain them. A competitive wage is just the beginning. We have to offer a positive environment (hard-ass supervisors will not get the job done). Progressive benefits, flexible work schedules, plenty of time off, social responsibility. Shall I go on?"

"It's impossible to navigate this problem to everyone's satisfaction. Recently we had to raise all our driver salaries by \$2 an hour in order to accommodate one new hire. I see more of this coming. Established, loyal employees with good benefits generally accept that there is some unfairness in the new hire situation, but only to a point." ➤



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"If you don't adjust your pay scale for existing team members who are producing, these loyal team members will no longer be so loyal. The adjustment has to be made for them first. Then look at what can be done for new hires. We recommend laying out a plan whereby the new hires come on at 'market' rates, but it's understood by all that they will move up the scale to above market rates quickly if they hit certain production or performance metrics. Overpaying for new hires who are unproven is a bad bet most of the time, even in this labor market!"

"Everyone thinks they are worth more than their pay. What method is used to value each job in your business? Do you have a 'step' program to move the employee up as they learn and master their duties? Some people finish tasks faster than others, so they are more productive over the workday. Most employees now cannot separate themselves from their phones which cuts their productivity for the day. Use the steps to evaluate productivity and pay schedule. Be FAIR with yourself and the employee when you consider their competence. What skills and education levels do they bring? Can they think for themselves and solve problems? This is worth paying a higher price for a body to fill in a space. Offer a gas allowance per month as an incentive. Pay a bonus monthly or at Christmas (which is a big help for employees who cannot save money). Help them navigate the taxes, health insurance, and other deductions so they understand why their check is what it is. Help them use the skills they have and teach them those they do not have. Keep them challenged so they do not have time to think about why they are not rich and famous. And thank them for a job well done. Humans want and need to feel productive. Your challenge is to lead them to fulfill that need. Now what is your worth?"

"You need to re-evaluate everyone's wage and not just the new hires, otherwise you will lose your existing employees (that are trained) to other companies that are willing to pay them more."

"The lumber/hardware industry has a reputation of paying lower wages. With the changing times our industry has become more complex and there is a new need for knowledge. Technology needs to be embraced along with social media. What was done 10, 20, 30 years ago no longer applies and that goes for wages."

"We have set rate parameters for all job categories and keep any new hire within the range. If we have to pay out of the range for new employees, we raise everyone within the category."

"You have to pay for the talent you want to attract. In many cases newer associates make as much or more than current associates. It just means the new associates have a lot to prove."

"Fast food particularly has driven up starting wages, along with all other entry-level workplaces. That makes our yard and cashier positions tougher to fill without making similar increases in starting pay. Then that accelerates starting pay in other positions up the chain creating a domino effect. Fortunately, our industry is robust in our geography, and we can afford those higher starting wages, and we can and have paid loyalty bonuses to non-management workers."

"Great question! We are experiencing the same issues. Unfortunately, we are making adjustments as we bring new people on. If we want to maintain a happy workplace, we have no choice but to make this decision."

"We just did an exercise in our market and found we needed to raise our starting wage around 9%. We changed the middle of the road associate 6% and the long term higher compensated associate 3% to try to be fair."

"If starting wages are getting close to your established employee wages, then you are not paying enough. Raise your wages for your employees. Better wages lead to an increase in profit because you can attract top talent which leads to more sales at a higher margin."

"We start our newcomers out at \$11-\$15/hour based on experience and ability (can they read a tape measure, drive a forklift, are they familiar with the products). They get benefits and a raise after sticking around 90 days. We strive to give all employees an annual raise of ~10% and have been fortunate enough to be able to for the last several years. I like to reward employees for their loyalty and an annual raise helps show them our appreciation as well as gives them something to work toward."

"Our starting wage has had to increase roughly 15-20%. However, when hiring highly experienced people, we've had to take a look at what others in a similar position are being paid. In some cases, we've had to increase the pay of current employees as well. Although it's against company policy to discuss wages, we know they do."

"As an employer you have to be willing and able to go out into the market and pay a talented new hire a highly competitive wage from the start. You cannot always base what you are willing to pay a new employee based on what you are currently paying established employees."

"We do pay benefits, however young people really don't care about benefits and 401(k)s; they want more pay. Benefits don't really matter to larger families either as they qualify for state health care. The insurance is so high for our company, it only works for a few employees. Local starting pay at McDonalds is now more than what our long-time loyal employees get per hour. Not sure how we can overcome this."

"Quite simply, once we realized the market was going up, we issued a mid-year adjustment to seasoned employees to keep the gap appropriate between new and longer-term employees. Unfortunately, the overall payroll has gone up significantly, but our reduced hours of operation since COVID has cushioned the impact with reduced overtime and strictly enforced lunch breaks." ➤



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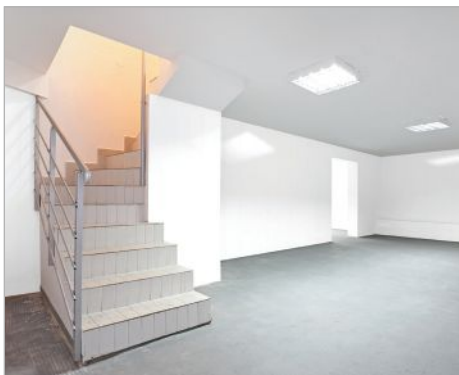
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"We actually faced this about two months ago. What we did was raise the starting pay across all positions. Of course, we were concerned about how longer tenured employees would feel about this. We held a meeting with leadership, and we communicated our concern in hiring and were transparent. Because we were transparent, they were all on board with our decisions."

"Employee training and turnover is expensive. Most workers compensation claims happen with less experienced employees. Employee benefits (especially health insurance) are part of being 'fair' but are very expensive. Implementing a profit-sharing program that is goal-oriented and transparent is the best way we have found to arrive at a fair compensation program that aligns the interests of the employer and employee."

"Research statewide salary data and make sure paying slightly higher than medium range and in the upper 75% of truck driver pay."

"As I have only one employee at a time, it is difficult for me to discuss attracting new hires. What is fair to me will not necessarily be fair to another. I don't believe that wages paid should be greater than the amount I make in a year."

"Although money might not be the top motivating factor for everyone, no one works for free. Work environment can play a huge factor in employee loyalty and spreading a good reputation as a great place to work. I'd ask everyone to reflect on how they foster a positive, secure, family environment on a daily basis. What are the little extra things you personally can say and do to make an employee feel valuable, heard, and important?"

"COVID-19 has actually been kind to my business. Sales are up, and higher prices (with same margins) means more profit. So, we raised wages top to bottom, and shared some PPP funds as a thanks for working so hard."

"We found that wage inflation was high for the entry level positions and not at all an issue as we moved up the range. This has resulted in manageable compression of the first two tiers of our compensation layers."

"We made the decision several years ago that our employees deserved a fair wage. We believe that anyone working 40 hours a week should be above the poverty level. While it has resulted in higher employee related expenses, our reduced turnover and increased productivity (and reduced inherent costs of hiring and loss of productivity resulting from training, etc.) has mostly offset the increased costs. At the same time, if base compensation for a new hire in X position has increased, we provide incremental increases to all people in X position with the caveat that X position is never worth more than Y to us no matter how experienced someone is. It is a hard discussion, but we have it regularly with everyone."

RESPONSES FROM WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS, MANUFACTURERS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS:

"I believe it's a good idea to publish a pay range for every job in the company and when the employee is 'reviewed,' the supervisor tells that employee what he/she must accomplish in measurable terms to qualify for a raise. This allows employees to know how much they can earn without receiving a promotion. Each year the range moves up or down, but typically up and the new range is communicated to each employee in each job classification. If incentive pay is a part of your compensation package, you can easily incorporate the incentive pay into this system."

"This is the basis of what America was founded upon, the law of supply and demand and each individual market's productivity versus margin, volume, and competition. Let the best company win, person win, and market win. It will level out, and we must realize that the current market is not a normal market but a transitional one."

"Staying competitive on pay is critical to attracting the caliber of people we all want and need. However, analyzing the financial impact of a starting pay increase should always include the subsequent pay increases for current employees. No one likes to feel treated like the latest cell phone promotion. Take care of your good employees or you'll eventually need a lot more of those new hires."

"There is no question that we are in a time of wage inflation. The challenge is, how long will this last and how do we not set an unrealistic, long term pay scale. Our stance is that we know that inflation is at or around 5.5% and we have been quick to add this to our established workforce. For new hires, we are raising our base rate for no experience and paying experienced people accordingly. We include a signing bonus, referral bonus and retention bonus when applicable."

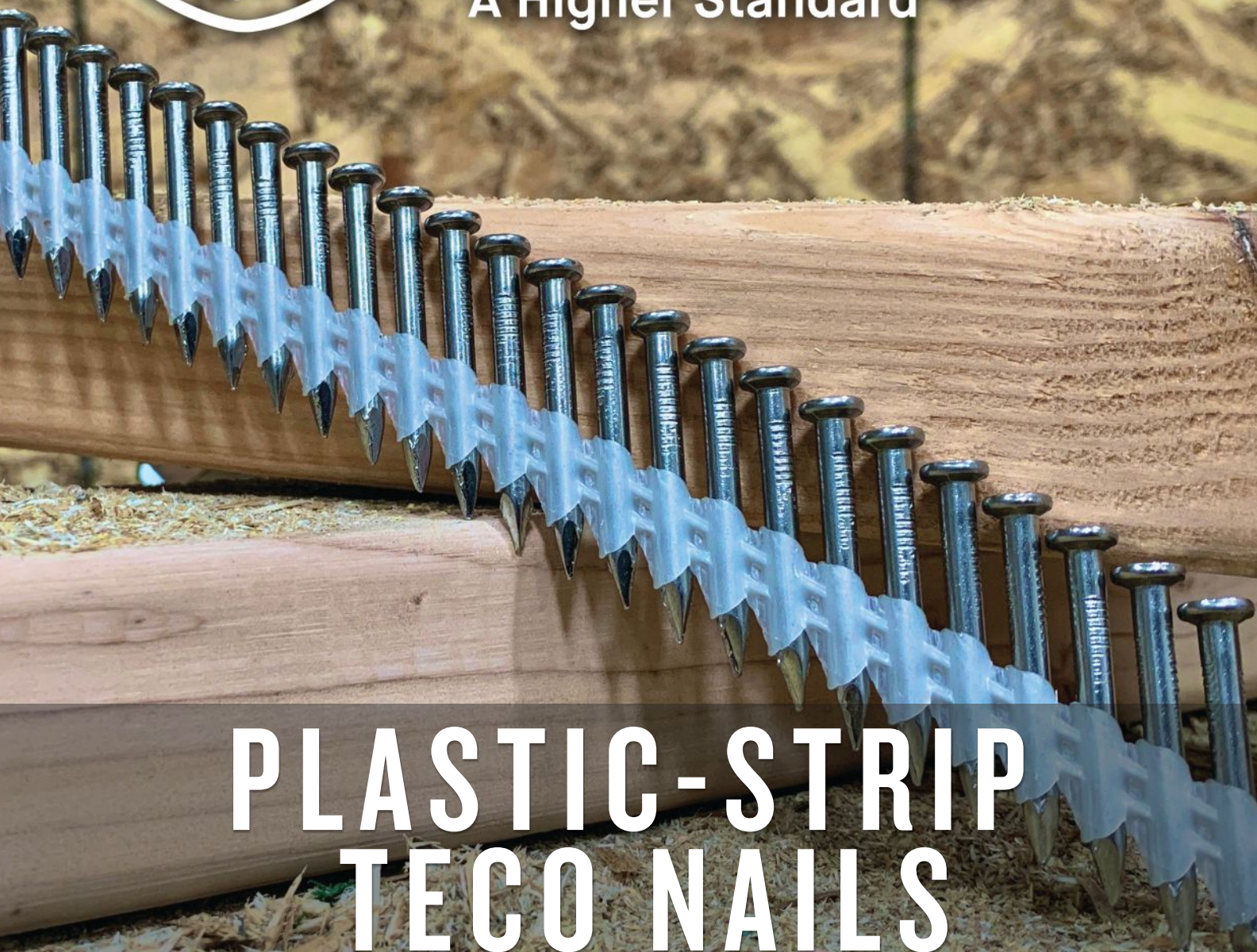
"Trust me, your current, loyal employees are being shopped. Recruiters and competitors both are reaching out to them. In fact, many do so on your job sites. The fact that your starting wage isn't competitive is a sure sign that your loyal employees are being underpaid (at least in their eyes). If your current employees are essential, you better raise their pay rate before they walk. If that cost, along with new hire costs, are too much of a financial burden, then strategies to raise prices, provide more offerings, or do more with less is essential."

"Perhaps offering a yearly bonus based upon years of service can offset the small wage difference. Anything done will impact your bottom line, so focus on any way possible to increase profitability. Efficiencies, purchasing, sales margin increases where possible—whatever it takes to put yourself in the position to outperform your competition." ➤



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"It might not be economically viable, but to raise the level of all employees a similar percentage would be fair and prevent the inevitable future of losing employees because you didn't keep up with the competitive wage, or just because of the salty taste from being nudged closer to an entry level employee."

"You need to pay based upon an annual bonus, and tie that to measurable productivity. In that manner, you'll get productive, motivated employees instead of a bunch of 'salary-suckers.'"

"In my opinion, in these times the length of employment is not as important as to what the new hire can bring to the table. You need to be willing to pay for those top 10-percenters if you want to keep the best. With that said, you must also have an evaluation procedure and accountability with good benchmarks."

"Wages are only part of the picture. Developing a culture that attracts new people is a very important long-term requirement for any successful business."

"'Money isn't everything' when companies pay below scale. New hires at this time are starting at 7-10% higher than existing associates. Company policy will only change once an organization sees turnover and/or their HR team influences C-suite level folks of the need to move on compensation lift."

"We reach out to industry friends and compare wages at least once a year. We also reach out to known union yards and make sure that our base wages are slightly over union scale, with better benefits than a union has. 401(k) matching and our ESOP put us in a league of our own."

"I will be glad to hear the responses to this as it is an issue here in our operation. As well as signing bonuses!" ■

Hundreds of readers share their insights for this every-issue feature. Have a Real Issue? Contact Rick@LBMJournal.com.

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The advertisement for Curri features a stylized illustration of a construction site. In the center, a green hotshot truck with 'curri' on its side is driving towards the right. Below it, a green semi-truck is also driving right, carrying a load of lumber. To the left, there's a blue building and a red location pin on a map. To the right, there's a blue location pin on a map and a QR code. The background is a mix of light blue and pinkish-white clouds.

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BUILDING PRODUCTS



PERMA-BOOT FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION AND REROOFING PROJECTS

A new home would be more appealing not seeing white pipes penetrating the roof. Perma-Boot for new construction will help eliminate call backs for roofers and builders since pipe flashings are a very common spot for roof leaks. This could allow you to increase your labor warranty at least for the roofing aspect of the home and give you a leg up over your competitors.

Perma-Boot produces a 3-in-1 repair and flanged version model which can benefit leaving just one or two in the truck to do a quick fix. The product now fits 1.5", 2", or 3" pipes with one unit.

THE PROBLEM

The plumbing vent pipes that penetrate the roof are typically sealed with an old-fashioned rubber gasket to keep water from entering the home. These rubber gaskets deteriorate when exposed to the sun and high temperatures. Over time they get brittle and crack, losing their ability to protect the home from water intrusion.

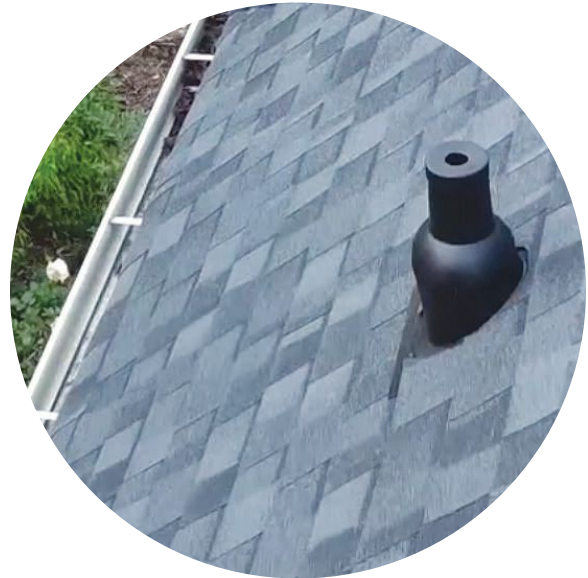
While modern roof shingles often offer a lifetime warranty, these rubber gaskets usually deteriorate in as little as 3 to 5 years. As a result, water begins to flow into the home causing damage to ceilings, interior walls and carpet.



Damage caused by conventional boot failure

PROBLEM SOLVED

Modern roofing systems demand modern flashings. Why install a temporary flashing on a modern roof with a lifetime shingle warranty? Do it right the first time by choosing the only pipe boot engineered to go the distance. The Perma-Boot is a gasket-less, high performance pipe boot system designed to permanently repair or prevent the most common type of roof leak, the leak around the vent pipes that penetrate the roof.



FEATURES

- Three in one product includes everything needed for the most common sizes (1.5", 2", and 3" vent pipes)
- Eliminates existing leaks and prevents new ones from happening
- Single best value in preventive maintenance for the roof
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Contact a Perma-Boot contractor to learn how to add years of leak-free life to new or existing vent pipe flashings. perma-boot.com





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ANCHOR LUMBER

EMBRACING THE NEXT GENERATION

While lumber dealers across the country face challenges brought on by a shortage of staff members, Alex McGehee of Anchor Lumber in Silvis, Illinois has an interesting perspective: Maybe it's not only the younger generation of incoming workers who need training... it's probably the managers as well.

Many LBM dealers in Alex's peer group—60-something years old, multigenerational business owners—are operating their yards by the same code ingrained in them 40 years ago. "We were brought up through this business by a different breed of managers," he says. "When I was a kid, things were different. The people I was working for were far different than the people my age now. I don't think we're paying as much attention as we should to what the newer generation wants out of a career."

As far as Alex is concerned, labor challenges aren't anything new. The industry has been searching for a solution for 20 years, he says. Alex isn't claiming to have the answers to everyone's labor issues, but he does know what works for his family-owned company.

"I think that people my age need to be better at embracing young people and encouraging them, showing them, and allowing them to be successful in our business. I think that we were a little slow in doing that. We've identified it now, but we were slow in doing it."

Having a son in the business has opened his eyes to the generation gap, he says, and he is grateful for the way his son sees the business differently than he does.

"Our industry and business's survival are going to depend on management being aware of these differences and embracing the younger generation," he says. "I've watched some of the younger people in our business who are successful, and they don't do it exactly the way I do it, but they're being successful. Us older guys, we have to be a little more open minded. People are different now than I was in my 20s. My dad probably struggled with those same concepts, but was really good at standing back, not saying anything, and letting me do it my way. I didn't get advice from him unless I asked for it. If I was about to make a mistake, he'd let me do it and know I'd learn from it." ➤





Anchor Lumber's Owner Alex McGehee works with team members to collaboratively manage daily operations.

FAMILY HISTORY

Alex's father was still in high school when he started in the building trades. Allen McGehee started building houses in high school, taking on a couple each summer all the way through college. Based in Silvis, Allen eventually purchased and warehoused more and more supplies for his burgeoning construction business. As sometimes happens in small towns when one builder has a lot of inventory and others are looking to buy, a lumberyard is opened. So, in 1971 Allen McGehee got out of the building business to focus on running the lumberyard full time.

The rest, as Alex says, is history. As far back as he can remember, Alex wanted to work with his dad in the lumberyard. When he got out of college in 1981, he did exactly that, working alongside his father until buying him out.

"All of my youngest memories are at the family business I grew up in," Alex says. "I never really thought about doing anything else."

Growing up working for his father, Alex had every possible job available at the company. He says it was all great

training while he worked for the family business all through high school and college.

When Allen McGehee passed away in May at the age of 87, it was an opportunity to reflect on how far the company has come since its founding in 1962—and to understand and appreciate how they've stayed true to their vision and remained rooted in the qualities that have helped them succeed. His father's foundation of providing quality products and outstanding service remains the focus for Alex and his team—and it's the primary reason the company has grown to be the community anchor it is today.

Now in his early 60s, Alex is working alongside his son, Sam, in the lumberyard business and his daughter, Courtney, in a property management company he also owns. Though his children are capable business managers in their own right, Alex isn't even close to handing over the reins any time soon.

"I see myself being involved in all aspects of all the different businesses for as long as I'm able," he says. "I really like going to work every day."



Owner Alex McGehee (right) and his son Sam (left) stand together with a photo of Alex's late father and Anchor Lumber founder J. Allen McGehee.





SERVING PROS

Anchor Lumber prides itself on serving pro customers and DIY homeowners alike, but does 90% of its business with professional builders and contractors. In 2020, that meant about \$28 million in revenue served through its central location, Anchor Lumber Company, and three other retail locations called Builders First Choice. The company also operates a truss and wall panel manufacturing plant, which is managed by Sam.

Two of the Builders First Choice locations are in Iowa, which has brought to light a stark contrast in business opportunities between the two states. While based in Illinois, the company does the majority of its business in Iowa, because of what Alex calls very growth- and business-friendly policies.

“Out of our 30 delivery trucks, we spend the largest share of our time driving to Iowa,” Alex says. “Probably 70% of our deliveries cross the river.”

Anchor Lumber, its Builders First Choice stores, and component plant location are home to about 75 employees, all who follow the Alex McGehee philosophy that has brought the company continued growth throughout the years: “I get up and go to work every day, every year, hoping to do better than I did the year before. That’s what I believe and that’s what I try to live.”

For Anchor Lumber, doing better means always being in tune with what customers need, and when and where they’ll need it. “We’re always looking to expand what we offer to our customers. We’re always trying to reach into another

market, reach into the current market with more products or services, that’s the recipe for continued growth,” Alex says.

LOOKING AHEAD

Another key to keeping ahead of competition is being able to identify opportunity, Alex says.

“We see ourselves surrounded with opportunity. It’s my job and responsibility, and that of our salespeople, to identify those opportunities and do something with them.”

In a market saturated with other independent LBM dealers as well as big box retailers, the competitive landscape is always changing. Companies come and go, and so do their personnel, and Alex is aware of the ebb and flow of personnel changes that can affect the market. The key, he says, is to pay even more attention to your own company. “I’d rather they react to me, than me to them,” he says.

What his competitors are often forced to react to are the results of Anchor Lumber’s pledge to out-service others. In fact, he says, Anchor Lumber isn’t happy unless it is over-servicing a customer. It’s more than a mission statement, it’s engrained in the company culture.

“We consider ourselves a partner with our customers and we want to help them be successful with their business, because that means we’re successful.”

As Alex looks to the future and the next generation coming up in his company, he’s secure in knowing that while they don’t do everything exactly the same way, they’ll be just as successful. ■

GET TO KNOW ANCHOR LUMBER

FOUNDED:	1962
LOCATIONS:	FOUR, PLUS WALL AND TRUSS PLANT
OWNERSHIP:	FAMILY
EMPLOYEES:	75
BUSINESS SOFTWARE:	EPICOR EAGLE
BUYING GROUPS/CO-OPS:	DO IT BEST
TOP THREE BRANDS SOLD BASED ON REVENUE:	WESTERN SPRUCE DIMENSIONAL FRAMING LUMBER OWENS CORNING SHINGLES ANDERSEN WINDOW



FASTENERS

IN THE WORLD OF FASTENERS, SUCCESS LIES IN RECOGNIZING THE DETAILS.

BY MIKE BERGER

FASTENERS ARE AMAZING CREATIONS, and ones that can be easy to take for granted. For example, of the over 6 million parts that it takes to construct a Boeing 747 aircraft, approximately 3 million of them are fasteners—a staggering number, and that's just for one aircraft. Everyone sees the sleek machine fly overhead, but few appreciate the tiny bits that hold it all together.

Likewise, in the world of lumber and building materials, it can be easy to overlook fasteners, but they're the vital underpinnings of everything that's constructed. And considering the accelerated demand for construction over the past twelve months, it quickly becomes obvious just how big of a player fasteners are in the LBM world.

This isn't to say that fasteners sell themselves or that there haven't been challenges for fastener manufacturers and LBM distributors alike. Of deep concern, fastener manufacturers say, are the growing shortages of raw materials, their increasing prices, and severe shipping delays. "These issues have contributed to rising costs and product shortages, and we are consistently seeing requests for products from customers who have been unable to secure product delivery from their normal suppliers," says Robert Shirley, product marketing manager for fastening systems for Simpson Strong-Tie.

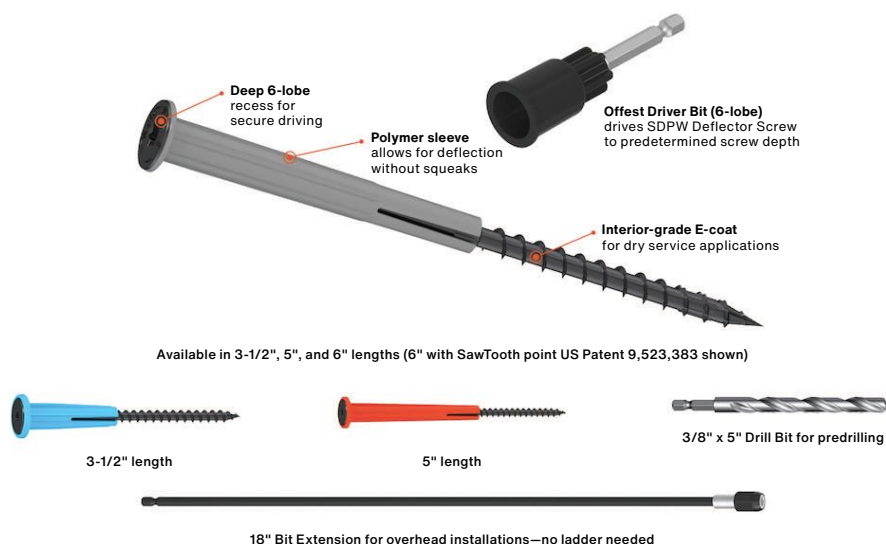
Robert Knecht, marketing director for SPAX, also sees these factors as major pain-points over the last year. "Raw material shortages and supply issues were a disruptor in the past year, although less so for companies like ours who rely on mainly domestic suppliers," he says. "Our company continues to grow, which means adding new people, and labor shortages—especially in the skilled workforce—have been challenging. We are fortunate to have fewer challenges than most as a domestic manufacturer with most of our products made right here in the U.S."

Shipping costs for those that rely on overseas materials and manufacturing have been especially detrimental and disruptive. Container costs have skyrocketed, and lead times often have more than doubled. Phil Lail, president of Pan American Screw Fastener Group (manufacturer of Deerwood Fasteners and Sure Drive USA), points to shipping—both in cost and in availability—as being one of his company's biggest challenges. "For example, last year a 20' container from Taiwan or China to an East Coast port in the U.S. was about \$3,800," he explains. "I just released seven containers to sail at just over \$16,000 each in order to keep product flowing to our key customers. These increased costs have to be passed up the chain to the consumer, unfortunately. Lead times at certain Taiwanese factories have extended from 90 to 110 days out to 180 to 220 days due to raw material allocations, backup in heat treating, plating, protective coating, and painting processes."

Aaron Anderson, general manager and fastener buyer for Steelhead Fasteners, echoes Lail's comments. "For us, the biggest disruptions have been caused by raw material shortages and pricing and the never-ending freight issues," he laments. "The freight issues start from the country of origin and extend all of the way to the point of delivery. Vessel space is at an all-time low and for some containers we are having to pay more than 100% of our contracted rates. In addition, the vessel delays are never-ending, causing some containers to have been rolled over multiple months before vessel space is secured. Then, when it finally arrives on the west coast, depending on port, berthing times for these vessels can be weeks before there is even a place for them to dock."

CONTINUED GROWTH ON THE HORIZON

Based on these challenges, it would be easy to assume a bleak future is in the cards for fasteners. In fact, when the statistics are analyzed, the exact opposite appears to be true, with opportunity aplenty for the savvy LBM distributor. ➤



ABOVE: The Strong-Drive SDPW Deflector Screw is a premium structural fastener for connecting non-load-bearing walls to trusses and joists. According to the manufacturer, the fastener's polymer sleeve allows for sliding during deflection, thus preventing squeaks.

LEFT: New this year from SPAX are its POWERLAGS Truss Screws for use in attaching truss/rafters to wall plates. According to SPAX, these engineered fasteners ensure a building code required, continuous attachment method from floor to roof.

OPPOSITE PAGE: FastenMaster has expanded its cordless tool options by launching cordless FrameFAST and PAMFast tools. These cordless options help to reduce trip hazards and reduce bending, stretching, and ladder climbing.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, privately-owned housing starts in June of this year were up 6.3% from the revised May estimates of 1,546,000 and 29.1% above the June 2020 rate of 1,273,000.

Even more promising is the fact that lumber prices are finally returning to earth. According to the *Wall Street Journal* at the time of this writing, lumber futures were down nearly 70% from the high of \$1,711.20 in May of this year.

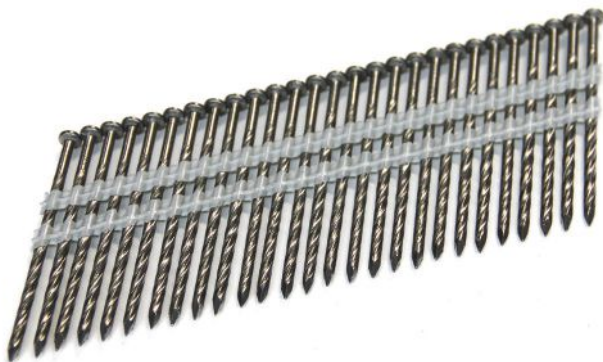
Those strong building starts combined with the correction in lumber prices have manufacturers optimistic. "As lumber prices continue to come down, we believe we will see growth across the DIY, remodeling, and housing sectors," predicts Simpson Strong-Tie's Shirley. "Simpson Strong-Tie is continuing to develop new products to address customer needs and support growing sectors, including the launch of our SDPW Deflector family of fasteners designed to ease the installation full-height, non-load-bearing partition walls, as well as the introduction of several structural fasteners designed for Mass Timber construction."



ABOVE: The Quik Drive auto-feed screw driving system from Simpson Strong-Tie is designed for applications where repetitive fastening is required. Available in corded and cordless versions, the tool allows in-control driving while standing, thus reducing back, neck, and knee strain.

RIGHT: ITW's GRK RSS Rugged Structural Screws are a lag alternative that the manufacturer says requires low installation torque, allowing for fast driving and ease of install, while a proprietary thread design draws two substrates together while the washer head allows zero gap joints.

BELOW: Steelhead Fastener's 20 - 22" full round head plastic collated framing nails are available in stainless steel, hot-dipped galvanized, and bright finishes and are also available in ring and screw shank.



Other manufacturers agree with Shirley's optimism. "We anticipate solid long-term growth for residential construction fasteners based on pandemic-driven lifestyle changes that have increased homeowner investments in improving their homes," says Web Shaffer, general manager and senior vice president of FastenMaster.

Amelia Hubbard, category manager for Midwest Fastener Corp., agrees. "Consumers in 2020 were at home, focusing on their families and homes, remodeling and investing discretionary money towards their homes versus travel and eating out," she says. "In 2021 with the upward trend in the housing market, homeownership is on the rise across the country, resulting in more opportunities for home remodels and new construction."

Changes in what consumers are buying is also driving growth for certain fastener segments. "We are continuing to see trends where screws are replacing nails, especially around structural applications and decking," says Jacek Romanski, channel marketing director for ITW Construction. "Bulk nails are losing space on store shelves and being replaced by structural screws. This is also being fueled by the pandemic in which homeowners are updating their homes and outdoor living spaces. We are still hearing that contractors are backlogged with remodeling projects for the foreseeable future."

Still, it's important to remember that the record demand the market has been seeing can't be sustained forever, manufacturers point out, but that doesn't mean growth won't stay in the black. "As long as construction and remodeling remain strong, we see the market continuing to grow at least 7 to 10%," explains Pan American's Lail. "We are growing by increasing our geographical footprint. We are adding three new salespeople to help grow the business in other areas of the country. Overall the market should continue to grow but we are forecasting somewhere along the way there has to be a post-COVID bubble burst. We have set sales records since May 2020 and the demand is still strong." ➤



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EFFICIENCIES LEAD TRENDS

While good for the bottom line, all that aforementioned growth is straining builder and contractor resources. Extreme demand for their services, coupled with the continued shortage of jobsite labor, has pushed them to seek out products that offer time-saving benefits, and manufacturers are answering that call.

More than ever, fastener makers are focusing on product innovations that speed installation and decrease call-backs. "A key factor that many builders continue to focus on is the reduction of call-backs due to incorrect installations of walls and flooring," says Simpson Strong-Tie's Shirley. "When installed correctly, the fastening of subfloors to joists using screws reduces call backs related to floor squeaks. The Simpson Strong-Tie Strong-Drive WSV Subfloor screw enables fast driving with less torque when installing subflooring. Combined with cordless Quik Drive auto-feed screw driving systems, these WSV Subfloor screws provide

more screw driving per battery charge due to this reduced driving torque."

ITW's Romanski agrees that efficiencies are key. "With the lack or shortage of labor, fasteners and power fastening tools need to minimize or eliminate any downtime on the jobsite," he explains. "Pro contractors do not want to deal with the hassles of broken or stripped screws or nailers that jam, causing them to stop what they were doing to solve the issue. They want fasteners that get the job done right immediately so they can move to the next project."

It's not just efficiency that's driving product development, however; the increasing use of mass timber construction is spurring fastener manufacturers to engineer new fasteners for these specific applications. As Shirley explains, "Mass timber construction has influenced new trends in fastening applications, methodologies, and the design of structural fasteners specifically suited for mass timber connections." As an example, he points

out Simpson Strong-Tie's Strong-Drive SDCP Timber-CP, a large partially threaded fastener that he says is ideal for wall-to-wall, floor-to-floor, panel-to-beam, surface spline, lap joint, and ledger connections common in mass timber construction, along with the Strong-Drive SDCF Timber-CF, a fully threaded fastener designed for beam reinforcement, support beam connections and butt joints.

"I see a definite increase in the use of cross laminated timber and other structural wood products," says Pan American's Lail. "To fasten these timbers correctly you need to ensure you are using the top grades of carbon steel and proper heat treat specifications that allows the fastener to bend but not easily break. We have redesigned our Big Timber CTX structural lag screw to start faster and drive easier. Some of these structural fasteners are up to 16" in length."

OFFER CHOICES, PROVIDE SOLUTIONS

New products. New applications. New building trends and techniques. When you add all of it up, the resulting sum can seem daunting to the LBM dealer who is trying to best serve its customers. To succeed in the fastener space, manufacturers recommend a few strategies for building supply retailers.

To start, they suggest offering a wide array of thoughtful fastener options. "Offering a variety of products, covering user needs is important when developing a fastener destination, complemented by knowledgeable and friendly staff is what creates a recurring customer," says Midwest Fastener's Hubbard. "It takes multiple positive experiences in a store to build trust, it takes one negative experience to lose that trust."

That doesn't mean, however, that the LBM dealer should overwhelm their customers with so many choices that store aisles become cluttered or difficult to navigate. Rather, they recommend keeping things organized in a way that quickly offers solutions. "Often the fastener aisle can have a crowded or busy appearance with so many different suppliers, styles and sizes,"



ABOVE: Maze Nails produces Stormguard double hot-dip galvanizing nails and the process is backed by a lifetime warranty against red rust. According to the manufacturer, the nails have been hardened to increase the shear value and tensile strength. The ring shank provides holding power in posts, trusses and timbers.

ABOVE RIGHT: The Non-Load Bearing Connector (NLB) from FastenMaster replaces a difficult-to-use clip (and nails) with a single fastener that can be installed from ground level and allows for the proper transfer of loads throughout the structure while reducing the installation time and effort.

RIGHT: Steelhead Fastener's wire collated siding/fencing nails come in smooth and ring shank, are available in stainless steel, hot-dipped galvanized, and electro galvanized finishes, and will fit most 15° coil siding nail guns.





A: Pan American recently introduced its Big Timber WTX Structural Lag Screw, which is engineered to work well with decorative black hardware, laminated beams and structural insulated panels. B: Pan American's SCTX structural lag screw is made from premium 316 grade stainless steel engineered for aggressive coastal and livestock applications.

points out Josh Martin, national sales manager for SPAX. "Our recommendation is to feature clean, nicely merchandised displays with consistent branding and customer messaging to help reduce confusion and clutter."

As well, it's vital for the successful LBM dealer to maintain strong lines of communication with their customers so that they can best serve their needs. Too often, they say, simple questions get skipped which can lead to frustration on the jobsite. "They need to better understand their customer base in terms of construction, i.e., multi-family or single-family," explains Steelhead

Fasteners' Anderson. "This alone is going to narrow down the type of fasteners that they might need, as basic sheathing nails for plywood will be totally different depending on what is being built. In addition, talk to the customers about the specific job in relation to needed fasteners and timeframe. If you need a special fastener but fail to ask the customer the total amount they will need for that job, it puts everyone in a real tough position when we are out of stock with none coming in for months, but the customer needs to finish the job. Absolutely no one likes to be put in that position, but if the sales-

person found out this pertinent info from the beginning it could have been addressed and a solution found."

Of course, part of the communication plan needs to include talking with your suppliers. As Pan American's Phil Lail points out, "In today's climate, with industry wide shortages and extended lead times from Asian manufacturers, I've heard it said that 'Inventory is king.' Working with your supplier and keeping them aware of trends and increases (or decreases) of certain key products in your individual markets is invaluable for a supplier to be able to react properly." ➤

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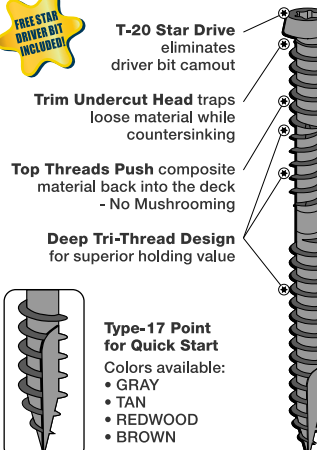
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And of course, manufacturers stress the need for education. By staying on top of the fastener space regarding new products, proper applications, and product benefits, LBM dealers can serve as a trusted resource for their customers, one that they'll return to again and again. "LBM dealers that can offer better product education to their pro customers will have a competitive advantage versus their peers who cannot," explains Simpson Strong-Tie's Shirley. "Unlike generic screws, lags and nails, premium fasteners are designed for performance, ease of installation, time savings, and in many cases, for specific applications in specific environments. Providing education to customers regarding what fasteners are ideally suited for which applications and level of corrosion resistance is key to ensuring that jobs and projects are built for safety and are built to last."



ABOVE: Screw Products, Inc. recently re-engineered the majority of its fasteners. According to the manufacturer, these improvements include a slightly curved head to offer a more elegant appearance, ribs under the head for quickly cutting into the wood, and dual knurls that reduce friction and heat on the shank.

RIGHT: Simpson Strong-Tie's Quik Stik overhead fastening tool is designed for use with the manufacturer's Strong-Drive SDWC truss screw and provides contractors a method for fastening top plates to rafters and trusses without the need for standing on a ladder.



BELOW RIGHT: SPAX PowerTrim finishing and composite-PVC trim screws can be used with wood, composite or PVC trim. They feature a secondary thread that pulls in PVC pigtails and tucks it in for a clean, flush finish.

BELOW: FastenMaster has expanded the availability for its Collated Cortex Hidden Fastening System for Trex Select and Transcend composite deck boards. According to FastenMaster, the system makes installation of collated plugs 50 faster than loose.



MORE TRAINING, MORE OPTIONS

Because of the need for LBM dealers to serve as educational resources for their customers, manufacturers have long provided product resources and training. The post-pandemic world, however, combined with the continuing labor shortage challenges, has brought about the development and release of new educational programs delivered in new and innovative ways. "The shortage and high turnover of labor has highlighted the importance of on-going and distributed training," says FastenMaster's Shaffer. "It's critical to 'train the trainer', creating a broad network of product experts that aren't lost every time personnel changes."

For example, at their regional training centers, Simpson Strong-Tie offers workshops and classes on proper specification, installation, and inspection of connectors and structural systems. "We remain committed to opportunities for classroom instruction as well as hands-on installation workshops for Simpson Strong-Tie products," says Simpson Strong-Tie's Shirley. "Available to engineers, architects, dealers, contractors, and inspectors, our training courses often qualify for professional development hours (PDH) and continuing education units (CEU) through a variety of states and organizations."

As well, the company also has launched its Builder Learning Center (training.strongtie.com/builder) that hosts curated training sessions on topics such as product installation, building codes, builder software and industry trends. "The site offers plenty of on-demand training, including self-paced online courses, videos and recorded webinars, explains Shirley. "While nothing can replace in-person hands-on education, it has been an exciting and rewarding challenge to find ways to serve our customers."

In the case of SPAX, it is investing in a new training center in Bryan, Ohio for its employees, and they have increased the number of live video demos for their dealers which demonstrate product applications, features and benefits. "The SPAX team is working hard to educate customers with videos, digital advertising and social media,"



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ABOVE: U2 Fasteners' Construction Screw is a heavy duty structural fastener. Its design has a finished appearance of a conventional round head, and is created to provide an extra-large bearing surface under the head.

ABOVE RIGHT: In 2020, Midwest Fastener introduced its all-new SaberDrive Platinum brand. According to the manufacturer, this product line offers the company's best deck screw and top-quality structural screws.



says SPAX's Martin. "We've mobilized a team of SPAX Ambassadors who are avid users of the products and enjoy sharing their experiences and applications on social media. We also have a huge focus on providing Technical Evaluation Reports to educate customers about code compliance, appropriate applications and usage of our products."

For the Pan American Screw Fastener Group, it has updated its sales literature and product catalogs to help educate the end user about the specific applications its fasteners can be used for. As well, it has added QR Codes to all its sales literature and product labels so customers can easily download Technical Evaluation Reports when needed for building inspectors or project managers.

And for Midwest Fastener Corp., it has updated its approach to training and education with more online materials that can be accessed from multiple locations at any time. "These updates have allowed Midwest Fastener to maintain the highest level of communication with our internal employees, sales team, suppliers, and our customers," says Hubbard.

In the end, it's all about providing solutions. Even for simple jobs, the successful LBM dealer will be a resource for their customers not just for product but for advice that goes beyond technical data. And every step of the way, the manufacturers are there to help. As Midwest Fastener's Amelia Hubbard says, "Our mission is to exceed expectations by being our retailers' partner in their growth. We create fastener destinations that make the customer shopping experience as easy, as quick, and as thorough as possible, helping the store owner solve problems by offering everything needed within their fastener aisle." ■

Michael Berger is the former managing editor for HANDY Magazine and has been writing about home improvement and construction for the past 20 years.

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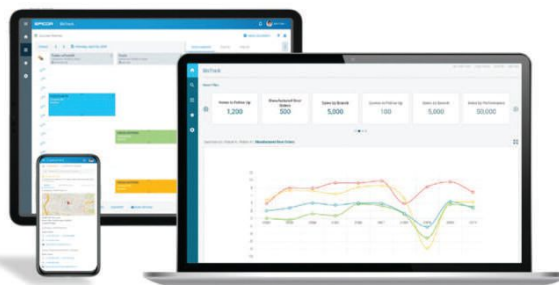


Simpson Strong-Tie's updated sizes for field-adjustable LSSR rafter hangers

Simpson Strong-Tie now offers its patent-pending LSSR rafter hanger in 2x lumber sizes that can install with both miter-cut and square-cut joists for plated truss. The three new models — LSSR26Z, LSSR28Z and LSSR210Z — feature a ZMAX finish designed for extra corrosion protection and respectively accommodate 2x6, 2x8 and 2x10 lumber. Like the original LSSR models, the new sizes are field-adjustable for skews up to 45° and feature an innovative hinged swivel seat that adjusts up to a 45° slope. LSSR hangers can be installed after all of the rafters have been tacked into place, which the manufacturer says boosts contractor versatility, productivity, and efficiency on the jobsite. All LSSR models, including these new 2x sizes, are tested and code listed in IAPMO ER-280. The new models fully replace 2x LSU/ LSSU sizes. strongtie.com/lssr

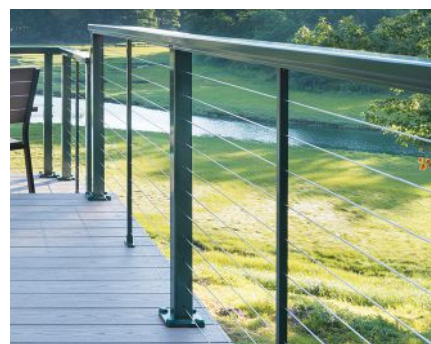
Epicor's BisTrack Kinetic

Epicor BisTrack software has been updated with kinetic technology that the company says will enhance the truly cloud-based user interface and provide a modern and intuitive experience for your employees and your customers. BisTrack Kinetic is designed to simplify common business processes, allowing users to navigate, access information, and perform tasks seamlessly and in fewer steps, resulting in increased staff productivity. Users can access BisTrack Kinetic on any device and in any browser to provide more convenience for your customers. BisTrack Kinetic also provides a modern user experience for your employees. Epicor's BisTrack is developed for pro dealers and distributors of lumber, millwork, building materials, and construction supplies. epicor.com



ColorEasy powder coated colors for DesignRail awning kits

Feeney has launched ColorEasy, a new powder coating program for its DesignRail Aluminum Railing System and Awning Kits. ColorEasy features 18 colors, including 15 colors along with three wood grain finishes: Cherry, Walnut, and Weathered Gray. Feeney is also introducing showroom displays and color selection tools designed to enable retailers to assist customers in choosing the right railing and awning colors for their projects. ColorEasy sampling tools include color chips with textures and a fan deck that shows how specific railing and awning colors will look in different settings. In addition, retail customers can access Feeney's online VisualBuilder tool to build and visualize exterior spaces featuring DesignRail railings and Awning Kits in the full range of ColorEasy colors. feeneyinc.com/coloreasy



TigerClaw by FastenMaster

According to FastenMaster, the combination of the TC-G Hidden Clip for Grooved Decking and the Tiger Claw Installation Gun is the fastest way to attach hidden clips on all leading deck brands including Fiberon, Trex, and more. The TC-G Hidden Clip works in pre-grooved or non-grooved decking planks using the TC-150 slot cutter. The clip's sharp prongs are designed to embed into the upper portion of the groove for strong holding power, and the stainless-steel screw ensures a lasting connection between decking board and joist. While the TC-G clips can be hand driven, the Tiger Claw pneumatic installation gun features a nose piece engineered to hold clips in the correct position every time, firing a screw nail (scrail) through the clip into the joist—fastening the deck board to the joist in one step. fastenmaster.com





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BlueTape payment services

BlueTape is a payment and financing solution for the construction industry. Construction pros can use BlueTape to make and receive payments on their mobile device. BlueTape is geared towards providing a payment and lending solution for contractors and construction material suppliers. Building material suppliers, dealers, distributors, manufacturers, and retailers have the ability to automate accounts receivable, send invoices and payment reminders via text, and offer their customers an easy way to pay for building material with credit cards and ACH on their mobile device. bluetape.com

Buildxact

Buildxact's quoting and construction management software for builders, remodelers, and contractors features point-and-click estimating said to create detailed price lists, automatic quote generation, and the ability to remotely assign work and manage schedules. With its intuitive estimating and project management tools, home builders and remodelers using Buildxact can cut the time required to estimate, quote, and win work by 80%, the company says. buildxact.com



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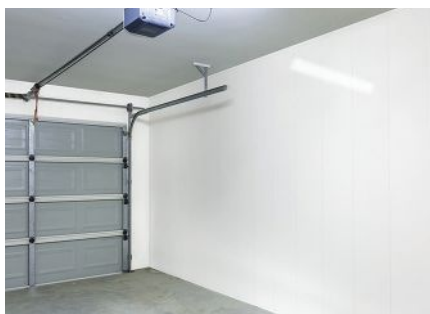
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Fortress Steel Patios

Fortress Building Products' newest category, pergolas, combine steel's weatherability and low maintenance qualities with its modern aesthetic that the manufacturer says brings lasting style to the backyard. The structural steel is dual-layer protected against fire, corrosion, twisting, insects, and rot. Customers can select from three freestanding pergola styles, including one Traditional and two Modern options. Customers can preview the Traditional and Modern pergola styles in a variety of formations using the Pergola Visualizer. Fortress pergolas offer dealers and distributors that currently stock Evolution steel deck framing a low barrier to entry, as the two steel building products share the same SKU. The assembly is backed by a 25-year limited manufacturer warranty. fortressbp.com/pergolas



Interior PVC Cladding

From Palram Americas, PVC cladding is designed to be much more durable, easier to install, safer, and more sustainable than drywall. Palram's PVC cladding products are said to be an ideal option for interior cladding projects as they are: Class A fire rated, USDA/FDA compliant, require no special equipment for installation, extremely durable, water-resistant for high-moisture and humidity environments, 100% recyclable, withstand harsh chemicals and repeated cleaning cycles, and inherently resistant to bacteria, mold, and mildew. Palram's PVC cladding is available in three product lines: Palclad Pro solid PVC panels, Palclad Pro HYG antimicrobial PVC wall cladding system, and Duraclad interlocking multiwall panels. palram.com

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YellaWood Protector stain and sealants

YellaWood has launched its first-ever line of stain and sealants: YellaWood Protector products. The line of acrylic-oil hybrid stain includes water repellents and UV inhibitors. The products are offered in four shades in both 1-gallon cans and 5-gallon buckets: Crystal Clear, American Classic Cedar, Rich Walnut, and Smoky Gray. According to the manufacturer, the premium stain product can be used for decks, fences, siding, pergolas, gazebos, and outdoor furniture. Formulated to offer a professional-grade, acrylic-oil hybrid that offers excellent protection, YellaWood Protector stains and sealants are private label products that YellaWood says adhere to the brand's high standards. yellawood.com



Milwaukee PACKOUT Deep Organizer

Milwaukee has expanded its PACKOUT Modular Storage System with the new PACKOUT Deep Organizer. This new organizer was developed to provide users with another versatile and durable solution for storing large fittings and accessories. With a 50 lb. weight capacity, the PACKOUT Deep Organizer features quick-adjust dividers and a depth of 5.5" to customize internal compartments to fit users' needs. To keep contents secure, the transparent lid seals the compartments to prevent contents from traveling during transport. The IP65 rated weather seal protects tools, accessories, and jobsite materials from rain and debris. With the addition of the new PACKOUT Deep Organizer, the Milwaukee PACKOUT Modular Storage System now has more than 35 solutions designed to fully customize users' storage. milwaukeetool.com



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New color options for Deckorators Vista WPC decking

Deckorators has added two new vertical-grain color options to its line of Vista wood composite decking, which is designed to offer the appearance of exotic hardwoods without the maintenance. Silverwood (light gray) and Dunewood (medium brown) join Driftwood (gray) and Ironwood (brown), to give builders and their clients more color pairing possibilities. All four Vista colors are available in 5-1/2" width and 12', 16', and 20' and grooved-edge options. Vista is backed by a 25-year structural, 25-year stain-and-fade, 25-year removal-and-replacement limited warranty. deckorators.com

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DEWALT Cordless Air Compressor

DEWALT's new 20V MAX 2.5 Gallon Cordless Air Compressor with FLEXVOLT ADVANTAGE Technology delivers max 140 PSI, which the manufacturer says allows up to 81% more nails per cycle. The OneTurn Regulator was developed to allow users to precisely adjust the regulated pressure quickly and efficiently without manually gauging pressure. The cordless, compact design weighs just 21.5 lbs. and can be easily transported, carried, and stored without the hassle of extension cords and power sources. Made in the USA with global materials, the 20V MAX 2.5 Gallon Cordless Air Compressor with FLEXVOLT ADVANTAGE Technology is designed for use by general contractors, remodelers, finish carpenters, and cabinet and trim installers, and can be paired with DEWALT staple guns and brad or finish nailers. The brushless motor and oil-free pump are said to provide efficiency and long compressor life, while the covered On/Off switch and heavy duty rollcage offer durability on the jobsite. dewalt.com



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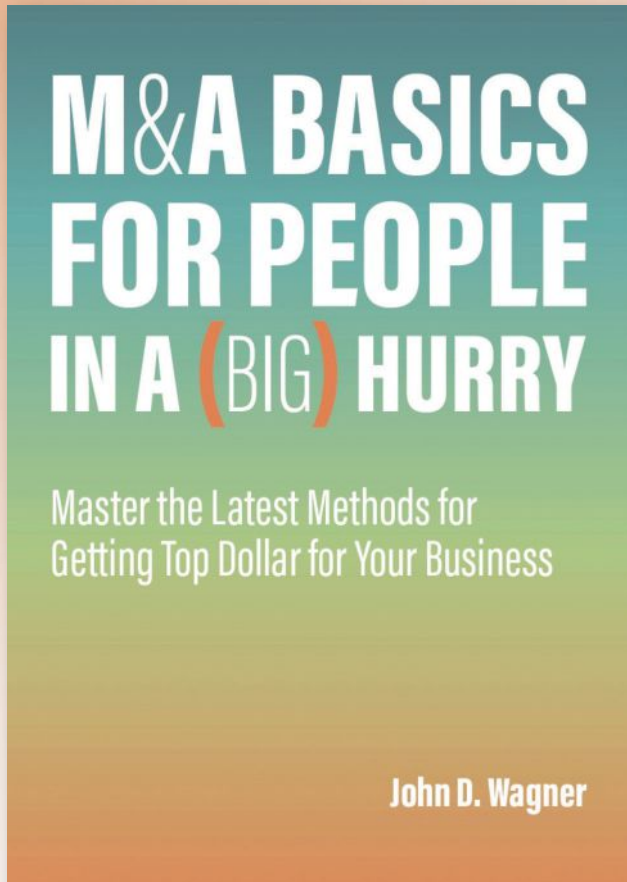
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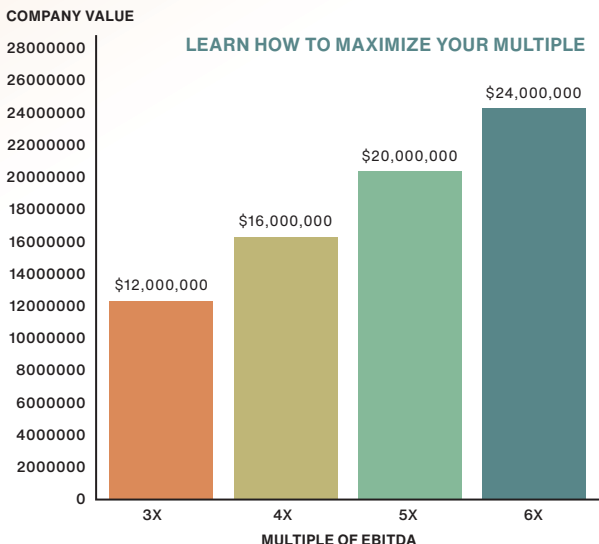
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John is the long-time M&A columnist for *LBM Journal* and a speaker at the annual LBM Strategies Conference.



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Residential construction continues move to suburbs, lower-cost markets

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION continued to shift toward the suburbs and lower-cost markets, and this trend is especially pronounced within the multifamily sector, according to the latest Home Building Geography Index (HBGI) released by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

During the second quarter of 2021, multifamily construction posted double-digit percentage gains in small metro core and suburban areas, while large metro areas experienced a decrease for multifamily building activity.

“The trend of construction shifting from high-density metro areas to more affordable regions, which accelerated at the beginning of the pandemic early last year, appears to be continuing,” said NAHB Chairman Chuck Fowke. “Lower land and labor costs, and lower regulatory burdens in suburban and exurban markets make it more appealing to build in these communities. And workers are increasingly flocking to these areas due to expanded teleworking practices and lower housing costs.”

The HBGI shows that multifamily residential construction grew by 14.3% in small metro urban cores and 25.5% in small metro suburban areas in the second quarter. In contrast, large metro core areas recorded a 0.5% decline.

“There was a marked increase in new apartment construction outside large metro areas as people have greater flexibility to live and work in more affordable markets,” said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. “Similarly for the single-family sector, the HBGI data revealed that construction growth occurred more proportionally in these more

affordable areas as well, while declining in terms of market share in the most expensive counties. However, overall single-family starts have slowed in recent months largely because of rising prices and limited availability of a broad range of key building materials.”

MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION GREW BY 14.3% IN SMALL METRO URBAN CORES AND 25.5% IN SMALL METRO SUBURBAN AREAS IN THE SECOND QUARTER.

The second quarter HBGI also examined the correlation between construction activity and housing affordability. Findings show that since the beginning of the pandemic, growth rates in multifamily construction have been flat in the most expensive housing markets and stronger in more affordable areas. In the segment defined as the “most affordable” regions of the country, multifamily construction posted a 48.3% gain since the second quarter of 2020.

Single-family home building has also experienced a shift toward more affordable markets, though not as pronounced as multifamily. Exurbs and outer suburbs of medium-sized cities accounted for 18.1% of single-family construction in the second quarter—a market share gain of 0.8 percentage points since the fourth quarter of 2019. And while the bulk (45.8%) of single-family construction occurred in core areas of large and medium-sized metros, that share has declined 1.2% for that period. ■

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JOB PLANNING 101

SOME OF YOUR LESS-THAN-ORGANIZED BUILDER CUSTOMERS ARE FRUSTRATED THAT THEY CAN'T GET THE MATERIALS THEY WANT WHEN THEY WANT THEM. HOW DO YOU GET THEM TO START PLANNING?

You'll never forget what it was like when, 10 years ago, you and your freshly minted degree in Business Administration joined a growing building supply company as a management trainee. Your classes prepared you well for much of what you experienced on the job, but the one thing you weren't prepared for was the tremendous differences between your company's pro customers.

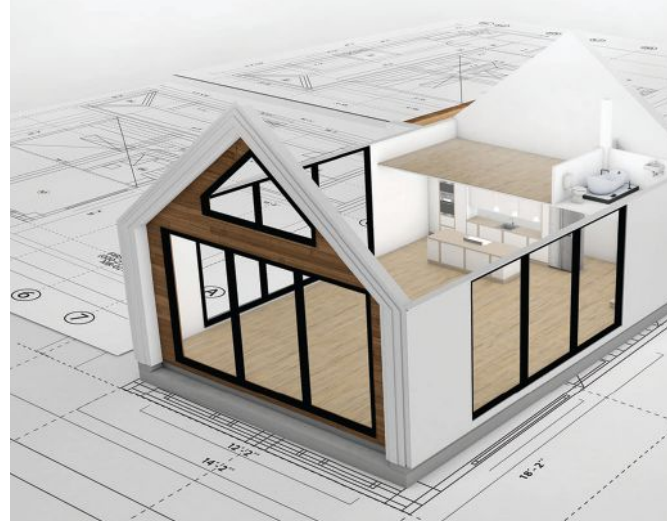
Some of the builders you worked with were natural administrators. Very organized, with detailed plans for the jobs they had in process, including dates that the materials needed to be delivered, schedules for the various subs to jump in and do their part, and more. These were the easy customers.

The others were, as they say, organizationally disinclined. Instead of planning ahead for what they'd need and when they'd need it, they were focused on the job at hand. "How can I plan ahead to two weeks from now when I don't even know how we're going to get past [insert challenge of the day]?"

Ten years ago, when business was in the slow rebuilding process following the Great Recession, there was less urgency, and more time to spend working through issues. But the business landscape today couldn't be any more different. Not only are you and your colleagues busier than ever, so are your builder customers. The builders who are disciplined planners are leaving their unorganized peers in the dust.

Where their lack of planning is hurting them is in material availability. With so many building materials in short supply with long lead times, they have jobsites that sit empty for weeks while they wait for the products they need. They're frustrated, and they take their frustrations out on you and your colleagues.

You've worked with many of these same builders since you joined the company a decade ago, and you hate to see them fall behind. You know the answer is to show them the power of basic job planning. But you know from experience that the customers who need help the most are those who will push back the hardest. What would you do?



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- **SHOW & TELL.** Without using names, show how much faster a similar sized builder is completing the same type of projects. The only difference: they work with you to plan their jobs.
- **MONEY TALKS.** Ask if they'd be interested in earning more money without working any harder. When they answer yes, talk about how basic job planning can help them complete more jobs with less stress.
- **DRILL DOWN.** Away from the jobsite, over a coffee or a cola, sit down and learn what they hope to accomplish. If they want to grow their business, you have the answer.
- **LEAVE IT BE.** You're their material supplier. Not their coach, or their boss. Let them do business they choose, and be happy that they choose to buy their materials from you.

SOMETHING ELSE?

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