

LBM JOURNAL[®]

APRIL 2024 | \$15 U.S. | LBMJOURNAL.COM



THE DECK ISSUE

THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND TRENDS IN DECKING,
RAILING, ACCESSORIES, AND DECK FASTENERS

WESTLAKE ROYAL BUILDING PRODUCTS—
ZURI GROOVED BOARD IN CHESTNUT

A PROUD HISTORY OF ALWAYS HAVING YOUR BACK.



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On day one we started with just a truck and a commitment to be the best. When the YellaWood® brand says you can trust us to deliver, those aren't empty words; they're actually proven words. And words we take seriously. Which is why we've been striving to give our very best every day for over five decades now. We can say with confidence that the Yella Tag can deliver like no other because it's been shown to do just that. **See all the other ways the YellaWood® brand has your back. Visit yellawood.com/for-dealers**



INSIDE

APRIL 2024



THE 2024 PRODUCTS & TRENDS DECK ISSUE



- 8 TWO DECADES OF COMMITMENT TO OUTDOOR LIVING**
Contributed by the North American Deck & Railing Association (NADRA).
- 46 AWARD WINNING DECKS**
An assortment of first place winners from this year's National Deck Competition.
- 50 5 QUESTIONS**
With Nick Thies of Midwest Fastener Corp.
- 52 DECKS**
Continued demand for outdoor living spaces can bring success for LBM dealers.
- 64 DECK RAILINGS + ACCESSORIES**
Modern aesthetics lead the way in homeowner purchases.
- 76 DECK FASTENERS**
The desire for elevated style drives development of new deck fasteners.

FEATURES

- 34 REAL ISSUES. REAL ANSWERS.**
Dealers give their suggestions on where to invest marketing dollars for the best bang for the buck.
- 42 LBM JOURNAL DEALER OF THE YEAR CATEGORY: \$10MM**
In 2019, Andy and Breezy Mitchell officially took over Mitchell Lumber, which was founded in 1971 in Silverdale, WA, and has been operating on the Olympic Peninsula in Belfair, WA, since 1992.



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**DEALER
OF THE YEAR
2024**
CATEGORY: \$10MM



DEPARTMENTS

10 THE BUZZ

LBM updates, news, and events. Plus, the latest from lumberyards across the country, and responses to our February issue Tough Call survey.

88 PRODUCTS

Our editors' picks that are sure to pique your interest.

96 TOUGH CALL

A well-connected customer—but inexperienced deck builder—worked through your entire stock of a discontinued decking product, and their project is only 95% complete.

LBM EXTRA

30 40 UNDER 40 Q + A

Featuring Sallie Keene Denton, business development representative for Wilson Lumber Company, and member of LBM Journal's 2023 40 Under 40 class.

INDUSTRY LEADERS

18 BUILDING SALES

You behave what you believe.
RICK DAVIS

20 SALES + OPERATIONS

The secrets to successful prospecting.
BILL LEE

22 CREDIT Q + A

Keeping up with collections.
THEA DUDLEY

24 MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

Should OPEX climb with sales revenue?
JOHN D. WAGNER

26 LEADERSHIP

Rising out of the ashes.
RUSS KATHREIN



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

MY FIRST HOME, a small post-WWII house in Richfield, MN, didn't have a deck—which is something I'd always wanted and never had. Fortunately, I connected with a deck builder who agreed that the deck on my little house should be as big as possible. I loved that little house, but without a doubt, my favorite part was the massive, face-fastened, pressure-treated wood rectangle that ran the length of the house and ate up a sizeable portion of my backyard. Add friends, a roaring fire in the outdoor fireplace, burgers sizzling on the grill, and there was no place in the world that I'd rather be.

As I've learned in the quarter century since then, I'm definitely not alone when it comes to my passion for decking and outdoor living. Indeed, the April issue of *LBM Journal*, which focuses on decking, railing, fasteners, and accessories, is consistently our largest issue every year. This year is no exception. There's lots of good info contained in this 96-page issue; here are some highlights:



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Schumacher', written in a cursive style.

Decks (p. 52), **Deck Railings and Accessories** (p. 64), and **Deck Fasteners** (p. 76) are three features with the type of deep dive reporting that's becoming a rarity in today's media world. Researched and written by Editor Mike Berger, each piece is packed with product photos from leading manufacturers, along with insights from leaders at those companies on where the decking market is headed, and how to make the most of a strong market for outdoor living. These three articles should be required reading for anyone whose company sells into this market.

NADRA National Deck Awards (p. 46-47). Each year, the North American Deck & Railing Association (NADRA) recognizes and celebrates the best-of-the-best decking projects. The creativity, functionality, and visual appeal of these projects help explain why the market for decking and outdoor living continues to expand and grow. If your company sells a lot of decking and railing, I encourage you to consider membership in this organization.

Real Issues. Real Answers. Marketing (p. 34). Our monthly Real Issues feature kicks off with a question from a reader, with insights from fellow LBM pros. This month, a reader reaches out to the LBM community for insights on the best bang-for-your-buck marketing tactics in a local market. Interestingly and surprisingly, 79% of respondents use social media for their marketing outreach—which is more than direct mail, radio, and billboards combined.

This issue also has our unmatched lineup of columns by industry leaders, including Rick Davis, John Wagner, Bill Lee, Thea Dudley, and Russ Kathrein. On behalf of the entire LBM Journal team, thank you for letting us be part of your journey.

— Rick Schumacher
Executive Editor & Publisher

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE FIRST CONSTRUCTION PROJECT I ever worked on was building a deck with my dad at my childhood home back in Cincinnati, Ohio. I was in grade school at the time, and neither my father nor I had ever attempted a project of this scale—heck, the most complicated thing we had built to that point was a birdhouse. As a replacement for an old paver block patio, the deck project required everything from designing the structure to pouring concrete foundation piers to a trip to the local lumberyard to place our wood order.

Sure, mistakes were made along the way, but so much was learned. My dad gave me the opportunity to use every tool on the jobsite. From the circular saw to the power drill to the plumb bob and level, I learned the ins and outs, ups and downs, and dos and don'ts of not just how to build a deck, but how to behave on a jobsite, how to work safely, and how to take pride in the creation of something.

The building of that deck gave me the confidence to tackle other projects as I grew older. Whenever I would feel hesitant about a job, I'd think back to that first deck and remind myself that, if my dad and I could build a deck when I was only 11 years old, then there's no reason I can't figure out how to build the next big thing.

It also instilled in me the joy of creating something with my own two hands, along with a deep-seated love for the smell of sawdust and the sound of power tools. And I'm proud to say that, when I sold my parents' house 27 years later, that same deck was still standing strong—a little gray around the edges (and who isn't), but rock solid despite the test of time.

I suppose it's partly because of that experience all those years ago that I have a particular fondness for decks, and I look forward every year to our April deck issue. We're proud to show you so many new products and building techniques available now that weren't around in the late 1970s, and it's always fun to see what the various manufacturers roll out. From the decking itself to deck fasteners to railings and accessories, there's so much to discover in this issue.

Whether it's in the In Depth features or from the insights of our columnists and LBM dealers from across the country, you're bound to find information that will help you move more decking and increase your bottom line, no matter if you're selling to the pro or to an aspiring father-and-son DIY team.

As fate would have it, I'll be tackling another deck project this spring, this time at my home in northern Minnesota, and I'll be using some of the same tools and techniques passed down to me by my father. And maybe that's the greatest legacy of deck building: being able to pass down to others the knowledge we've acquired so that they can build their own successes.

— Mike Berger
Editor



Michael J. Berger

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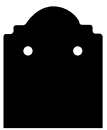


Fresh ideas for home improvement.



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Outdoor Accents



Mission



Avant

Strength and selection go together with Outdoor Accents® decorative hardware from Simpson Strong-Tie. We're always expanding our Mission Collection® and Avant Collection™ lines with new products and accessories, making it easy to enhance outdoor structures and living spaces. Both feature an innovative hex-head washer and fastener combo that looks like a bolted connection but installs as simply as a screw. It's the only approved fastening solution for Outdoor Accents connectors. Plus, our code-listed connectors and fasteners are rigorously tested for performance. So whether your customers are building a planter box or a pavilion, it will be strong, safe and beautiful for years to come.

To see our complete lines of Outdoor Accents decorative hardware, visit go.strongtie.com/outdooraccents or call (800) 999-5099.



TWO DECADES OF COMMITMENT TO OUTDOOR LIVING

FOR TWO DECADES the North American Deck & Railing Association (NADRA) has been the voice of the deck and railing industry providing a unified source for professional development, promotion, growth, quality, and safety. The community of deck builders, inspectors, dealers, and manufacturers are all united to support each other and participate in developing the deck and outdoor living community.

The association's ambition remains to enhance the quality of every aspect within the deck industry, and to educate in a way that enables the delivery to families and businesses a safe and enjoyable outdoor living experience.

Mike Beaudry, the association's executive vice president, said "The association's slogan has always been, 'Doing things for the right reason and having fun doing it.' Well, here we are celebrating the right things having been done and yes, having fun doing so. The NADRA team works hard to keep a 'club feel' in everything we do, every interaction we have, and through every discussion, meeting, presentation, or training session we deliver. Continuing to raise the bar in every aspect around the delivery of a safe outdoor living environment can only be achieved if everyone at every level and within every aspect of the industry works together as a family. It's that family approach that has formed the foundation of the association from day one, and one which we will look to extend for as long as possible as NADRA evolves and grows."

So, what about the future? Well, we know that of the 50 million residential decks in use, around 70% are over 15 years old and in need of repair or replacement. Unlocking that latent potential requires us to continue to educate the whole market, consumers included, of the importance of deck safety, and to secure that understanding of the need for regular deck safety inspections.

The education programs and associated certifications NADRA has established continue to build awareness and to squeeze open the

potential that the industry can feed off of for the next 25 years and more. Product manufacturers continue to develop better performing and looking products, distributors are investing in the logistics to deliver those products, and contractors are working hard to develop the skill sets of their people to bring all that background activity to life.

NADRA collaborates with regulatory bodies and industry stakeholders to shape policies and standards that ensure the safety and integrity of outdoor structures. They promote sustainable materials and advocate for updated building codes, driving positive change in the industry. And Deck Safety Month in May educates homeowners about safety measures, empowering them to enjoy their outdoor spaces safely and responsibly.

The NADRA Connect facility serves as an online community where members can network, share insights, and collaborate with industry peers. This virtual space fosters connections and facilitates discussions on trends, challenges, and best practices, further strengthening the association's mission of advancing the industry.

Beyond advocacy and educational activities, the association is a driving force behind innovation and collaboration, sponsoring events like the Deck Expo, an annual gathering organized by Informa which serves as a hub for industry professionals to explore the latest trends, technologies, and products in deck building and outdoor living while providing a platform for networking, education, and collaboration, furthering the association's mission of advancing the industry.

Its 20-year commitment to excellence has had a profound impact on the outdoor living industry. Through their and collaborative initiatives, they continue to drive positive change and shape the future of deck building and outdoor living. NADRA: an association of "people" united by common interests, needs, standards, and ambitions delivering a safer marketplace.

CONTRIBUTED BY NADRA





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Awaken to renewed design with the new **StyleView® Classic** series from **YKK AP**. Created with the modern builder and homeowner in mind, StyleView's precision-welded corners and modern frame design bring you the perfect blend of style, durability and performance.

NEW **StyleView**
CLASSIC
Premium Vinyl Windows



PARR LUMBER CO.



McCOY'S BUILDING SUPPLY

BY THE YARD

Parr Lumber Co. opened its newest truss manufacturing plant in Lacey, WA, serving the South Puget Sound area. PARR Truss Lacey is the company's ninth and most automated truss manufacturing plant. The location employs 20 team members focusing on manufacturing floor and roof trusses.

McCoy's Building Supply recently celebrated the official groundbreaking of its new 11,531-sq.-ft. company retreat and an expansion of its San Marcos, TX headquarters campus.

84 Lumber has made expansion plans in California to increase its presence to eight locations, plus two additional facilities currently in the permitting process for La Mirada and Lancaster. These new locations include a production yard and truss plant in Bakersfield; stores in Stockton and La Mirada; production yards in Lancaster and Riverside; and a truss plant expansion in Yuma, AZ. The company also opened a new location in Palmetto, FL.

L&W Supply, a distributor of interior building materials and construction supplies, has opened a new location in Portage, MI. The new Portage branch will be a central support hub for customers in Grand Rapids, Jackson, Kalamazoo and South Bend.

Golden State Lumber, a third-generation, family-owned company based in Petaluma, CA, is celebrating 70 years of business. Founded by Glenn Nobmann in 1954, the company now operates locations and showrooms across several cities.



DISTRIBUTION NEWS

Keylink will expand into three Midwestern states with distributor Wolf Home Products. Wolf will distribute Keylink railing in Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin in addition to other states in the region.

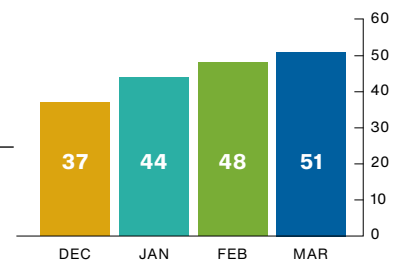
SEND NEWS AND UPDATES ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION TO WENDY@LBMJOURNAL.COM

Builder sentiment rises above breakeven point

Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes climbed three points to 51 in March, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI). This is the highest level since July 2023 and marks the fourth consecutive monthly gain for the index. It is also the first time that the sentiment level has surpassed the breakeven point of 50 since last July.

CO-OP + BUYER'S GROUPS

United Hardware and **Do it Best** announced that the two companies intend to merge after receiving unanimous approval from the boards of directors of both companies. The merger is expected to deliver significant benefits to member-owners, employees, and customers through enhanced scale, efficiency, and innovation. United Hardware shareholders will vote to make the merger official in the coming weeks.



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LBM STRATEGIES

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OCT 16-18 • WESTIN SOUTH COAST PLAZA • COSTA MESA, CA

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PEOPLE IN LBM

Tibbetts Lumber promoted **Rob Hicks** to the role of chief administrative officer. Hicks joined Tibbetts Lumber in March 2022 as director of human resources and operational support. The company also named **Joe Sanchez** as regional manager for the southern region of Florida, overseeing the Palm Bay, Fort Myers, and Englewood locations.

Gordon Lumber Holdings Company announced **Erin Leonard**'s return as President and CEO. Leonard previously served as CEO and has now resumed leadership responsibilities.

McCoy's Building Supply appointed **Zach Dauer** as store manager of its Lockhart, TX location. The new store will open June 2024 with a grand opening celebration to follow.



BARNETT



WARD



MAILLOUX

Kodiak Building Partners appointed two leaders to key positions within its operating companies.

Cory Barnett has been named president of Sun Mountain Custom Doors, and **Josh Ward** has been promoted to president of American Builders Supply (ABS).

Orgain Building Supply, an Ambassador Supply company, announced **Chuck Mailloux** as general manager.

Central States Manufacturing promoted **Eder Garcia** to vice president of operations. Eder has been promoted to the Central States leadership team to oversee standardizing company-wide plant operations and ramping up the focus on safety as the 100% employee-owned company continues expanding nationally to serve growing customer demand.



GARCIA

Eva-Last Americas announced several new company promotions:

- **Eric Atkins:** Director of Commercial Sales
- **Greg Reed:** Director of Sales for the west
- **Shawn Feero:** Director of Sales Canada
- **AJ Jesiolowski:** Director of Product

LMC appointed **Jenny Brawley** as the new regional manager for the southeast region. Brawley, with over 25 years of extensive experience in sales roles within the manufacturing industry, will be based in North Carolina.

Tyndale Advisors, the wholly-owned subsidiary and marketing arm of Orgill, Inc., has promoted **Jim Rivas** to president of Tyndale Advisors.

Do it Best has made the following promotions and additions to its team:

- **Karisa Bailey:** IT Business Technical Support Specialist
- **Chad Burgh:** IT Senior Systems Engineer
- **Tyler Hiatt:** IT Security Analyst
- **Lisa Saunders:** Divisional Merchandise Manager
- **Allison Flatjord:** Vice President of Marketing and Ecommerce
- **Joey Klinger:** Associate Forest Products Trader
- **Lisa Saunders:** Divisional Merchandise Manager

TOUGH CALL SOLUTIONS

THE FEBRUARY ISSUE SURVEY RESULTS FROM LBMJOURNAL.COM AND LINKEDIN.

THE NEXT BIG THING?

You have the opportunity for an exclusive in your market for what could be a game-changing product, but the financial commitment is huge. Here's how readers would handle this Tough Call.

FIND A PATH

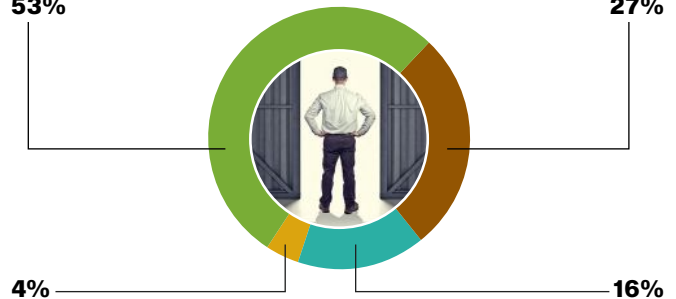
You can't take that big of a risk, but you'd love to make a splash with some of your biggest builder customers. Find a way to make it work without the big investment.

53%

GO BIG

This is exactly the kind of opportunity you were looking for. Yes, it's a risk, but truly game-changing products are rare. Take the chance, and take your company to the next level.

27%



JUST SAY NO

When something seems too good to be true, it usually is. Tell the manufacturer thanks for the opportunity, but you'll pass.

WAIT AND SEE

"Slow and steady" got you where you are. Plus, you're not sure that any of your competitors are positioned to say yes. Say no for now, but circle back if they're willing to negotiate.

7x Stronger than solid timbers.

OUTSTANDING



CULPEPER
COLUMNS

The Original Laminated Timber Column

Constructed of laminated timber made from high-grade, pressure treated lumber, these columns are sturdy, long lasting, and a welcome alternative to solid timber, fiberglass, or aluminum columns.

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PEOPLE IN LBM

PWT announced that **Steve Killgore** has been named special advisor to the board. Killgore joins PWT's board with more than 45 years of professional expertise and success, holding senior-leadership positions across sales, marketing, and company operations at numerous leading manufacturers.

JELD-WEN named **Antonella B. Franzen** to its board of directors. Franzen is currently the chief financial officer for Dupont's Water & Protection segment, a \$6 billion global business with more than 30 manufacturing plants.

YKK AP America Inc. has named **Mike Turner** as president of the company's commercial business group and **Josh Jensen** as president of the company's residential business group. The company also appointed **Shane Wall** as residential sales representative for the state of South Carolina. Wall will be responsible for promoting brand awareness and building long-term customer relationships with window and door dealers and home builders throughout South Carolina.



TURNER



JENSEN



WALL

INDUSTRY UPDATES

Maine-based **TimberHP** launched TimberBatt, a high-performance, press-fit cavity insulation for residential and light-commercial construction. TimberBatt manufacturing starts with wood chips leftover from lumber production and sustainable forestry operations.

A-1 Global Holdings, Inc. held a grand opening for its latest expansion, a 48,000 sq.-ft addition to the A-1 Industries of Florida manufacturing facility in Fort Pierce.

Feeney debuted its new DesignRail Modern collection at the 2024 International Builders' Show, as well as showcased its ColorEasy powder coating program.



Several products took home awards for innovation and performance during the 2024 Best of IBS at the **National Association of Home Builders' International Builders' Show** in Las Vegas, NV:

- Best in Show Winner:** Solstice Shingle by CertainTeed, LLC
- Best Business Solution Software:** TraceAir by TraceAir
- Best Home Technology Product:** MB-79N Window with Infratherm Technology by BERTRAND Windows & Doors

Best Energy Efficient Product: Solstice Shingle by CertainTeed LLC

Best Indoor Product: JascoPro Series SmartCycle Lighting by Jasco Products

Best Kitchen & Bath Product: Empervious by Emser Tile

Best Outdoor Product: Quick Click 6" Shadowline Soffit by ChamClad

Best Window & Door Product: Pella Installation System by Pella Group

Most Innovative Building Material: Protecto Wall VP by Protecto Wrap Co.

Most Innovative Construction Tool: Integrated Layout System by Flashpoint Building Systems

INDUSTRY EVENTS | 2024

APR 28 - MAY 1
LBM ADVANTAGE 2024 NEXTGEN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Denver, CO | lbmadvantage.com

JUL 25-28
BMSA 2024 SUMMER CONFERENCE
Chattanooga, TN | mybmsa.org

AUG 14-16
ALLIED BUILDING STORES FALL MARKET
Grapevine, TX | alliedbuildingstores.com

SEPT 6-9
DO IT BEST FALL MARKET
Indianapolis, IN | doitbestonline.com

SEPT 25-27
CONSTRUCTION SUPPLIERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW
Miramar Beach, FL | gocsa.com

OCT 6-8
WORLD MILLWORK ALLIANCE 59TH MILLWORK CONVENTION & TRADESHOW
San Antonio, TX
worldmillworkalliance.com

OCT 16-18
LBM STRATEGIES CONFERENCE 2024
Costa Mesa, CA | lbmstrategies.com

OCT 23-25
LMC EXPO 2024
Philadelphia, PA | lmc.net

OCT 28-30
LBM ADVANTAGE FALL PLANNING CONFERENCE
Boston, MA | lbmadvantage.com

NOV 13-15
NAWLA 2024 TRADERS MARKET
Uncasville, CT
nawla.org/events/tradersmarket

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MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

Central Valley Builders Supply acquired **Caseywood Corporation**, a building supply company based in Grass Valley, CA. It is a merger of two multi-generational, family-run businesses.

OrePac Building Products, a wholesale supplier of interior and exterior building materials, and **Western Timber Products**, a specialty wood products manufacturer, made a definitive agreement for OrePac to purchase the Western Timber business, with the deal estimated to close at or near the beginning of April.

Nation's Best continues to expand its national footprint by acquiring two additional locations in Kentucky. With the addition of **Pilot Lumber's** stores in Alexandria and Bellevue. Nation's Best brings its total location count to 54 across 16 states.

R.P. Lumber Co., Inc. continues to grow with the pending acquisition of **Schrock Lumber Co.**, a 60-year-old family-owned hardware, lumber, and building materials retailer located in Mediapolis, IA. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

84 Lumber has finalized a deal to purchase certain assets from West Coast Lumber, with the plan of moving the **West Coast Lumber** team over to 84 Lumber as West Coast Lumber exits the production yard business.

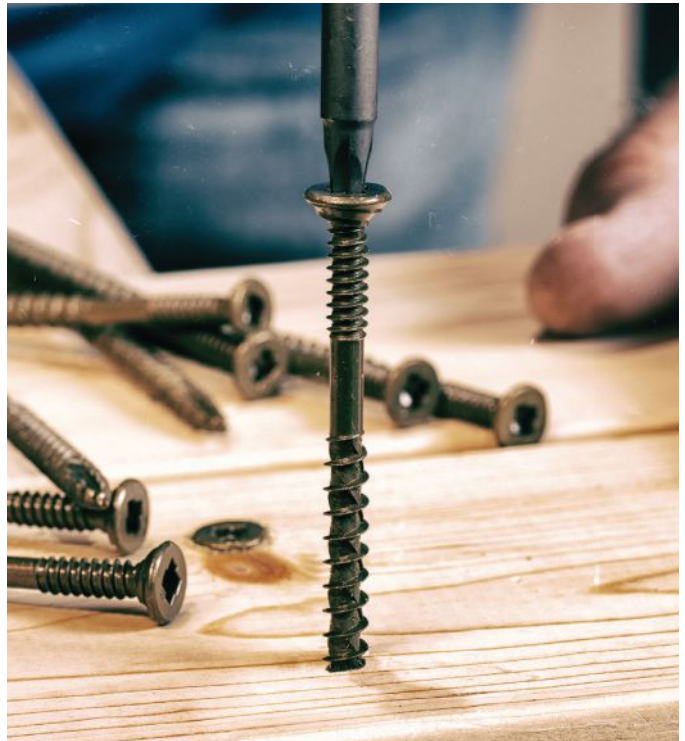
US LBM has acquired **Homestead Building Systems**, a turnkey structural building component manufacturer and distributor in the Mid-Atlantic region. Founded in 1996, Homestead Building Systems operates a 29-acre manufacturing facility in Orange, VA and distribution center in Bristow, VA.

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Ultimate Wood Screw

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NO STRIP-OUTS.
FEWER CUSS WORDS.**

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Scan the code to order a sample and upgrade to the ultimate wood screw today.



GRABBER
CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS

EPICOR

Driving Results Built on a Strong Relationship with Epicor



DISCOVER NOW

EPICOR FOR BUILDING SUPPLY

Eikenhout, Inc.

Generating competitive advantage through improved productivity, process visibility, and actionable data insights.

A Winning Strategy

"We are an independent business going up against huge national chains, so we have to leverage technology to stay competitive. Epicor has helped us tremendously with that" says Sean Scully, Vice President of Operations at Eikenhout, Inc., a 128-year-old company that has grown from a modest roofing supply business to a highly reputable distributor of building supplies with 10 locations across Michigan.

During the past two decades, the triad of Scully, Joel Gritter, Vice President of Finance, and Kyle Hillard, Director of IT, have played a prominent role in carving out those advantages through the strategic deployment of technology, especially Epicor BisTrack, Epicor Warehouse Management (WMS) and Epicor Data Analytics (EDA).

Gritter recalls, *"When we were doing our due diligence about how to move forward with an ERP solution, it became very clear that Epicor was the right choice. This was especially important because we wanted a core system without the need to manage a stable of add-on third-party products, plus Epicor helped to offer an integrated e-commerce option."*

Inventory Goals

Epicor WMS helped provide Eikenhout with a modern, efficient, highly visible inventory management system.

"Instead of physically walking paperwork out to the yard," Hillard explains, *"we have the ability to schedule an order in BisTrack, and it automatically drops into the scanners, enabling multiple employees to immediately start pulling the order."* Adds Scully, *"It's a big customer service*

win. Whether customers are in a store or on the phone, their perception is that the order is ready to go. So, in that respect, WMS is super valuable."

Data-Driven Efficiencies

Prior to Epicor, Eikenhout's business intelligence capabilities were limited. Now, Epicor BisTrack integrates data sources, allowing the team to create insight-driven reports on everything from low-demand products to sales data to potential geographic expansion opportunities.

For example, when inflation caused a surge in decisions around credit and created a bottleneck in AR, a new BisTrack-fed report empowered the Eikenhout team to install a process that curbed credit code releases by 80%. *"With Epicor, we have significantly better controls with a lot less time required to manage them"* Hillard affirms.

Because BisTrack permits rebate accruing to happen at the time of the sale, it makes customer rebate tracking much easier. According to Gritter, *"We get an accurate number in the financial statements each and every month, expensing rebates as we go, instead of the previous model of absorbing a single big hit at the end of the year."*

A Trusted System

BisTrack's Smart Click functionality has been a game-changer at Eikenhout—allowing users to create customized actions for their data. *"Smart Clicks are an awesome feature of BisTrack and one that I've never seen in any other platform,"* Scully enthuses. *"The ability to make a global change in minutes versus a manual, painstaking process saves us days' worth of time."*

With Epicor, we have significantly better controls with a lot less time required to manage them.

In addition, the Eikenhout sales team now feels confident that back-end operations will work smoothly, helping ensure that they get proper credit for their sales. In fact, the sales team receives dashboards that present daily and month-to-date sales, as well as year-to-date budget progress. Regional managers can easily view performance by salesperson and by branch, eliminating the need to email reports back and forth.

Aggressive Objectives and Future Plans
Gritter, Hillard, and Scully have ambitions to expand their competitive advantage using Epicor solutions. These include creating an Epicor BisTrack-enabled e-commerce channel, along with an AP automation initiative to enhance vendor experiences while driving better pricing and improving profit margins. The team is confident that the Epicor partnership will continue to yield impressive results. *"From our earliest days with Epicor, even though we are likely a smaller customer, we've always had the opportunity to be involved in software development,"* Scully confirms. *"There is a distinct willingness at Epicor to partner with customers for positive change."*

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BY RICK DAVIS

YOUR MARKET IS DIFFERENT. I know this to be true because you told me. There are tens of thousands of markets in the country where lumber and building materials are sold, and every single one of them is different. It's been said by Nate in Poughkeepsie, Leon in Louisville, Sheila in Sheboygan, and Fyodor in Chicago. In fact, they are all correct because it is what they believe.

YOU BEHAVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE

If you believe your market is the toughest market, your behavior shifts immediately. You conclude that A. your market is the most competitive; B. it's all about price; C. buyers aren't loyal; D. you can't get contractors to schedule appointments; and E. you talk yourself into outcomes before you've even picked up the phone to talk to a buyer.

The result for you, me, and all salespeople is that we behave what we believe. A salesperson who believes their market is highly competitive operates from a position of scarcity. The belief is that opportunities are limited, and the salesperson cannot afford to lose any sale. Successful people operate from a position of abundance, something they create between their own two ears. Abundance isn't a state of the market; it's a state of mind and a confidence builder. Alternatively, perceptions of scarcity inevitably lead to vulnerability.



Rick Davis is the Sales Education Leader for ABC Supply and the President of Building Leaders. You can buy his books or learn more about his online sales training platform at buildingleaders.com.

If you believe you live in a market of scarcity, you subconsciously send out energy, gestures, and even words (e.g., "Let me know how my price looks after you've checked it out.") that invite the buyer to negotiate. You're not really delivering a price; you're delivering a starting point. You expect (and perhaps feel validated as in "I knew it!") when the price is immediately challenged.

If you believe buyers aren't loyal and quickly jump ship, you become vulnerable to irrational service demands. Any mild concern can be perceived as a catastrophic threat to the long-term relationship. Overreactions occur when an angry voice supersedes

the objective evaluation of urgency. Task priorities are based on emotional outbursts rather than objective service triage.

After years of study and tracking, my conclusion is that buyers are extremely loyal in our industry. I coined the term, "transactional dependability," in my book "Sales Economics" while measuring the degree of loyalty that exists and various levels of the industry supply chain. My studies have revealed that transactional dependability (or loyalty) hovers near the 85% range. That is, you retain 85% of your customers and volume from one year to the next.

I devoted a full chapter of "Sales Economics", to the power of appointments both as a leading and lagging indicator. Yet, one salesperson after another tells me contractors won't make appointments with them. They assure me, "You really can't get contractors to pin down times to meet." To this lament, I ponder aloud how weird it is that a buyer never makes a dental appointment ... or schedules time to meet a customer ... or plans to meet the municipal job inspector on site to ensure a project meets deadlines. The only conclusion a salesperson could (or at least should) glean from this Socratic inquiry is that the buyer does make appointments, but they don't make them because the salesperson hasn't established enough value in the purpose.

Each interaction with a prospect or customer is a play in your playbook of success. It's a miniature part of your journey that, when properly executed, can add up to big results—or ongoing frustration. Your beliefs will drive your behaviors; change your beliefs and your performance will change with them.

To put the argument to rest, I *actually* can tell you which is the toughest market in the country. I've delivered presentations and consultations in 42 states and six Canadian provinces. I've worked in over 200 cities. The toughest market in the country? It's the one I'm in that day ... because that's what they tell me.



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BY BILL LEE

BUILDING MATERIAL salespeople who wish to be in control of their futures have little choice but to become adept at prospecting for new business. When it comes to effective prospecting, shooting from the hip is almost a guarantee that you will never set any records; you need an effective strategy to convince target customers that your company is the right choice for them.

Before attempting to identify candidates to target, I believe you should first identify the characteristics you most want your prospects to possess. Your prospects are your choice, so think through the personalities and behaviors you are most compatible with and target those prospects first.

Next is to identify your targets by name. Use every source available to you to develop a compelling value proposition that clearly communicates how your products and services can address your prospects' specific needs. This involves understanding the needs, preferences, and problems your potential customers are attempting to solve.

This next step is crucial: Once you have identified your prospects, it is important to be able to communicate to them how your products and services address their specific needs. Be sure to do your homework and make sure your company's service capabilities mesh with the needs of your prospects. Don't assume all of your prospects suffer from the same issues.

Make sure you clearly understand each prospects' individual needs and concerns. Being almost anal about doing your "homework" will buy you and your company a lot of credibility with your prospects. When you ask your prospects questions, be specific. For example: "Mr. Prospect, if we are successful in earning a piece of your business, I want

the reason to be because we have identified something we can do to enable your company to be more successful, make more money, or solve a pressing problem. If you could change just one aspect of your current supplier's service level, what would it be?"

Earning credibility is fundamental to establishing a trusting relationship with your prospects. Keep good records on what you talk with your prospects about on each sales call to keep from repeating yourself. If, as an example, you notice the same material sitting around a jobsite for a week or two before being picked up by the prospect's supplier, make a note of it and, at an appropriate time, mention the cost builders incur when material is not picked up in a timely manner.

Invite your prospects to have lunch with you and stop by your store so the prospect can see how efficient and organized the operations manager keeps his end of the business, how the dispatcher organizes deliveries, how backorders are scheduled so they don't fall through the cracks, etc.

If you have a sales coordinator assigned to you, make sure he or she knows your prospect's name on the their next visit to your store.

I believe it's important to remember that you're dealing with human nature when you're trying to take a customer away from a supplier they have perhaps been buying from exclusively for a number of years. Be sensitive to their emotions and help them to begin feeling at home when they visit your store.

Here's an example with specifics: Alert the store manager, the dispatcher, the yard foreman, etc. that you are bringing a prospect, Dave Beardall, by the store tomorrow. Remind

THE SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL PROSPECTING



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

them that his son is a wide receiver for the Northside High School football team and Dave builds homes on the east side of your community.

Before his arrival, get prepped. Get a credit application filled out well in advance of him placing his first order. Get with the yard foreman and prepare a questionnaire so you can ask him all of the typical logistical questions well in advance of receiving his initial delivery.

Each step in the process is important. Show your prospects that you are a real pro and that this isn't your first rodeo.

WORK ETHIC AS **STRONG** AS YOURS



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BY THEA DUDLEY

Hi Thea,
We have a delinquent customer that is now part of the National Debt Relief program. What are our options for collecting, if any? What kind of proof can we request of our customer that this is true?

— No Relief for Us

KEEPING UP WITH COLLECTIONS

Dear No Relief,

Remember when you were little and would fall while on a trampoline and everyone would keep jumping so you couldn't get up? That is credit management. Every day, some new twist shows up that makes you question how this role should work.

Someone applies for credit, you give them credit, they purchase product, they pay for it in the agreed terms. Easy peasy, right? If only life in credit was that simple. There is always something new or some twist to keep you on your toes.

Credit repair and debt relief services—it sounds so good: fix your credit, remove negative items from your report, consolidate and negotiate down your debt. “Call us, we can fix this,” is the motto. Sleep soundly again. This is actually a recycling of a decades-old cottage industry that has been around since credit reporting began back in the 1800s and makes headlines when there is any economic disruption. It has now grown, as of last calculation in 2022, to a revenue of \$4.4B—BILLION—according to the data company IBISWorld.

The truth is these companies can't do anything for a customer they can't do for themselves. It is called negotiation,

paying attention to your credit report, policing the information and working with your creditors. They can't make negative items go away simply because you don't like them. If the information is current and accurate, no one can make it go away.

Let's talk about that name. National Debt Relief program. Sounds like a government agency to help out some folks that are in a pickle. There is no national debt relief program. There are a lot of buzz words out there on our national debt, lots of debate, so the name of this company sounds like it could be a government program.

WRONG! It is a company, one of thousands that offers to take over dealing with a company's debt—for a price. Their service offers to take over negotiating down each account, making the payments, looking into the credit report to remove items, etc. The main attraction to signing with them is the claim that they will stop the collection calls. Naw, bro, nothing stops debt collection efforts except bankruptcy.

Did your customer tell you when they signed up for this service and who the contact person is at National Debt Relief program? Your customer should be able to tell you who they are working with at the company and provide a contact name. Run a credit report on this company, along with a Better Business Bureau check and lastly, Google that company. That is where most of the dirty laundry shows up. Check to see if the person assigned to “work this out” is certified with the International Association of Professional Debt Arbitrators.

Contact your customer all you like. This is not like bankruptcy where they waive a white flag and the game is over. Your customer may have enlisted the aid of a company to help them sort themselves out, you did not. You have no idea when or if you will hear from this group anytime in the near future. You have decisions and choices to make to keep your company's cashflow safe.

Whatever you are not challenging, you are choosing. Read that again.



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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MoistureShield
COMPOSITE DECKING

BY JOHN D. WAGNER

OUR TEAM WAS recently modeling the future growth of one of our clients, and we happened to be working closely with a skilled financial analyst at our client's location. When we got back his first growth model, he had applied a multi-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for his company to five future years. Perfect. That growth rate would be readily accepted by an acquirer, since it is based on an historical record.

Next, taking a conservative position, he maintained the earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) as a percent of sales for the five future years. Readers of this column know that the EBITDA as a percent of sales is a crucial key performance that expresses what percent of sales become earnings.

Next, however, the analyst created what we viewed as an error. As the sales climbed, he modeled a corresponding symmetrical increase in OPEX as a percent of sales (operating expenses), essentially coupling sales and OPEX percent increases. This maintained the EBITDA percentage for the future years of the model. But was it correct to assume that OPEX would rise symmetrically with sales revenue? Moreover, if the OPEX did not climb at the same rate of sales, we knew that EBITDA as a percent of sales would improve, because a dollar saved in OPEX adds a dollar to EBITDA.

SHOULD OPEX CLIMB WITH SALES REVENUE?



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

Invariably, as your sales rise, there will be some higher OPEX/fixed costs that are associated with it, e.g. back-office support, expanded real estate for inventory, new rolling stock, etc. That's both unavoidable and healthy for your business. Why starve your operations of resources?

But OPEX as percent of sales (another closely scrutinized KPI) does not have to rise at the same rate as sales. In fact, it's likely that:

1. You already have elasticity in your workforce and infrastructure to handle growth; your staff can accommodate a rise in sales without proportionately adding OPEX.
2. Within OPEX, you have fixed and variable expenses. Fixed expenses like rent, will typically go up with inflationary increases. Variable expenses like sales commissions will follow sales increases more closely. This alone can slow (or halt) the coupling of sales and OPEX growth rate. By not laying on OPEX as your sales grow, your EBITDA dollars grow and your EBITDA as a percent of sales improves. If you increase OPEX in anticipation of sales growth, or add it faster than sales growth, the opposite will happen.
3. Well-run businesses often get more efficient as they grow, not less. So, it's likely that you can decouple sales and OPEX growth, so they don't increase at the same rate.

How can you ensure OPEX growth control? As well-run businesses grow, we have seen leadership take a more "dashboard-driven" approach to managing the operation. Popular tools like Microsoft Excel with Power BI, Tableau, Zoho, and Google Sheets can readily take data and convert it to dynamic graphs for review. Increasingly, AI is being employed with these systems to fuel accurate analytics as well. Consider starting and ending your day with a KPI dashboard that shows your sales, OPEX, OPEX percent, GP dollars, gross profit margin, EBITDA dollars, and EBITDA percentage.

In revising our client's growth model, we actually reduced OPEX as a percent of sales over time, increasing efficiency and productivity. In Excel, we could see EBITDA as a percent of sales improve, and EBITDA dollars grow, as the OPEX percent decreased. Probably the only "flaw" in the model was that a lack of OPEX discipline would punch a hole in it. But in the financial modeling we have done for other clients during the run-up and run-down of lumber prices, these companies universally did not increase OPEX as they enjoyed more gross profit dollars, and a higher EBITDA, from higher commodity prices. We think they can do the same when the higher gross profit dollars come from increased sales across all product categories.

SMART START PROGRAMS



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ORGILL

BY RUSS KATHREIN

A FRIEND OF MINE told me that his office and warehouse had just burned down and that he lost everything. I told him I truly empathized with him and shared my family's story of losing our business to a fire. It got me thinking about how my dad and our family got through it, and I realized it was a pretty good story to share about leading through loss, rebuilding, and people doing the right thing.

Memorial Day Weekend 1976 found my family in Florida celebrating my sister's college graduation. We were waiting for the commencement to start when we saw the dean of the college wading through the rows of chairs coming toward us. He stopped at my dad and whispered something in his ear.

RISING OUT OF THE ASHES

My dad's face turned white. He said something to my mother and quickly left. I asked my mom what was wrong and she answered, "There's a fire at the lumberyard." My dad hopped on the first plane back to Chicago. On approach to O'Hare airport, the pilot announced over the intercom that they were being put in a holding pattern because one of the runways was closed due to a huge industrial fire that was shooting flames hundreds of feet into the air. He said you could see it off the right side of the plane. Everyone was trying to look out the windows to see the spectacle. A passenger saw my dad sitting in his seat on the left side of the plane and said, "Hey buddy, don't you want to see this fire? It is pretty amazing!" My dad looked at the man and glumly said, "No. That's my lumberyard on fire." The rest of the plane suddenly got quiet and went back to their seats. No one said a word until they landed.

The fire burned for 36 hours. Fourteen fire departments responded. It took nearly 100 firefighters to get the blaze under control. When my mom and I flew back home the next day, my dad picked us up at the airport, and we drove

to the lumberyard. As we pulled up, all you could see was a smoldering pile of ash next to our smoke damaged office and store. Sticking out of the ashes was this towering resaw that my dad had just bought and installed. It was devastating. My mother burst into tears and my dad stared at the remains pondering what to do next.

The next day my dad had an office trailer delivered to the site and he and his team set to work. No time to feel sorry for themselves. Everyone had one mission: get the business going again. Luckily, he had purchased a smaller piece of land across town where he had set up a small saw shop and had more lumber stored. A couple of lumberyards in Chicago reached out to my dad and offered assistance,

including delivering loads that he had sold and selling lumber to my dad at their cost so he could get back on his feet. I was drafted to go down every weekend and scrounge through the place and try to salvage whatever we could to use or resell. Everything smelled of smoke, as did my clothes for months. To this day I can still close my eyes and smell that acrid smell.

After a couple of months, the business was back on its feet and stronger than ever. The fire acted as a kind of purge that made everybody get rid of the old way of thinking and start with a fresh perspective, both literally with new buildings and layouts, and figuratively with thinking and planning. Like a phoenix, Totem Lumber rose from the ashes and is still going strong to this day.

Years later when my brother and I owned the business, one of the lumber companies that had helped out my dad experienced their own devastating fire. We called the owner's son who had called my dad offering help in the days after our fire, and offered the same help, no strings attached. Karma is a pretty cool thing.



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

HOME EXTERIOR SOLUTIONS

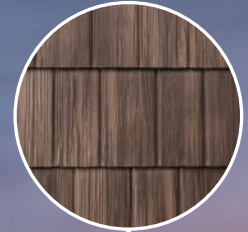
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NewTechWood

REVOLUTIONIZING OUTDOOR LIVING: NEWTECHWOOD'S COMPOSITE DECKING

In the realm of outdoor living, there's a growing demand for decking materials that combine aesthetics, durability, and sustainability. NewTechWood, a leading innovator in the composite decking industry, has been making waves with its revolutionary products that marry form and function. Let's delve into what sets NewTechWood's composite decking apart and why it's becoming the go-to choice for homeowners and contractors alike.

CUTTING-EDGE COMPOSITE TECHNOLOGY

NewTechWood's composite decking is crafted using cutting-edge composite technology, blending recycled materials with high-quality polymers to create a product that mimics the look and feel of natural wood without the drawbacks. This innovative approach not only results in stunningly realistic wood grain patterns but also ensures exceptional durability and longevity.

UNRIVALED DURABILITY

One of the standout features of NewTechWood's composite decking is its unparalleled durability. Unlike traditional wood decking, which is susceptible to rotting, warping, and insect damage, NewTechWood's composite decking is engineered to withstand the harshest outdoor conditions. Its moisture-resistant properties make it impervious to mold, mildew, and moisture-related issues, ensuring a long-lasting and low-maintenance outdoor space.

LOW-MAINTENANCE ELEGANCE

Gone are the days of tedious staining, sealing, and sanding. NewTechWood's composite decking offers hassle-free maintenance, requiring only occasional cleaning with soap and water to keep it looking pristine year after year. This low-maintenance convenience appeals to homeowners seeking to spend more time enjoying their outdoor spaces and less time on upkeep tasks.

ECO-FRIENDLY SOLUTION

As sustainability becomes an increasingly important consideration, NewTechWood's commitment to eco-friendly manufacturing sets it apart. By utilizing recycled materials in its composite decking, NewTechWood helps reduce environmental impact without compromising on quality or performance. This eco-conscious approach resonates with environmentally conscious consumers looking to make greener choices without sacrificing style or functionality.

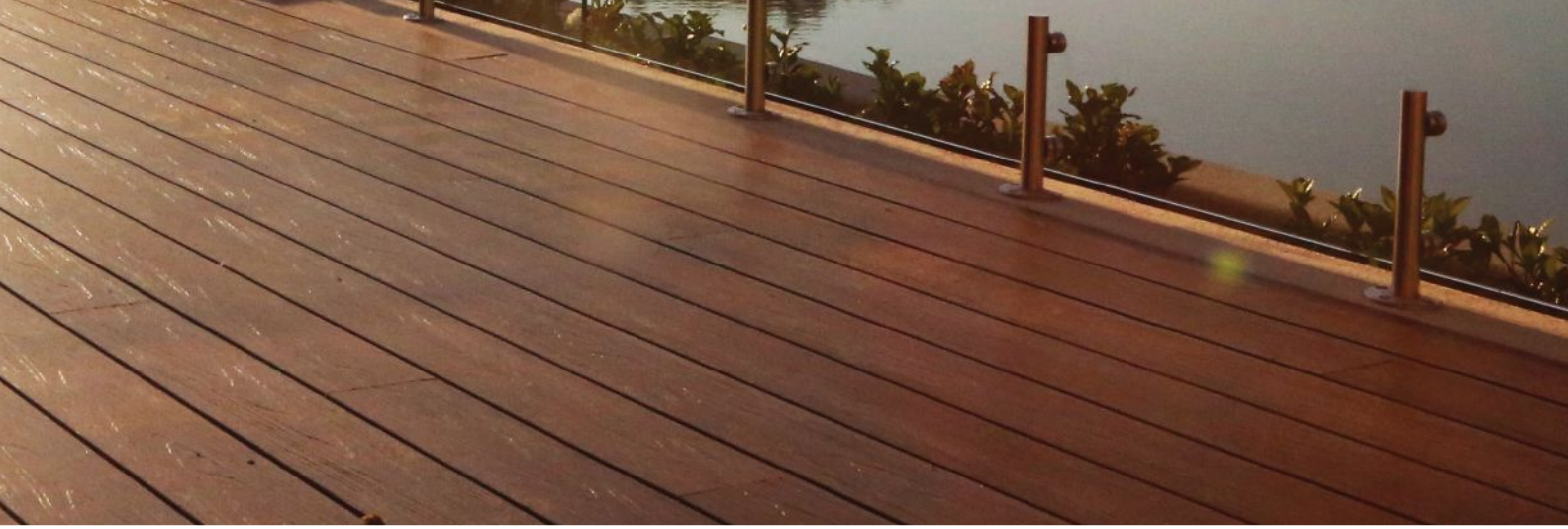
VERSATILE DESIGN OPTIONS

NewTechWood's composite decking offers a plethora of design options to suit every aesthetic preference and architectural style. From classic wood tones to contemporary hues, there's a NewTechWood decking solution to complement any outdoor setting. Additionally, NewTechWood offers various board profiles, including grooved and solid options, allowing for seamless installation and customization possibilities.

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

While the initial investment in composite decking may be slightly higher than that of traditional wood, the long-term value it provides far outweighs the cost. With its superior durability, low-maintenance requirements, and timeless appeal, NewTechWood's composite decking delivers exceptional value over its lifespan, making it a smart and worthwhile investment for homeowners seeking to enhance their outdoor living spaces.

NewTechWood's composite decking represents a game-changer in the outdoor living industry, offering a winning combination of beauty, durability, sustainability, and value. Whether you're designing a cozy backyard retreat or a sprawling outdoor oasis, NewTechWood has the perfect decking solution to bring your vision to life. Embrace the future of outdoor living with NewTechWood's composite decking and elevate your outdoor space to new heights of style and functionality.



IN 2023, LBM JOURNAL INTRODUCED ITS 40 UNDER 40 AWARDS. NOW WE'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CLASS. OUR INTERVIEWS SPOTLIGHT THE 40 UNDER 40 MEMBERS' LBM EXPERIENCE, THOUGHTS ON ATTRACTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE INDUSTRY, AND VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE.



SALLIE KEENE DENTON

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE
WILSON LUMBER COMPANY

During her tenure at Wilson Lumber Company, Sallie Keene Denton has designed and overseen the company's ongoing showroom redesign, which will transform it from a traditional lumberyard interior to one of the largest design centers in northern Alabama. Keene Denton said she saw an opportunity to better utilize her interior design background to introduce the Wilson Lumber brand, products, and experience earlier in the building process to designers and architects making key decisions and specifications before construction. Her efforts are helping to close the gap between designer, builder, and supplier all while providing the design community with solutions for building materials.

How did you become involved in the LBM industry?

In 2011, I began working in the construction industry. Though it was in a less traditional sense after earning my Interior Design degree from Auburn University. Practicing design at high-end firms gave me a firsthand look at project management and construction. After a decade in the field as a designer, I joined Wilson Lumber in 2021 and began my career in the LBM industry.

What is your favorite part of your job?

People. My favorite part of the job is interacting with people. Interior designers, architects, builders, Realtors, homeowners. Every day is different but involves helping people find solutions for their projects. I also work with an incredible team of people who are dedicated to our customers.

What advice would you give to companies looking to attract young professionals like yourself?

Look past the resume. Don't discount someone coming from outside the LBM industry. My resume consisted of interior design jobs, but I'd spent the better part of a decade selling designs to my clients, that included architectural millwork, furniture, and soft goods, plus managing the construction of those designs in the field.

What is your personal mission statement?

"The most damaging phrase in the language is: 'We've always done it this way.'" In 2019, I adopted this quote by Grace Hopper as my guidepost. I was unknowingly on the cusp of gigantic personal and professional changes that would occur over the next three years. Throughout those difficult years, I learned that growth is good, change is only scary if you let it be, and that uncertainty is full of possibility. Just because, "we've always done it this way," doesn't mean it's a good thing to do, and it may hurt you further. Growth won't happen in the comfort zone—so I use this as my gut check. Am I, or are we, continuing to do something because it's comfortable or because it's the right thing to do? I certainly have my moments of wanting to stay complacent, but knowing that growth happens when I'm uncomfortable enables me to make the leaps when challenged to do so. ■

LBM
JOURNAL
40
UNDER
40

WE DON'T TRUCK AROUND



WHEN IT COMES TO CONCRETE, WE MEAN BUSINESS.

Quality, availability, service. They're the simple ideas that Sakrete was founded on in 1936, and today's commitment to our dealers across the nation. When you're ready to stop truckin' around with concrete and focus on the hard work of growing your business, it's time to switch to Sakrete.

Become a Dealer at [Sakrete.com/Dealer](https://www.sakrete.com/Dealer)



HIDDEN FASTENER OPTIONS TO ELEVATE YOUR CUSTOMERS' DECKS

When it comes to your decking lines, selling the boards and railings is often what comes to mind first; fasteners can sometimes be an afterthought. But with a diversity of fastener options that directly contribute to the deck's look, feel, and performance, knowing the choices inside and out can be a differentiation point for many dealers—and may offer upsell opportunities for both you and your pro customers.

While most composite and capped composite deck materials can be surface-fastened with traditional screws according to manufacturer recommendations, hidden fastening systems deliver the ultimate clean appearance and eliminate exposed nails while providing secure holding power for lasting performance.

TimberTech® offers several hidden fastener options to meet customers' needs depending on their budget and design parameters. With an understanding of these product lines, you can help ensure they design and build to the best possible finished deck for each project.

HIDDEN FASTENER OPTIONS

Hidden fasteners for composite and capped composite decking typically come in two forms: surface-driven screws that are concealed by plugs (designed for traditional boards) or hidden clip fasteners used on the sides of grooved deck boards.

TOP-DOWN HIDDEN DECK FASTENERS

Top-down fasteners are those that run through the face of the board into the joist below. TimberTech offers two top-down hidden fastener options:

Cortex® Fasteners: Screws are hidden by plugs made of the same material as your chosen deck boards. Compatible with all TimberTech full-profile deck boards, Cortex fasteners are easy to install, can be used on the entire deck surface, and deliver the strongest connection.

New Collated Cortex Plugs: The same advantages of Cortex, but plugs are collated in convenient strips; they're pre-aligned for the plug grain and eliminate handling individual plug pieces, helping to speed installation by as much as 50%.

HIDDEN CLIP FASTENERS

TimberTech grooved deck boards can be used with three types of hidden clip fasteners:

CONCEALoc®: Designed exclusively for TimberTech grooved deck boards, this hidden fastener system provides a fastener-free surface and can be installed pneumatically with the FastenMaster® Tiger Claw Installation Gun or by using a standard drill.

EDGELoc®: Designed exclusively for TimberTech grooved capped composite deck boards, EDGELoc features pre-set screws and 12-clip collated strips for a faster install time. The hidden fastening system offers superior lateral hold thanks to serrated surfaces.

SALES SUPPORT TOOLS

Among the TimberTech product knowledge, technical, and sales support opportunities, TimberTech stocking dealers can now take advantage of the **EDGELoc POP Display Bundle**. This package comes with all the EDGELoc needed to fill the display at a lower price.

HOW TO CHOOSE A HIDDEN FASTENING SYSTEM

To help customers choose the right hidden fastening system for each project, there are several factors they can consider:

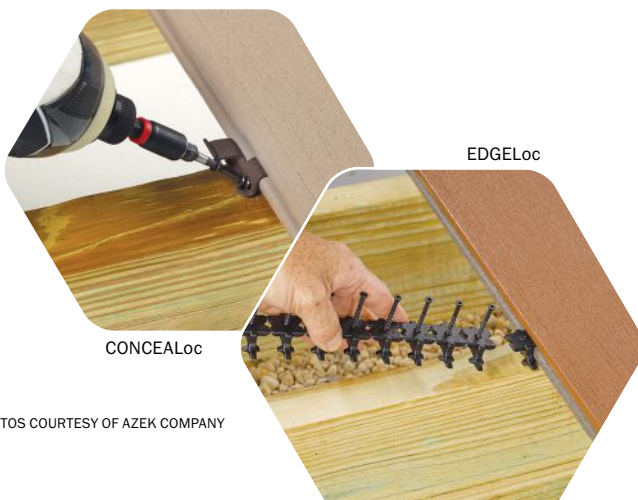
Installation: While all hidden deck fasteners offer straightforward installation, some customers may be more comfortable with top-down vs. hidden clip installation, or vice-versa.

Use on stairs and perimeter: Cortex screws are the only hidden fasteners that work for the entire deck surface, including the stairs and perimeters.

Overall deck design: Certain hidden fasteners are better suited for tighter butt joints and miters, which is important for design elements like a picture frame border.

REACH OUT TODAY

Weyerhaeuser Distribution is committed to delivering the reliable, consistent outdoor living products you—and your customers—can rely on. Connect with your Weyerhaeuser representative today about the decking, railing, and fastening solutions available in your market.





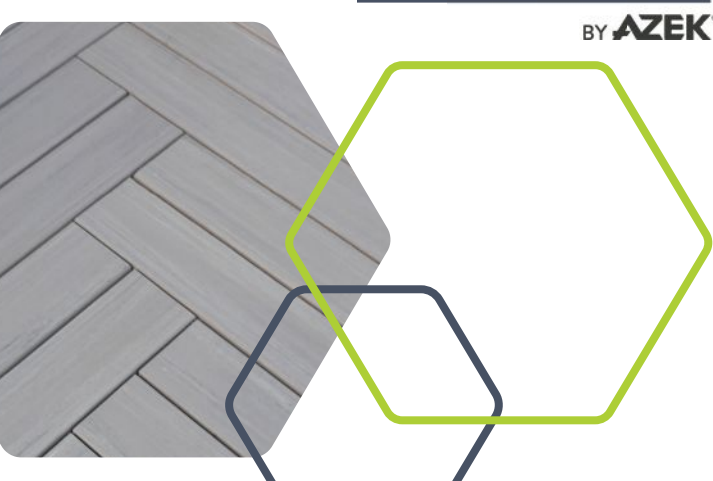
DETAILS ON DECK

Grow your outdoor living business through Weyerhaeuser's extensive TimberTech® Advanced PVC by AZEK portfolio.* With endless style options, long-lasting durability, low-maintenance upkeep, and the industry's leading warranties, you and your customers can trust in TimberTech outdoor living products.

*Product portfolios may vary by geographic market.



TimberTech
ADVANCED PVC
BY AZEK®



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SOCIAL MEDIA REFERRALS X
 REWARDS WEBSITE SWAG YOUTUBE **E-BLAST** **EVENTS**
 TV LOYALTY PROGRAM LINKEDIN RADIO **POST** **SEO** **INSTAGRAM**
BILLBOARD VENDOR PARTNERSHIP

WHERE TO INVEST

MARKETING

DOLLARS

FACEBOOK ADVERTISING SEM **TIKTOK**
 DOOR HANGERS TRADE SHOW
TAG COMMUNICATION **NEWSPAPER**
ENGAGE CUSTOMER SERVICE **MARKETING**
 AUDIENCE TARGETING **INTERNET**
DIRECT MAIL



BY LBM JOURNAL READERS

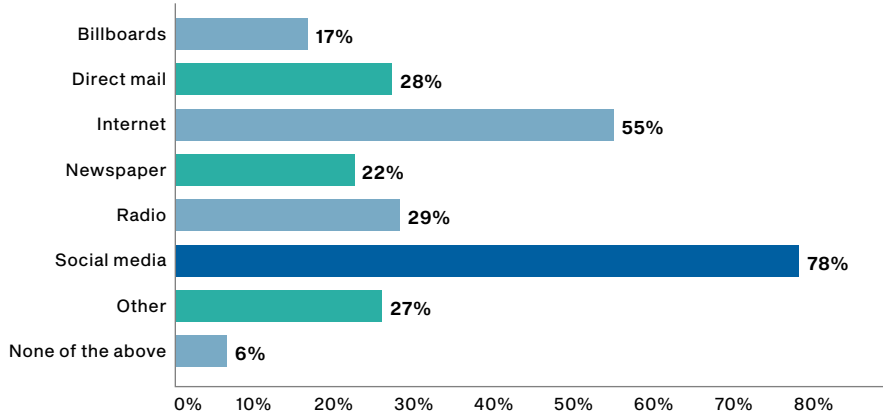
When it comes to small business marketing, it can be difficult to pick a strategy, especially when you are just starting out. Social media, print, billboards, television—the options seem endless, so where should you invest?

Nearly 60 readers responded to our Real Issues survey email (let us know at operations@lbmjournal.com if you'd like to be on the list). **THE QUESTIONS:**



Which of the following marketing channels does your company use?

(Respondents could choose more than one answer)



We've got a tough new competitor coming to town who serves builders and remodelers. They do a great job with their marketing—which is an area where we really need to step up our game. We'd love to learn from other LBM suppliers about what marketing strategies deliver a good bang for the buck. Other than an inactive Facebook page, we don't do any social media. Is that something we should be doing as well? Appreciate any suggestions.

Responses from lumberyards, full-line building material dealers, and specialty dealers/distributors:

"We have found more specific marketing works in this case, we went after a small group of builders with a very unique approach. We felt it would make the biggest impact on a smaller group to start with."

"Best bang for the buck is in-house social media. Talk to your employees and see if anyone has experience/interest in updating your pages. You probably have someone that you've caught on their phone during the workday—this could be your go-to social media expert. Everyone has a camera in their pocket, so gathering content is easy. Update your personal and company LinkedIn page. Focus your Facebook page to business-related content only (no fish-faces or sharing unrelated memes) and join your target community pages.

My town has a Facebook page where businesses can advertise on every Saturday, so I would post specials, sales, and blowout deals for my former company. Encourage employees to "like and share" company posts to spread the message. Your trucks can be your best marketing tool. They are on the local highways daily and in your target consumers faces making you money while advertising. Nobody notices a white truck with a sticker on the door. Body wraps are relatively inexpensive and attract attention. Bright colors and line art draw attention that people remember. Just make sure your drivers remember that the truck and how they drive will draw attention. Another plus is your drivers will respect driving a cool looking truck."

"Use Instagram. Step 1: Create a bunch of posts highlighting different product categories on various project types (single-family, multifamily, etc.) Tag the manufacturers, subcontractors you work with, architects, and your customers. Step 2: Follow every builder, subcontractor, and architect in your area. They will probably follow you back. Step 3: Engage with the followers and accounts you follow. Step 4: Set post alerts for developers you want to work with and when they post about an upcoming project or something you have experience with, reach out. Ask to bid. They will look at your page and see that you have some credibility. Then, you get your shot."

"Partner with vendors to highlight your strengths." ▶

“Social media alone isn’t the answer. You need to have an entire integrated marketing strategy encompassing your social media, website, and advertising efforts. Ultimately, the goal with it all is to capture and follow-up with leads. Simply posting on social won’t do more than just create an artificial sense of ‘we’re doing great!’ It has to move the revenue needle for the business. Marketing should drive qualified leads for the business. Ensure you have a solid foundation with a well built-out website for your customers that you can draw them into. Then you can build a cohesive content strategy that stokes the fire.”

“The first thing I would look at is your website—it is your company’s face. It’s your cheapest and most effective advertising. It works 24/7/365. Is it up to date? Does it attract the types of customers you’re after? Is it interactive (with offers?) Other than a ‘Contact Us,’ does it have other CTA’s (calls to action) that people can fill out forms and give you their information? Examples would be a ‘Free Quote’ form, ‘Free Download’, ‘Free Samples.’ Do you have a blog that features some of your customer’s projects? These are a few of the strategies we use to get 15,000 visitors and 150 new contacts a month.”

“You’ll want to match your marketing efforts and the platforms you advertise through with what your target audience is on. Do you advertise for retail or just wholesale? B2B or B2C, or both? For B2B, you will want to focus on trade industry knowledge, build a subscriber list and email your customers/others in the trade. Reactivate that Facebook page and start sharing what your employees are doing. What makes your company better than your competitors, it’s all about relatable, authentic video content right now.”

“You should be looking at your business. What do you excel at? Try and make that better. Also you should meet with your best customers face-to-face. Make it a lunch or take them to dinner whatever time works for them. Ask them point blank what they think your business needs to improve on and take notes. Do this with at least three customers. If there is any overlap of information you now have identified you have areas to improve.”

“Yes to Facebook! We have been using an agency to build our advertising program. I think it is important to keep name awareness, who we are and what services/materials we offer, top of mind.”

“Social media and digital marketing are a MUST in this day and age. The customer base is only getting younger and social media has been proven to be the best way to reach millennials, Gen Z, etc.”

“No matter what platform you settle on, shift your social media strategy away from direct sales pitches for your brands and services. Instead, adopt a holistic approach by incorporating storytelling and culture to create a more engaging brand presence. This fosters stronger connections with your audience, building trust and brand loyalty and, consequently, boosting sales.”

“I think that more and more people are spending time scrolling. I would consider Instagram as well as Facebook and reach out to your suppliers for some help. We recently did a postcard program (three mailings to the same ZIP codes). I have not been happy with the results from that expenditure.” ▶

“YES TO SOCIAL MEDIA! DON’T USE IT AS A SELLING TOOL, USE IT AS BRAND AWARENESS. BE RELEVANT IN YOUR MARKET.”

“Give out swag: shirts, caps, can koozies. Talk with your customers. Use every form of social media to stay visible.”

“Actually have never seen a ‘great job’ done to builders and remodelers, only to retail markets. Our current customer base for the pro is not active on social media at this time but is coming as new leaders take over. We are wrestling with the pro side right now as we know the need is coming.”

“We are ACE, so they do their thing with our name on it. Social media is what we use for our name brand.”

“If I could allot the time, I think Facebook and a website would be worth it. We have a website but don’t have anyone to maintain it. I have good intentions, but that’s as far as it gets.”

“Yes, social media is definitely necessary. It shouldn’t be overbearing at the same time.”

Step 1: Identify your market and demographics. You can develop a strategy based on that information. Find out where your customers are and meet them there.

Step 2: Once you identify that, determine your budget. If you’ve never been active in marketing, get ready for a shocker. It’s not cheap.

Step 3: Determine if you have the sophistication to do it in-house. Real talk: If you haven’t been active, you probably don’t. Look into local agencies that you align with. If you don’t have any local ones, there are great national ones like Venveo. Be very real considering your budget, if you underspend, your dollars are just being wasted; if you overspend, you’ll never recover the dollars. Strongly suggest guidance from a professional.

Step 4: Execute and be real. If you’re looking for a silver bullet, you’re going to be disappointed. Without getting deep into things, the measurable tie back to marketing spend is one of the most challenging things to determine.

Lots of great industry specific marketers like Venveo out there. At a minimum, follow Beth PopNikolov on LinkedIn and read through everything she posts. Good luck and may the Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) ever be in your favor.”

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“As marketing director of a small niche millwork distributor, I highly recommend embracing social media to its fullest potential! Remember, content is key in captivating your audience. Aim to post consistently, around 2-3 times per week. Craft a well-thought-out social media strategy that assigns specific themes to each day of the week. For example, designate ‘Testimonial Tuesday,’ ‘Professional or Employee Spotlights,’ and ‘Tips and Tricks for Installation’ days. Don’t forget to incorporate engaging video reels and stories into your content mix.

It’s crucial to emphasize your unique selling points and what sets your company apart from the competition. Dive deep into the reasons behind your brand’s existence and communicate these effectively. Engage with your current customers and leverage their testimonials and advocacy to strengthen your brand’s credibility. Consider implementing an employee advocate program to encourage your team members to share company content and help grow your online audience. Doing so can amplify your reach and establish a stronger presence in the industry.”

“For targeting consumers who are interested in remodels, specifically, find your local NPR station. Public radio listeners tend to skew older, have more expendable income, and are very loyal to the companies that support their local station. Public radio doesn’t allow for advertising, but you can underwrite their programming. What’s great is that because it’s a nonprofit organization, you can write off the amount as a donation at year-end, while still getting your message to an active/loyal audience.

Our organization has a unique opportunity, in being a 130-year old company, to tell our story. We have a local program that would like to feature the story of our business, and it’s history in developing the area in which we live. Not everyone will have quite as big an opportunity, but everyone DOES have a story to tell. It’s just a matter of finding the right avenue to tell it, and the right audience to hear it.”

“THE BIGGEST BANG FOR THE BUCK IS ALWAYS EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE. YOU HAVE TO DO THIS ANYWAY, SO TRULY EXCEL AT IT AND FOLKS WILL KNOW.”

“Advertise in home builders associations and get connected with the local chamber of commerce. Instagram seems to be where we connect with our contractors more. Facebook is more of the retail side.”

“It should be to an extent; however, our role as sales people to give best service were trained for.”

“Paid search.”

“A social media page is free. Get the employees involved. Have them take pictures of loads they built for delivery. Have drivers take pictures of interesting deliveries. Sales can provide stories of what they have provided in the community. Even posting ‘tag sale’ items gets attention. Make it local to the area—something that a new company cant.”

“Social media and digital marketing is where it’s at.”

“We do lots of collaboration with our general contractors on installing our products and posting on Instagram. Find a couple willing GCs and do some in-the-field videos.”

“The basics always deliver best. Focus on having good information available on the web with phone numbers, product info, things pros want to know and they can find easily on their own.”

“Our marketing department is in its infancy here—being run by one person, me, who has very little experience—so I’m not sure we are the most qualified to be giving advice, but I definitely think that just about every company should have the key social media pages (Facebook and Instagram for sure.) To me it feels like an essential component to placing your company within the eyes of the community and those you service. We have also had some degree of success getting people in our doors for in-store sales using paid advertising on Facebook. We did not have a super good way of measuring this besides just asking where they heard about the sale at the counter.”

“We don’t do any advertising; the majority of our business comes from regular contractors who have been buying from us for years. To be honest, most of the new business that we acquire comes from word of mouth. We have so many people come in that say, ‘so-and-so down the street said that they only ever come here,’ and so for us, our biggest marketing tool is our customer service and the high quality materials that we both stock and are able to acquire. We have recently undergone a resurgence of our Facebook page and have also started up on Instagram. I think it will take some time for both of those to gain traction enough to see how beneficial they both are.”

“Social yes, but it can be tricky. Not really for ‘selling’ obviously but good for branding and engaging. You should really consider Digital/Behavioral advertising. Our provider calls it ‘Custom Audience Targeting’ or CAT. This enables you to serve and advertise only to people who are actively researching online the product you are promoting, whatever that may be. It’s 100% targeted. You should also be doing SEM (Search Engine Marketing) covering the areas you operate in.

Other digital efforts could include blogging, which can first be promoted on social media and then posted on your website. The goal is to direct people to your website to fill out a contact form which should be monitored by someone who would be able to respond promptly. The entire digital effort has been very successful for us!”

“Every single person who has a phone is on social media. Get that Facebook up and active. But be careful with paying for boosting. We have not seen a good enough return for what we’re paying to believe in ‘boosting.’ Make sure all of your employees are ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ your posts. The more people who share it will cause Facebook’s algorithms to show it to more people. When you pay to boost your add, you lose the ability to have others share it. And it comes across as an ad which will cause most people to scroll on by. When they see people they know sharing something they’re more apt to look at it.

Anything you can do to touch people’s emotions, whether it’s happy, sad, angry, or best yet funny, will get a reaction. Reactions keep it moving and keep it relevant even long after you’ve moved on to the next. You don’t have to spend a bunch of money but you need to be active.”

“Social media is the best way to get in front of people. It is cheap, if not free, and you can change the message 10 times a day if you want and target who you are after.”

“Post regularly on Facebook and Instagram.”

“We have a lot of success with using our Facebook page. We use it for advertising, promotions, giveaway promotions at Christmas time, and employee profiles. We also, with their permission, use it to take jobsite photos and feature our contractors on our Facebook page. It does take time to maintain but we think it is worth it. The other marketing we focus on is our website. We updated that a few years ago and included the ability for people to request quotes and orders through the site. That has been a success and yielded many orders.”

“Yes. Social media is good as well as direct mail and email blasts.”

“We were in the same situation years ago when Lowes moved into town. We thought it was going to be hard to compete. Well, time will tell for you, but we grew instantly 30% over the next few years. They brought us more business when people wanted more service for their money. Yes, you need to be on social media showing off your business. Flooring after installed, kitchen cabinets, etc. You will succeed!”

“Social media campaigns are beneficial to get traffic in the door. The important part of maintaining market share would be to execute all processes and practices at optimum level. You might see a small dip at initial market share opening due to a new business being opened with promotions, however consistency goes a long way.”

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Apply on Hardwood & Treated Lumber
LOW VOC
10 Year Warranty

Ipe Clip
Hidden Deck Fasteners
FOR HARDWOOD DECKING
100 SQ. FT.
3 YEAR & LONG PROTECTION
RESISTANT TO UV RAYS
CONSISTENT CLEAR GRAY SPACING
AVAILABLE IN 3 SIGNATURE COLORS
HIDDEN DECK FASTENERS

Hidden Deck Fasteners come in 3 distinct gap spacing sizes and 3 signature colors!

“Social media now is probably the most effective and cost-efficient. If it is an issue for you, some marketing companies will even do it for you as part of a larger package, but that is up to your budget. Simply maintaining a Facebook/Instagram page is super easy, and most vendors you probably buy from has stock material ready for you to use (Marvin, Reeb, Wolf, etc).”

“Yes, get into it consistently, keep it light but professional. It is a great way to start conversations, in store and online, with your customers.”

“All social media. Post all the time. Share what separates you apart from your new competitor. Such as services you offer, storytelling, behind the scenes, etc.”

“Facebook is a great way to keep active and sustain the sense of community with the locals. How you post is just as important as when you post. Mix up your feed with sales items as well as company interaction. If the company participates in a local event then post about it. We like to join fundraisers and donation opportunities not only to aid in the local benefit but also keep our company in the eyes of the community. We also have a marketing team that we hired outside of our company that builds our website and keeps our logo pop-ups on google and other local search engines.”

“Get with the vendors and do some contractor/customer cookouts. Introduce who you are over a hamburger and a handshake.”

Responses from wholesale distributors, manufacturers, and service providers:

“Pair up with the best marketing company in your area. A good one is worth every penny.”

“If you are a lumber (commodity) dealer, you need all the advertising you can afford. You can move out of the commodity material market by adding value to the consumer or installer by offering the following services: design, take-offs, engineering, financing, installed sales. Community involvement is a great form of marketing that benefits your customers rather than tech giants or marketing agencies.”

“LinkedIn can be a great resource for LBM.”

“Expanding your social media to include additional platforms will expand exposure to a wider range of age groups. Instagram, TikTok, and others have high appeal. Consider including video. As far as other initiatives, what is the new competitor doing with their marketing that works? Watch it, learn from it and then improve on it!”

“Know your audience. If your area is full of young hungry builders, online advertising is key. If your area has a solid 50-something builders base, service and pricing matters most.”

“Adopt a loyalty program and capture your shopper data, then you can send them highly targeted communications and offers via email and direct mail.”

“Google Analytics FREE and Google Tag Manager FREE are great tools. Social media is also the future and for the younger generation.”

“It sounds like you build relationships, have a cookout with horse shoes. Match up drywall with remodeler against builder and carpenter. Let them build the relationship you have fostered.”

“Hire a social media marketer and hit all the stops; Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, X, etc. Work on your website to drive SEO, which in turn will push you up the Google search rankings.”

“Regularly posting meaningful/interesting/helpful info and/or images to build your brand using social media takes discipline. Content creation is the biggest challenge. And it’s difficult to measure ‘results’ so only companies who stick with it (like your tough new competitor) understand the significant impact their marketing is having on their business. If you don’t have a creative marketing-savvy person on staff who can dedicate the time to do it properly then the best bang-for-the-buck is to hire someone.”

“We sell value constantly. If all the customer wants is a cheap price, we wish them well. We create relationships from the front line to the top.”

“LinkedIn has a great number of industry professionals. Boosting content there will help. There are other online platforms that cater towards marketing yourself and your lumber products online that can help you reach network and meet new customers.” ■

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Send it to Rick@LBMJournal.com
The reader who suggests the “Real Issues” topic will receive an LBM Journal prize pack.

CONGRATULATIONS Mitchell Lumber Company!

LBM^{JOURNAL}
DEALER
OF THE YEAR
2024
CATEGORY: \$10MM




Since its beginning in 1971, Mitchell Lumber Company has flourished alongside the Belfair Washington community by providing the best materials and supporting its community through various forms of outreach. Today, second generation owner Andy Mitchell and his wife Breezy lead the company. This award recognizes Mitchell Lumber Company as a high-performance independent lumberyard committed to best practices and strong values of the lumber and building material industry.

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In 2019, Andy and Breezy Mitchell officially took over Mitchell Lumber, which was founded in 1971 in Silverdale, WA, and has been operating on the Olympic Peninsula in Belfair, WA, since 1992.

A FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS FINDS A NEW BALANCE

LBM JOURNAL'S DEALER OF THE YEAR AWARDS recognize LBM companies of different sizes that epitomize the entrepreneurial spirit. By our definition, a Dealer of the Year describes a company in which leadership excels at identifying underserved—or emerging—markets, satisfying customers, and constantly working to grow and improve business. While these companies represent vastly different operations, the common thread is their fierce commitment to finding ever-better ways to serve their customers and their communities.

BY WENDY STURGES

When his father, Jeff, unexpectedly passed in 2014, Andy Mitchell hadn't planned on taking over his family's business. Although he had worked in and grown up around the lumberyard, he had been working as a union firefighter and his wife, Breezy, had recently become a nurse, and neither were sure about running a lumberyard.

"With the downturn of the economy, we were really nervous," Breezy said. "We were starting a family, and we weren't sure if this was really the kind of future we wanted. Our first thought was to sell it and just kind of be done with the lumberyard. We had a couple of offers and we were being really nitpicky about the deals. So finally one day we thought, maybe this just isn't what we want. We weren't ready to let it go."

In 2019, the couple officially took over Mitchell Lumber, which was founded in 1971 in Silverdale, WA, and has been operating on the Olympic Peninsula in Belfair, WA, since 1992. Founded by Andy's grandfather, then sold to his parents, Jeff and Kath, the yard is now run by Breezy as the

majority owner, as well as Andy who splits his time between the lumberyard and his firefighter work.

Breezy said keeping the business in the family may have kept them smaller, but it allows them to better serve their employees and the community. "We're the last-standing family-owned lumberyard out here on the peninsula," she said. "We tell our employees what sets us apart is that we don't have the [buying power] that some of the other lumberyards have behind them, but we have the capability to make decisions and make their lives easier and better very quickly."

Moving toward modernization

Since taking over, Breezy and Andy said they've made a number of changes, while honoring the business' past.

One the couple's first decisions was to work with local CPA Kyle Kincaid, a contact Jeff had made before his death. With the advice of Kincaid and others, the Mitchells steadily grew the business from \$3 million in revenue in 2019 to \$11 million in 2023. ▶



LBM JOURNAL

DEALER OF THE YEAR 2024

CATEGORY: \$10MM

In 2020, Mitchell Lumber purchased land next to the existing lumberyard to expand operations, fulfilling a longtime dream of Andy's father. Today, the business carries a wide range of inventory from lumber and hardware to fencing, windows, decking, siding, beams and more, with well-known brands like James Hardie, Pacific Woodtech, and Fiberon decking. The company also offers delivery and contractor services, and builds custom wooden swim floats for private use, many of which can be seen along the Hood Canal and Puget Sound.

With a combination of new technology—the company utilizes ECI Spruce for its business management software—and the guidance of long-standing business contacts, the couple found a new balance to help move the business forward, something that has helped them survive in an age of consolidation and closures.

"A lot of the smaller, local lumberyards around here were acquired by larger corporations or closed," Breezy said. "We're in a unique age bracket where we still remember what it was like, but we're still young enough to know that things are changing. If we don't change with the world, we'll get left behind."

Breezy said there are still many customers who insist on having paper copies of statements versus going paperless, or calling a salesperson directly versus ecommerce, which she said they are always happy to accommodate.

The couple said they lean on the support of their IT Manager, Justin Heinitz with IT Machine, to help with ongoing improvements.

"We walk a fine line of being innovative, but not pushing our customer base too far either."

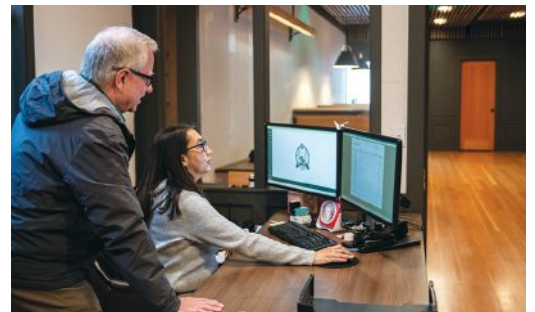
Through all the changes, one constant for Mitchell Lumber has been the company's employees, some of whom have worked for former competitors that went out of business and even a few that came back from retirement because they missed their old jobs.

"They came back and they're still working because it's fun, and they don't even have an end date because they're loving what they're doing," Breezy said. "It's just it's a good environment here. We try to stand out with customer service and relationships, and it all starts with our employees, then our employees carry that service to all of our customers."

Commitment to doing good

But despite the changes to bring innovation to Mitchell Lumber, the couple said they are dedicated to maintaining the business' reputation in the community.

"My dad was a very respected, kind, fair, thoughtful individual," Andy said. "He was not very animated, kind of stoic. But when he passed, there were about 400 people at his service. Going back to his high school days, people came from far and wide. That was my father's





reputation and it was the lumberyard’s reputation in the community, and it’s something that I make sure that I’m upholding.”

Breezy said Jeff was always ready to lend a hand in the community or help a stranger, and to this day, the Mitchell family tries to keep that spirit alive.

“‘What good shall I do this day?’ We really try to live by that as our motto. It’s the last thing you see before you walk outside of our door in our house, and it’s the first thing you see when you walk into our office.”

Andy said Mitchell Lumber’s reputation has not only helped with customers, but with vendors as well.

“As heavily as we rely on our advisors and professional help by our CPAs, IT manager, and attorney, we lean very heavily into really good relationships with our vendors,” Andy said. “Building those relationships over the previous 40 years made them willing to help and I really saw the value in that. So we have really strong relationships with some of our vendors.”

He said he’s seen multiple times when a simple conversation can lead to a chance to help a vendor, or the other way around, creating a long-lasting relationship that’s mutually beneficial.

“Having those vendor relationships means that those random conversation can lead to a huge cost saving and profitability going up for that order and orders overall. [Recently] I had a one-on-one meeting with the manufacturer rep for decking, and they asked, ‘What can I do to support you?’ And I said, ‘Just show up and talk. That’s what’s going to make you successful as the rep for your decking manufacturer and every little bit you are able to help Mitchell Lumber as a manufacturer, we really invest that money back into the company.’ They’ve seen this company triple in size over the last 5-6 years. So they know that we’re a good partner for them as well.”

In addition to running the business, the couple also stays active in the community, with Andy continuing his work as a professional firefighter and Breezy serving as a director on the Central Kitsap School District board. That involvement carries over to Mitchell Lumber, which sponsors local sports teams and community centers and supports the American Heart Association as well as lymphoma and cancer charities.

The couple has a number of goals for the future, including seeking a women-owned business certification, investing in social media, and diversifying which markets they serve.

Andy said over the next few years, Mitchell Lumber hopes to go after federal government contracts for projects at nearby naval bases and create a more robust decking program, as well as to acquire more space

to expand inventory for the company’s interior trim and door packs.

However, even with all their future plans, Andy said his favorite part of the day is still walking around the yard and store, cup of coffee in hand, helping out where he can.

“There’s nothing I like more than helping in the store, walking down the aisles. I think it’s why we have such a great reputation—we have instilled in our employees what has been upheld from the 70’s when it was my grandpa and my dad. If someone asks you where to find a hammer, you don’t just say Aisle 6, you walk down Aisle 6 with them. There’s nothing I’d rather do.” ■

PHOTOS: ROBERT WINKLE PHOTOGRAPHY

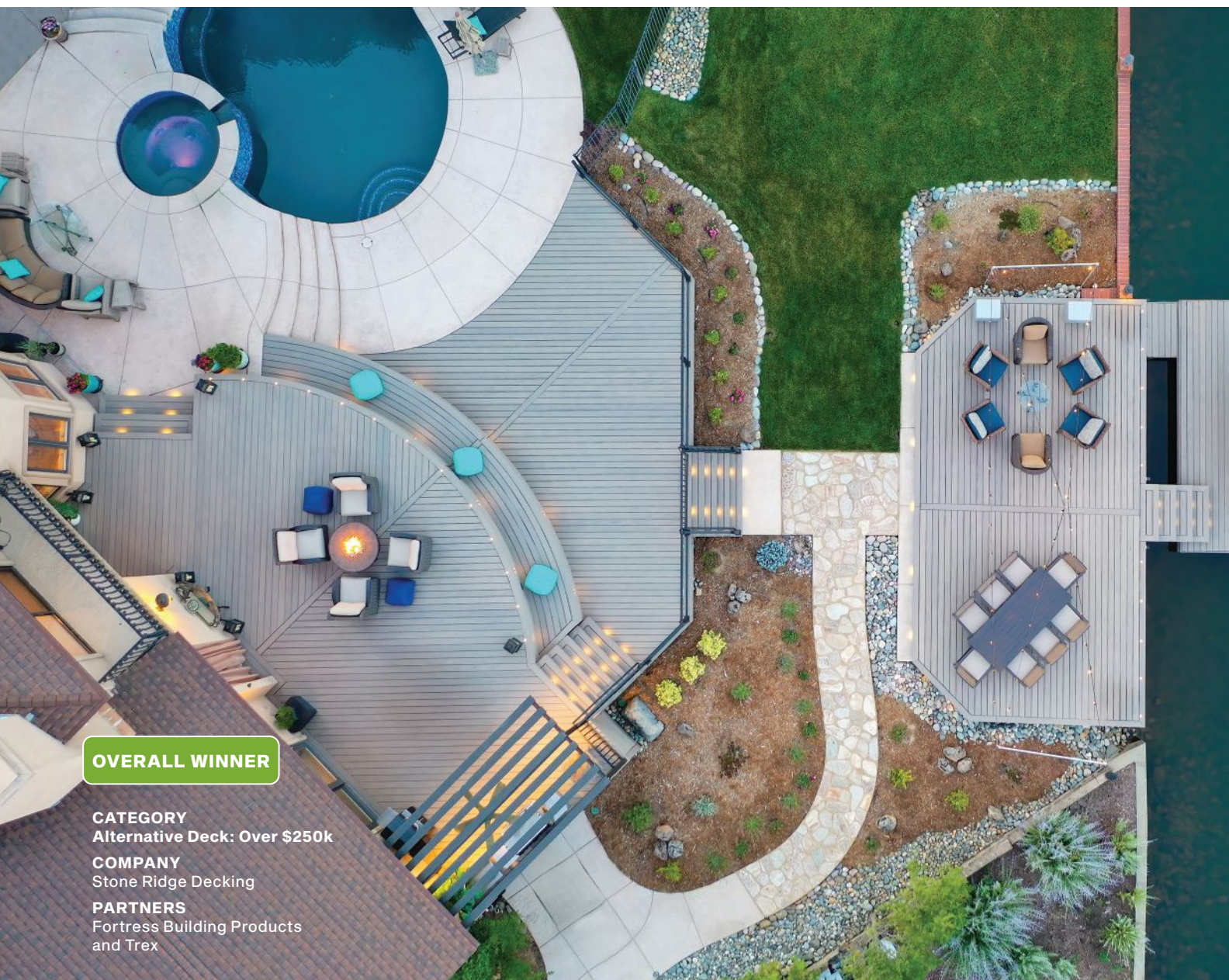


GET TO KNOW MITCHELL LUMBER CO.

FOUNDED:	1971
OWNERSHIP:	Family
LOCATIONS:	1
EMPLOYEES:	30
CO-OP/BUYING GROUP:	LMC
ERP SOFTWARE:	ECI Spruce
TOP THREE BRANDS SOLD BASED ON REVENUE:	James Hardie Pacific Woodtech Fiberon

One of the most anticipated events among deck builders, dealers and manufacturers is the North American Deck and Railing Association's (NADRA) recognition of outstanding deck, porch and outdoor projects. This year, NADRA celebrated the winners of the National Deck Competition on January 4 in Clearwater Beach, Fla. Deck building pros from across North America (and beyond) entered this 14th annual competition. Projects were judged by a panel of experts based on use of space, functionality, creativity, use of materials, and overall visual appeal. Of the many notable projects, pictured here are an assortment of first place winners. See the complete gallery of winners at NADRA.org.

AWARD WINNING DECKS

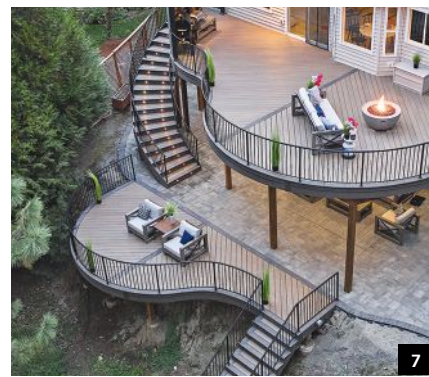
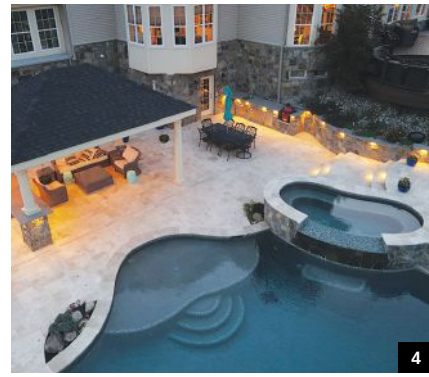
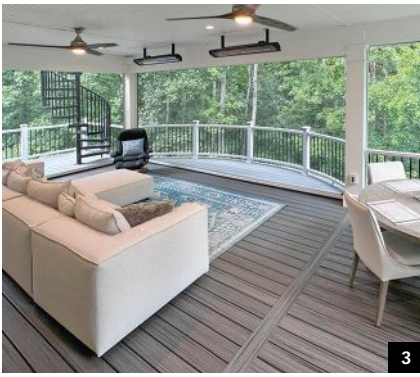


OVERALL WINNER

CATEGORY
Alternative Deck: Over \$250k

COMPANY
Stone Ridge Decking

PARTNERS
Fortress Building Products
and Trex



1 **CATEGORY**
Wood Deck: Over \$50k
COMPANY
Fraser Decks and Patio Covers
PARTNER
Dixieline Lumber & Home Centers

2 **CATEGORY**
Limitless Creation: \$35k-\$70k
COMPANY
Northern Outdoor Living
PARTNERS
Deckorators, ProWood, Regal ideas and Outlive LLC

3 **CATEGORY**
Alternative Deck: \$151k-\$250k
COMPANY
Decksapes of Virginia
PARTNER
Trex

4 **CATEGORY**
Hardscape
COMPANY
Holloway Company

5 **CATEGORY**
Alternative Deck: Under \$35k
COMPANY
The Deck Nerds
PARTNERS
Bugh Inc., CAMO, and Fiberon

6 **CATEGORY**
Railings on a Deck
COMPANY
Baxter Construction
PARTNER
Regal ideas

7 **CATEGORY**
Limitless Creation: \$71k-\$150k
COMPANY
Ridgeline Decks Co.
PARTNERS
FastenMaster and Wolf Home Products

8 **CATEGORY**
Docks
COMPANY
Q-Ice Builders
PARTNERS
Owens Corning Lumber and StoneDeks System



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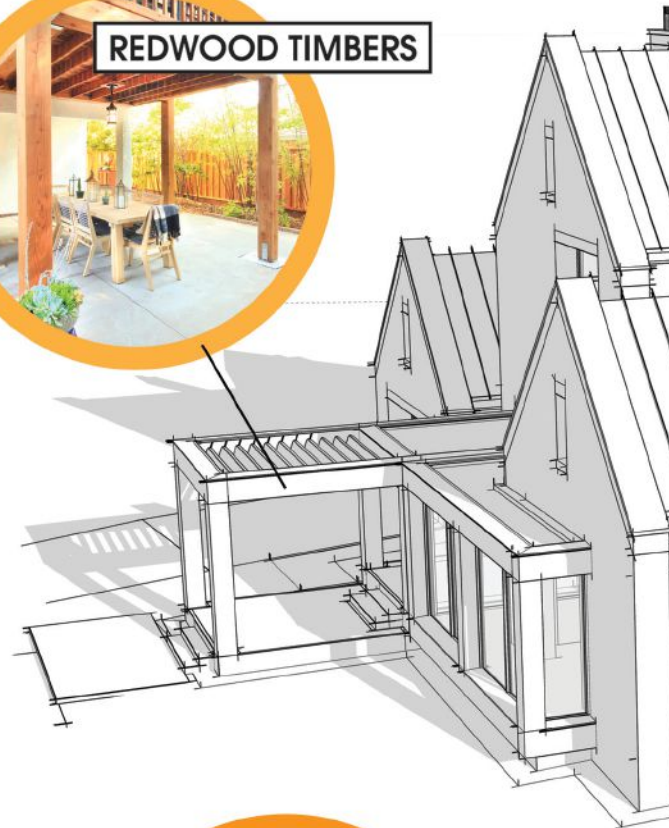
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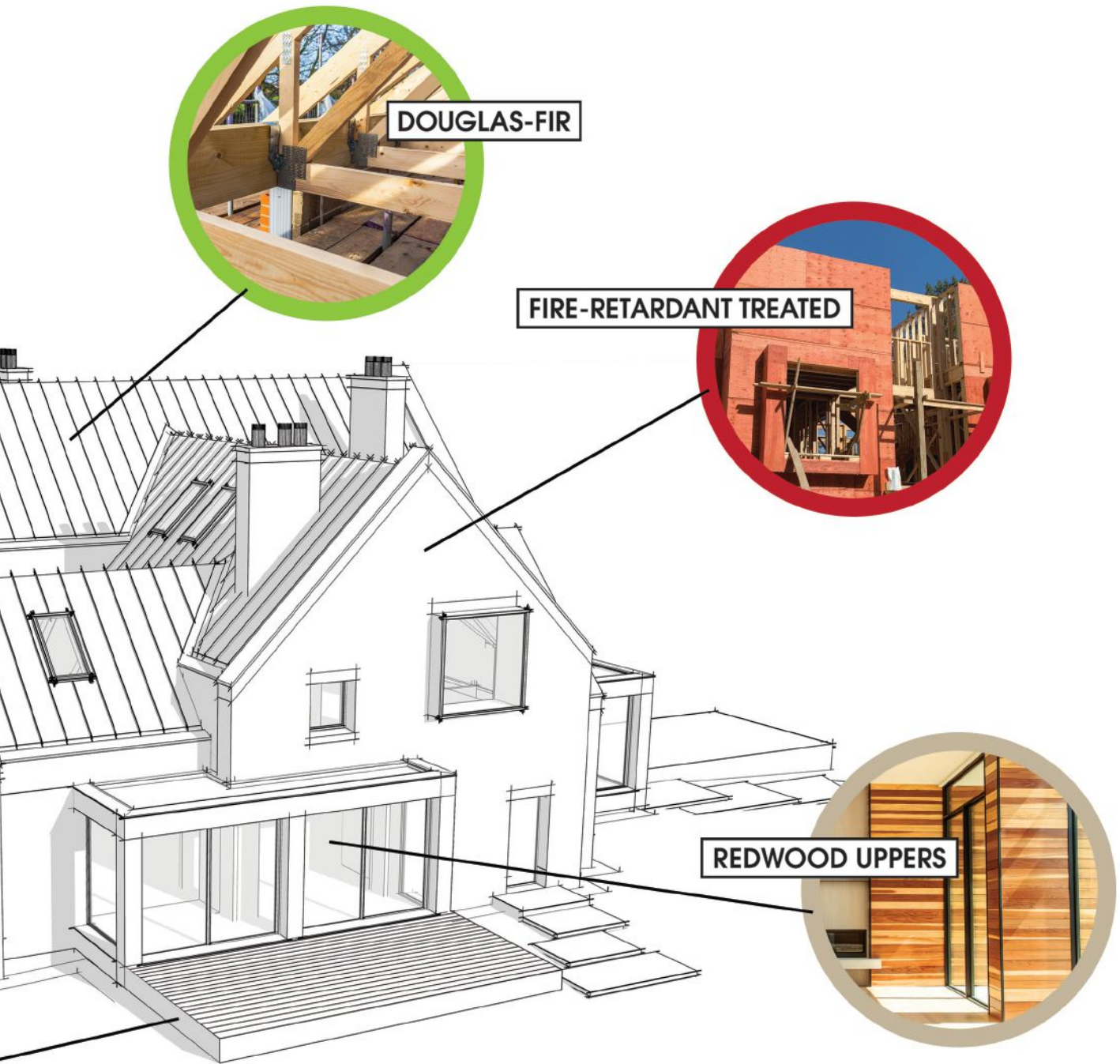


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5 QUESTIONS: NICK THIES

CATEGORY MARKETING MANAGER
MIDWEST FASTENER CORP.

How have fasteners significantly changed in recent years?

Fasteners have evolved in many ways, but one of the latest materials is composite. Composite fasteners have high tensile and shear strength while being lighter and more corrosion-resistant than their alloy counterparts.

3D printed fasteners are another big change in fastener manufacturing. 3D printing of fasteners allows for production of fasteners with complex geometries with very little waste material. 3D printed fasteners aren't in wide use yet, because the materials used to make them are fairly limited, but this is something to keep an eye on.

Considering the continued impact of diminished workforces, how can the choice of fasteners help builders and remodelers increase efficiency?

Reducing installation time or the quantity of fasteners needed is a big way that fasteners can help builders increase efficiency. This can take different forms, like replacing brackets that require multiple fasteners with 1 or 2 screws (when codes allow) or using collated screws and drivers instead of individual screws.

Providing proper training and education on fasteners and their installation techniques is also crucial to ensure fasteners are used properly, can improve efficiency, and ensure long-lasting performance and safety.

How are updated building codes impacting the development of new fasteners?

Building code evolution often drives fastener evolution. One example would be the 2012 code change that mandated continuous exterior insulation for homes built in northern climate zones. This spawned a large increase in insulation fasteners that were needed to attach all of this mandated, continuous insulation to the exterior of a home.

The flip side of this is when fastener evolution actually drives building code evolution. A recent example of this is the truss screw. Trusses were traditionally fastened to top plates with brackets (often called "hurricane brackets") until a screw was developed that was sufficient for this use case. Building codes were updated to allow for the use of screws instead of brackets, greatly speeding up installation time and cutting costs for the builder.

How can LBM dealers best position themselves to succeed in the fastener segment?

Understanding the needs of their contractors/customers and the trends in the fastener industry is imperative. LBM dealers should have a fastener program catered to their customers' changing needs, not a cookie cutter program. Midwest fastener rolled out an "LBM Fastener Essentials" program in 2022 to help LBM dealers with this challenge. This program gives our reps and dealers a head start on putting together a fastener aisle that's rationalized and targeted specifically for the end users that live in the LBM segment of the market.

When it comes to fasteners, what can LBM dealers do to be a better resource to their customers?

Having a strong understanding of the fastener aisle is still one of the top things LBM dealers can do to be a resource to their customers. Understanding each fastener, its features, uses, and how it may or may not work together with other fasteners gives a dealer a significant advantage over the rest of the market. Having this knowledge in the aisle also provides cross sell and upsell opportunities and helps ensure customers are getting the best fastener for their job, which will keep them coming back. ■

Nick Thies is a seasoned professional at Midwest Fastener Corp, with more than a decade of experience. His journey began in the warehouse, where he honed skills in inventory management and logistics. Progressing through roles in e-commerce and marketing, Nick gained valuable experience and knowledge of the fastener industry. Currently serving as category marketing manager for the construction fasteners segment, Nick combines industry expertise with a passion for solving end user problems. Beyond work, he enjoys fixing and remodeling projects, reflecting his hands-on approach to problem-solving. Nick is an avid DIY enthusiast, finding joy in bringing ideas to life for his family through creative projects.



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DECKS

UltraShield composite decking boards from NewTechWood come in solid and hollow profiles for both commercial and residential applications, and can accommodate either common screws or hidden fasteners. The boards are wrapped 360 degrees, including the grooves, which the manufacturers says provides exceptional protection against moisture, mold, fade, and mildew.



THE 2024 PRODUCTS & TRENDS
THE DECK ISSUE

Continued demand for outdoor living spaces can bring success for LBM dealers.

BY MIKE BERGER

Decks and related structures have long been a part of our history. Take for example the Sweet Track, an ancient boardwalk that crossed a marsh in the Somerset Levels of England. It was built around 3800 BC and consisted of crossed wooden poles driven into the swampy soil to support a walkway of oak boards laid end to end.

Older yet are the remains of a wooden platform archaeologists working in Zambia have discovered. The rudimentary construction—the oldest-known wooden structure in the world—consists of two interlocking logs joined by a notch. Markings on the logs demonstrate that they were cut and chopped with a range of stone tools an estimated 476,000 years ago. The structure, which was found upstream of Kalambo Falls near the border of Zambia and Tanzania, was likely part of a platform used as a walkway, though it may also have been the base for a shelter.

If one of today's modern decks lasts for over 400,000 years, it would be a true testament to its construction. Still, while that kind of life expectancy is not likely, the deck industry as a whole appears to be poised to experience continued growth and deliver significant wins for LBM dealers. ▶

Westlake Royal Building Products' Zuri Premium Decking is designed to mimic the look of exotic hardwood. With minimal grain repetition, Zuri decking is available in Walnut, Chestnut, Pecan, Brazilia, Weathered Gray, and Hickory. According to the manufacturer, it's resistant to scratches, stains, fading, and moisture, and it comes with a 25-year colorfastness warranty.



Optimism dominates

If any factors are poised to disrupt the decking segment in 2024, interest rates and the possibility of continued inflation would be at the top of the list. Decking manufacturers are keeping a sharp eye on these variables, but they still express optimism as to the overall state of the decking market. "Based on what we see in the field, indicators seem strong for outdoor living and deck demand this year at the dealer and installer level of the channel," says Matthew Bruce, vice president of sales for MoistureShield/Barrette Outdoor Living. "While interest rates have a significant effect on new construction, we are in a position that 90%+ of the non-wood decking market falls into the R&R category. While the average homeowner may not be as inclined to make a move into a new home with the market uncertainty, it is highly likely that those who stay in their existing homes will do upgrades or renovations. Outdoor living is still one of the largest areas that consumers are spending their dollars. We like our positioning in the space and feel that the segment will still see growth over the next several years."

Jessica Hewitt, director of marketing for Humboldt Sawmill Company, anticipates 2024 to show similar decking demand to 2023. "Demand

has settled into a steady pace, lower than the high-volume years of 2020 through mid-2022, but the category remains strong," she reports. "With the median age of a home in the U.S. at about 40 years, there will always be a certain amount of churn in the industry with decks needing repair or replacement. Homeowners locked into low interest rates have found themselves to be better off staying in their existing homes and remodeling as needed versus trading up to a new home with a hefty mortgage."

She goes on to explain how the American consumer has steered the economy away from excessive fears of recession, inflation, and interest rates, while record stock prices and equity in their homes has led homeowners to invest and expand. "Decking projects augmented by overall landscape and hardscape expansions—fences, pergolas, outdoor kitchens, raised planting beds, etc.—illustrate the versatility and value added that redwood lumber and timbers can provide," she says. "Deck builders can tap into this consumer demand by providing entire design packages that go well beyond the average deck."

One other factor that is helping the growth potential for decking is the stabilization of wood prices. According to Trading Economics, lumber prices stabilized around the \$550 per thousand feet benchmark amid prospects of increased supply and subdued demand. The latest data from top producer Canada showed that lumber production edged down by 0.1% month-over-month in November but rose by 2.4% on an annual basis, indicating a resilient upward trend in the sector over the longer term.

As Chris Brown, executive vice president of Culpeper Wood Preservers, explains, "As we begin 2024, the forecasts still point to a slowdown in the housing market, and there is still skepticism for the building materials industry. However, as a supplier of pressure-treated wood, one advantage is that the pricing of lumber is anticipated to remain relatively stable throughout the next 10-12 months. While new home construction and existing home sales could see a slowing market, the repair and remodel industry should remain strong as people look to invest in their homes. Considering the current economic conditions, many homeowners will decide to stay put and look to improve areas within their current homes. As the outdoor living segment continues to be more of the popular area to improve, this should bode well for the decking segment." ▶

Deckorators Voyage Decking and Picture Frame Deck Board lines now offer Step Treads, available in Khaya, Tundra, and Dark Slate (shown). Incorporating the company's Surestone technology, Step Treads are reported to combine strength, moisture resistance, stability and enhanced traction in a lightweight design. Available in 11-1/4" x 13' length with a solid edge, step treads provide a seamless look for stairs and offer homeowners the freedom to customize their space with three versatile colors.





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Still, some caution is warranted, manufacturers point out. “It is difficult to make any clear predictions regarding inflation and how interest rates in 2024 will affect the growth of the decking segment,” says Bret Martz, vice president of North American professional sales for Trex Company. “We do expect interest rates to stay elevated relative to recent historical rates. The byproduct of the macro-economic environment is the expectation that existing homeowners are more likely to stay in their homes and focus on improvements and designing spaces that fit their lifestyle needs. Outdoor living continues to be one of the more popular focal points for home improvement, so we are cautiously optimistic and feel that our competitive programming, coupled with industry leading new products, and unmatched brand recognition and preference, position us well to succeed.”

Steve Booz, vice president of marketing for Westlake Royal Building Products, shares some of Martz’s viewpoints regarding the economy. “Despite the uncertainties surrounding inflation and interest rates, which have the potential to impact home renovation activities, Westlake

Royal Building Products holds an optimistic view regarding the growth of the decking segment in 2024, and really most of our remodeling products,” he says. “Changing consumer preferences and trends in outdoor living spaces continue to influence the expansion of the decking industry. For example, four years after the pandemic, people are finding great enjoyment in gathering and socializing with friends and family. This includes entertaining outdoors and creating a comfortable yet functional outdoor living space. Decks, in particular, are evolving into true extensions of the home.”

Colors evolve

When it comes to deck colors for 2024, don’t look for major deviations compared to last year. If anything, colors are migrating towards more neutral tones. “Nationwide, we’ve seen a shift away from grays to a more natural, neutral palette of browns and tans over the past few years,” says Michelle Hendricks, category marketing manager for Deckorators. “Homeowners’ preferences for deck colors are generally becoming more minimalistic and monochromatic. This opens up more opportunities for pops of color and texture elsewhere. With neutral color options, the deck becomes a versatile base that can adapt to shifts in tastes, seasons and trends. Homeowners can easily switch up their outdoor furniture, accents and decor without the need to completely overhaul a bold color scheme.”

Lighter colored palettes with increased performance details such as heat mitigation continue to drive demand, explains Trex’s Martz, pointing to the adoption of the company’s new Trex Transcend Lineage and Trex Signature decking lines. “More and more homeowners are seeking materials that create a harmonious and modern outdoor ambiance,” he says. “Pioneering new levels of aesthetic authenticity, these new decking options closely resemble the look of premium hardwood interior flooring, making them the perfect complement for creating a sense of seamless continuity from indoors to outside.”

Other manufacturers, however, forecast increased demand for decking in gray tones. “For a clean, modern look, the trend towards gray decking is set to accelerate in 2024, from bold charcoal to subtle light gray, like Zuri Premium Decking’s Weathered Gray, which remains one of Westlake Royal’s top sellers,” says Westlake Royal Building Products’ Booz. ▶

ACRE wood alternative decking from Modern Mill siding is a sustainable alternative that looks and feels like real wood but is made from upcycled rice hulls. ACRE is water-, weather-, and pest-resistant and guaranteed not to crack, splinter, swell, or rot. According to the manufacturer, ACRE can be cut and installed like wood, and accepts paint and stains.



MoistureShield InstaDeck is an outdoor flooring system comprised of heavy-duty plastic tiles that snap together to create a foundation for a freestanding, ground-level deck. InstaDeck tiles can be assembled using minimal tools on any level flat surface, including grass, concrete, existing patio surfaces and gravel. The product utilizes an integrated fastening system that allows compatible MoistureShield composite decking to be secured into place without the use of screws.



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Using a different process than any other Trex product, the company says its Signature decking offers the ease of maintenance and high performance of WPC with a proprietary shell formulation that delivers its most realistic representation of wood attained to date. Available in two nature-inspired colors, Trex Signature establishes a new luxury tier in the brand's decking lineup as its top offering.



Outdoor living drives sales

Similar to last year, homeowners are spending record amounts of time at home, especially in their outdoor spaces. As more people were forced to work from home and forego public gatherings because of the COVID-19 pandemic, embracing outdoor living became a priority. It's a trend that remains on the upswing and should be one of the biggest in 2024, says Westlake Royal Building Products' Booz. "Essentially, homeowners want their outdoor areas to be as appealing, comfortable and functional as their interiors," he explains. "Homeowners will also try to make decks an extension of their indoor living spaces by incorporating elements that cater to their interests, such as an outdoor kitchen, fire pit, or lounge area with comfy furniture. Homeowners may also consider creating distinct zones for cooking, dining, lounging, and entertaining by incorporating multiple levels into their deck design."

Combining elements of both wood composites and PVC decking, Stratos Composite Enhanced PVC Decking from MoistureShield is designed to be stronger and longer-spanning than PVC decking. According to MoistureShield, Stratos is the strongest deck board in its class, providing rigidity and a more solid feel underfoot compared to conventional PVC and composite decking when installed 24" on center.



Deckorators' Hendricks shares similar opinions. "Homeowners want to maximize the utility of their outdoor living spaces," she says. "The easiest way to achieve that is by creating flexible-use zones to accommodate different activities and elements—think outdoor kitchens, spas, seating areas, and entertainment centers. Our contractors like to use Deckorators Picture Frame Board to visually distinguish those zones around the deck."

Envision Outdoor Living Products' Moritz points out that, while outdoor living in and of itself continues to be one of the biggest trends in residential construction, versatility is important when it comes to those spaces. "Ideally, creating a living area that has a little something for everyone and every task—areas for group gathering around a fire pit, a relaxing space to read or nap, an outdoor dining space and kitchen, etc.," he recommends. "Builders and remodelers are creating those spaces in a variety of ways, including designing their composite decks with inlays, picture framing, and borders to visually separate spaces. Large planters, rugs, and furniture placement also serve that function."

Being able to create a versatile outdoor living space starts with thoughtful design. "Designate outdoor living zones, creating separate spaces for dining, recreation like hosting a movie night, and even office spaces as more and more employees choose suburbs and rural locations for living and work from home remains a viable option, for full- or part-time work," says Kim Guimond, chief marketing officer for Modern Mill. "Add a skirt to hide the space underneath the deck to the ground. This can also create hidden storage space. Integrate lighting and climate control with pergolas for shade or lamps for added heat."

Never stop learning

In order to best sell these trends to customers, decking manufacturers recommend LBM dealers be as educated as possible on product options. While this advice may seem obvious, it's often overlooked. "Dealers should ensure that staff are well-trained and knowledgeable about different decking materials, including wood, traditional composite, mineral-based composite, and other alternatives," says Deckorators' Hendricks. "They should understand the pros and cons of each material, as well as their specific applications and maintenance requirements." ▶

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Pacific Woodtech (PWT) recently introduced its manufactured treated LVL that it reports is the only one on the market, offering superior strength and uniformity. Utilizing TRU-CORE technology, a heat press system evenly distributes treatment chemicals throughout the wood for lasting durability. This process creates a durable product that is protected against damage caused by fungal rot, decay, and wood-destroying insects.



She goes on to say that a knowledgeable and readily available customer service team that can address questions and offer guidance is equally crucial. “It’s also important to collect and consider customer feedback. Dealers should establish a mechanism to gather input from customers about their experiences with different decking materials, and use that feedback to improve and refine their offerings.”

Culpeper Wood Preservers’ Brown also stresses product education. “The most essential practice available is having the proper knowledge of the products and all information about the intended applications,” he explains. “Homeowners are investing in their property and need to ensure the right products and building practices are followed. Our company stresses education not only to our retail customers but also to contractors and homeowners. We provide all this information on our website and want to ensure it is updated and available to everyone.”

Envision Outdoor Living Products’ Moritz echoes these sentiments. “One of the biggest things dealers can do to best serve their customers is simply product education—knowing

the products they sell inside and out in order to help buyers, especially consumers, understand the differences between decking materials to help them choose what will work best for their needs,” he stresses. “This knowledge also can help customers navigate what is sometimes an overwhelming decision-making process—not just what type of decking to use, but also what color and what railing to go with it. Work with your manufacturers to get to know the products, including accessories, and to understand how to walk buyers through the options to reach their needs both aesthetically and functionally.”

Now is the time for your team to bone up on product knowledge, manufacturers recommend. “Spring is a great time of year to start educating homeowners and builders with lead nurture and product education,” says Modern Mill’s Kim Guimond. “Modern Mill offers many packaged ideas like product decision trees to compare and find the optimal product for ones projects, we offer tools to reach audiences including deck safety checklists, outdoor living inspiration and our new websites offers a project gallery to see actual decking installations and new ideas.”

Says Trex’s Martz, “The stocked, trained, and committed dealer with display space or a showroom provides the best service in the industry. A balanced strategy between the manufacturer, distributor and dealer that embraces the strengths of all parties is a way to differentiate from the masses.”

To say that the decking industry won’t experience hiccups in the coming year would certainly be an exaggeration. Yet despite continued labor shortages and uncertain economic forecasts, industry experts seem to share a cautious optimism for what the decking category might bring for the LBM dealer. As Modern Mill’s Guimond puts it, “We continue to see significant upside for decking as homeowners seek sustainable options for new and replacement decks, the continued desire for more beautiful outdoor living spaces, and the strength of home improvement sector. It’s also worth noting that there is a lag from housing starts to peak construction spending, so we could start to see more spending from 2023 housing starts later this year.” ■

Culpeper Wood Preservers has expanded its line of Culpeper Columns. According to the manufacturer, the columns have the appearance of veneer-encased timbers without requiring extra construction time. They can be used instead of fiberglass or aluminum columns for substantial cost savings. Laminated timber columns by Culpeper are lighter, easier to handle, and less likely to twist and crack than traditional solid columns.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS



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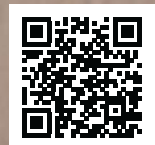
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Reinventing Lumberyards: From Wood Stacks to Design Tracks

Lumberyards have always been the cornerstone of the building industry by providing the raw materials that help turn architectural dreams into reality. They are places where wood stood tall and proud, waiting to be part of someone's home. Over the years, I've witnessed the magic that happens when lumberyards dare to dream beyond the beam by evolving into vibrant design centers. It's time to talk about transforming these bastions of building materials into design destinations. This journey not only broadens the scope of what you offer but also enhances the value you bring to every project.

Pulling in the Creatives

Lumberyards, listen up: it's time to flirt with the artsy crowd — interior designers and architects. These professionals are constantly searching for inspiration, unique materials that can elevate their projects and, importantly, a place that understands their language of design. By transforming your spaces into hubs of inspiration and creativity, you not only cater to their needs but also position yourself as an indispensable partner in the design process. It's about transcending the role of suppliers to become collaborators in creating beautiful, functional spaces. That's the lumberyard of the future.

Crafting Higher Margins with Style

Gone are the days when being just a lumberyard was enough. The secret sauce? Design. Moving from a traditional lumberyard to a design center isn't just good for business; it's a game-changer that recognizes your potential to contribute to projects in a more meaningful way, beyond simply supplying materials. Higher-margin projects don't fall from trees; they're cultivated in spaces that inspire and innovate. You can differentiate yourself in a competitive market by focusing on design and offering high-margin, customizable solutions — showing that what you offer can transform spaces, not just build them.

Diversifying Sales Beyond Seasons

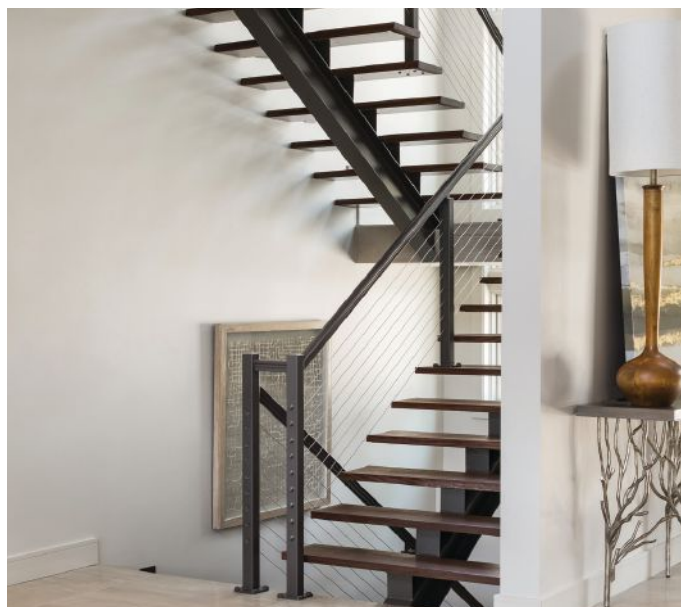
Your sales shouldn't migrate south for the winter. By expanding your product range to include options suitable for indoor use, such as interior cable railings, you ensure that your appeal isn't confined to outdoor projects alone. This approach helps you maintain a steady stream of business, irrespective of the season and supports your customers in realizing their vision year-round.

Showroom Glow-Up: Where Design Dreams Do Come True

A common feedback from designers is the lack of spaces where they can explore materials and gather inspiration. Take your showroom and lumberyard from a "maybe" to a "must-visit" by transforming it into a realm where samples aren't just available but celebrated, and every corner offers new design inspiration. This approach moves beyond merely showing products to showcasing possibilities.

Railing Against the Ordinary

The demand for unique and customizable railing solutions is on the rise. Consumers and professionals alike are looking for ways to incorporate railings that offer both safety and style. The trend towards aluminum frames and unique colors further highlights the desire for products that adapt to various design aesthetics and personal preferences.



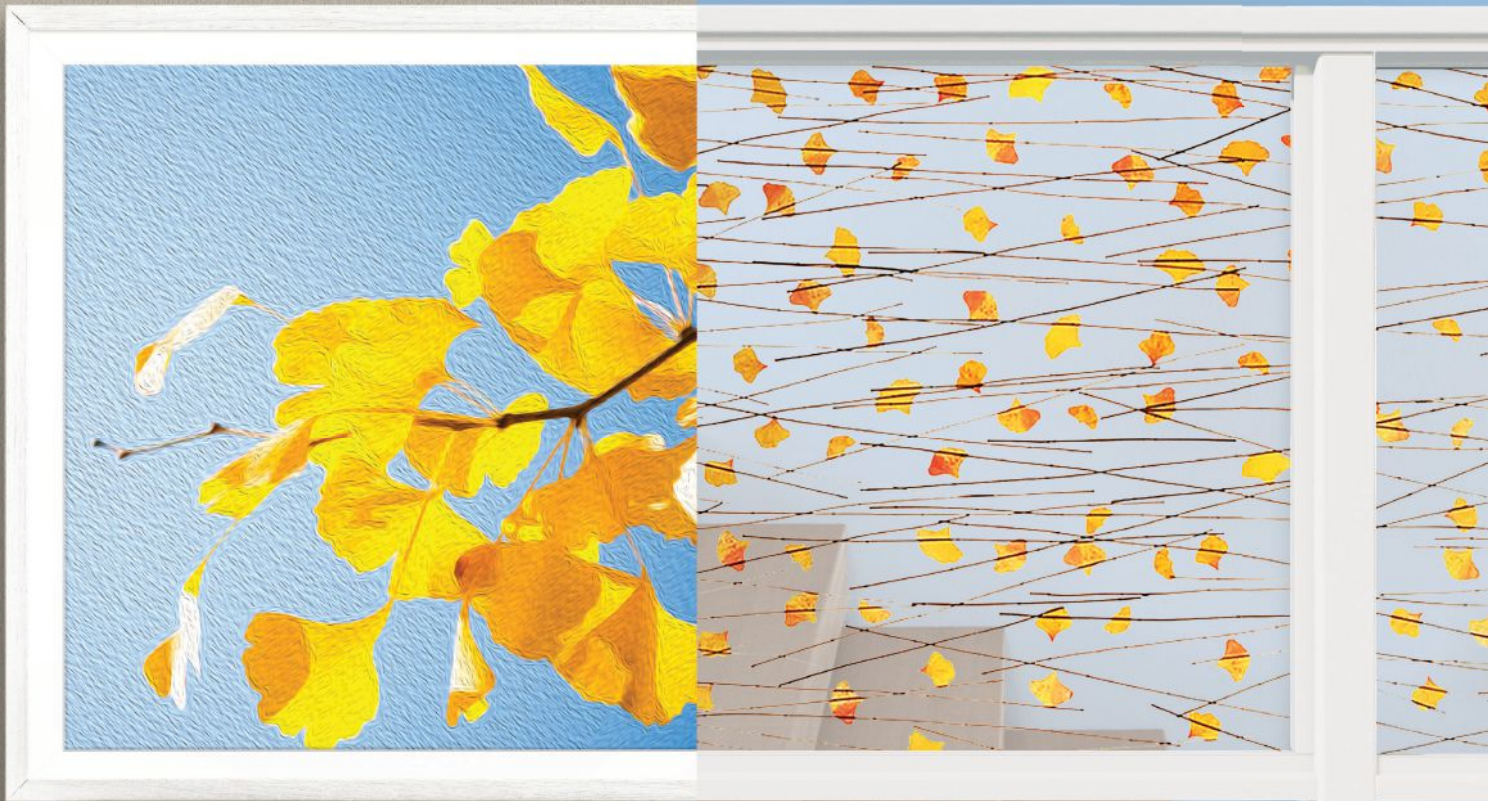
Best Practices for Success

Adopting best practices is essential for lumberyards aiming to evolve into design centers. This includes embracing digital platforms for e-commerce, establishing a strong online presence and utilizing social media to connect your brick-and-mortar lumberyard with a broader audience. Become the local beacon for all things design. Stock those unique products that can't be found just anywhere. Set up a showroom that doesn't simply display products but tells a story, with a team ready to guide every customer through their design journey.

The transformation from a simple lumberyard to a design center isn't a pipe dream; it's a strategic shift towards offering higher value, both in terms of products and services. I've seen the potential firsthand. It's not just about selling railings; it's about selling dreams. By embracing this vision, your customers are invited to explore the endless possibilities that lie beyond the traditional boundaries of lumberyards.

BY KYM NOSBISCH, SENIOR MARKETING DIRECTOR AT FEENEY

It's All in How You Frame It.



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The Deckorators Privacy Screen System offers an innovative way to introduce both definition and seclusion to outdoor spaces. This system enables users to mix and match components, including screens, slats, and decking, to create a unique style for their outdoor living space. Its user-friendly installation, versatility, and privacy-enhancing features make it a standout product in the industry, catering to the evolving needs and desires of homeowners.

DECK RAILINGS + ACCESSORIES

BY MIKE BERGER

Modern aesthetics lead the way in homeowner purchases.

At our core, we as a species—when we allow ourselves—understand the importance of the outdoor world. Take for example the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, “Now I see the secret of making the best person, it is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.” Or perhaps the words of the great naturalist, John Muir, who suggested, “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity.”

These thoughts could just as easily be describing the growing importance of outdoor living. As evidenced by biophilic design, a concept used within the building industry that stresses connectivity to the natural environment, homeowners are increasingly seeking outdoor living spaces that go beyond plain decks and instead embrace the elevated aesthetics imparted by today’s deck railings and deck accessories. The question for LBM dealers, however, is how sales of deck railings and accessories will shake out in the midst of economic uncertainties. ▶



New from Feeney, its DesignRail ColorEasy brings an expansive palette of 18 colors to spark creativity and personalize designs. According to Feeney, this makes it easy to add the perfect color to an interior or exterior space for a cohesive design—inside and out. From traditional to trendy and everything in between, these powder-coated colors will complement virtually any style when applied to its DesignRail products.

In order to deliver on an increased demand for entertaining space, Deckorators is now offering its cocktail rail option, that it says is more in line with homeowners' growing desire for flexibility and functionality in their outdoor spaces. Deckorators composite decking can be used to create the cocktail rail itself for a cohesive look that helps unify the whole space.



With continued worries about high interest rates and continued inflation, it would be natural for deck railing and accessory manufacturers to feel cautious about the coming year. Instead, however, they seem to share a feeling of cautious optimism. "Despite inflation and interest rate concerns, we anticipate steady growth in the deck railing and accessory segment in 2024," says Katrina Ralston, president of Feeney. "Homeowners continue to be eager to turn their backyards into personal retreats. That desire for customized, stylish outdoor spaces seems to be weathering the economic uncertainties quite well. We believe this enduring trend will continue to drive demand."

A cable option for the value conscious consumer that wants the look of cable but at a lower cost, ADI's DekPro InvisiCable is ideal for exterior use in decks, stairways, and balconies using wood or solid composite posts. Fittings are concealed in the post creating a clean, almost invisible infill.



Keylink Discovery is the company's newest railing line, designed for high-volume contractors who need quick installation. The brackets are factory-installed on the posts, and the balusters snap into the top and bottom rails, creating a panel.



Don Douglas, senior product manager for Fortress Building Products, agrees with Ralston's sentiment. "We expect the railing category to remain strong through 2024," he predicts. "With interest rates still high, we believe that homeowners will use their equity to further invest in their useable living space by expanding outdoors. Railing is a perfect and necessary addition to any outdoor home improvement project."

One factor that plays into a positive growth outlook is that deck railings and accessories are not wholly tied to new construction; the R&R segment also helps drive growth. As Michelle Hendricks, category marketing manager for Deckorators, points out, "Homeowners keep demand for outdoor living products strong in several ways: when they're buying and building new houses, they improve their outdoor environments to suit their tastes, and when they decide to stay in their homes, they remodel outdated decks, railings and other exterior items for long-term enjoyment and aesthetic value."

And based on what manufacturers report seeing in the field, indicators seem strong for outdoor living and deck demand this year at the dealer and installer level of the channel. "While the average homeowner may not be as inclined to make a move into a new home with the market uncertainty, it is highly likely that those who stay in their existing homes will do upgrades or renovations," says Matthew Bruce, vice president of sales for MoistureShield/Barrette Outdoor Living. "Outdoor living is still one of the largest areas that consumers are spending their dollars. We like our positioning in the space and feel that the segment will still see growth over the next several years."

Low maintenance, high aesthetics

One of the main driving factors when it comes to purchase decisions for deck railings and accessories is low maintenance. While certainly not a new trend, it's one that continues to increase in importance, and LBM dealers should be prepared to offer products that deliver on that promise.

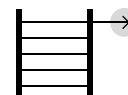
"LBM dealers should anticipate growth in low-maintenance rail systems for their outdoor living division," says Luke Guittar, vice president of sales and marketing at Absolute Distribution Inc. (ADI). "Metal railing products with both horizontal and vertical infill options offer the consumer affordable solutions that are both attractive and long-lasting." ▶



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* Claim based on a 12' x 18' deck with 8 posts and 7 panels (RDI Elevation Rail installed 49 minutes faster than competitive cable railing install of 129 minutes)

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EncloSure, Barrette Outdoor Living's DIY-friendly screen enclosure solution, allows homeowners to enjoy being outdoors while offering protection against insects and the elements. With an easy four step purchasing system, homeowners can select from three sizes that best fits their existing covered space and, if needed, adjust post and rail sizes using a miter or circular saw.



Hand in hand with low maintenance are railing products that create a more modern aesthetic. "Cable railing has consistently gained popularity in the last five years," says Guittar. "With unparalleled views and modern design aesthetics, consumers are now, more than ever, creating their perfect back yard oasis."

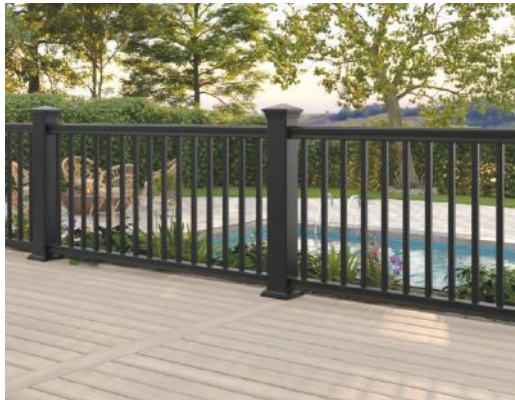
Fortress Building Products' Douglas also sees the growth potential in railing products that embrace a modern aesthetic. "Horizontal railing continues to be a big trend item," he explains. "As more homeowners try to take on

projects themselves, products like Fe²⁶ Axis horizontal steel railing from Fortress Building Products deliver both the modern aesthetic they are looking for combined with a straightforward installation process. Plus, the horizontal orientation of the panels creates the illusion of a larger outdoor space, visually expanding the width of a deck or patio."

A variation on the modern aesthetic that is gaining traction, manufacturers report, is the use of mixed materials. "There's a growing interest in using mixed materials that combine durability and aesthetic appeal, like pairing traditional wood with modern aluminum," Feeney's Ralston points out. "Bold and vibrant colors are also making their way into designs, allowing for personalization that speaks to individual style."

Kevin Mynaugh, product manager for Keylink, also reports seeing customers using mixed materials, like vinyl and aluminum combinations. "And horizontal infill is everywhere," he says. "Cable, rod rail, fence panels—everything is going horizontal! Keylink has done horizontal cable for years and our system is consistently praised for its look and easy installation, so we're already on that trend. And we're releasing a rod rail infill for those who want a baluster-style horizontal system."

MoistureShield has added a Satin Black color option to its premium Navigator line of Solid Core composite railing to align with recent black exterior design trends being seen in new home construction and home remodeling. With a material composition offering the look of painted wood, Navigator fights damage from moisture, rot, insects and other harmful elements and is finished with an acrylic cap to defend against scratching and impact.



Joining the Trex Outdoor Lighting line-up is a new Solar Post Cap. This energy-efficient component harnesses the power of the sun to deliver all the ambiance customers want without any electrical wiring. Compatible with Trex 4x4 composite post sleeves, the Trex Solar Post Cap is reported to be easy to install and automatically lights up when the sun goes down—no timer needed.



Everything all at once

Homeowners don't simply want a deck built; rather, they have become design savvy and are looking for the creation of outdoor spaces that incorporate a variety of elements such as railings, lighting, and outdoor cooking areas. These desires create unique challenges for builders, and if an LBM dealer can offer easy-to-implement solutions, they can quickly become a go-to resource.

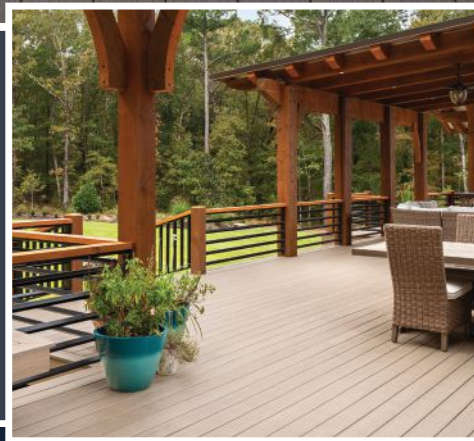
"Now more than ever, builders are being challenged to stay competitive," says Fortress Building Products' Douglas. "But increased labor and material costs can make staying competitive difficult. To help builders overcome this challenge, Fortress Building Products offers a wide range of competitively priced steel and aluminum railing systems that are quick and easy to install. Using a pre-assembled means that builders who may not be familiar or comfortable with the deck railing installation process can install the product with relative ease, which saves valuable time and money. In turn, they can move on to their next job more quickly." ▶

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According to the manufacturer, products like Fe²⁶ Axis horizontal steel railing from Fortress Building Products deliver both the modern aesthetic homeowners are looking for combined with a straightforward installation process. Plus, the horizontal orientation of the panels creates the illusion of a larger outdoor space, visually expanding the width of a deck or patio.

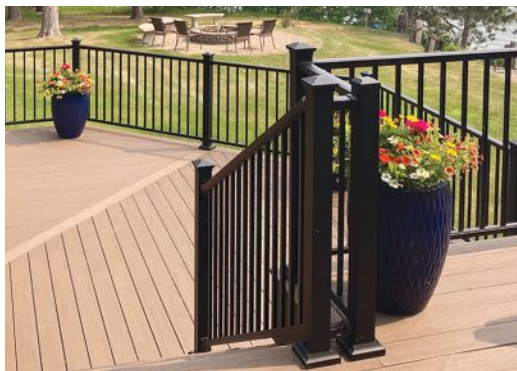


Says Feeney's Ralston, "In 2024, builders face the challenge of meeting consumer demand for products that combine style, durability and ease of installation—the triple crown of deck railing requirements. Our DesignRail and CableRail systems are crafted to meet these needs head-on. They offer a blend of aesthetic appeal and longevity, with the added benefit of straightforward installation. This approach not only addresses the immediate challenges builders face but also elevates the standard of what deck railings can offer, making projects smoother and more satisfying."

Deckorators Aluminum Rapid Rail is available in two new colors for 2024: Textured White and Weathered Brown. Featuring a contemporary design with square balusters and a simple installation system, this product has a powder-coated finish that resists scratches and corrosion.



4" posts are now available for ADI's DekPro Prestige aluminum railing system. The larger post design provides a more robust post option that can be used with the standard prestige railing system. Posts are welded to the baseplate for superior strength. Post includes a cap, skirt and shims.



To help offset these design challenges, deck railing and accessory manufacturers recommend LBM dealers work with suppliers who can deliver all the needed elements so that the build can be as quick and efficient as possible. "Homeowners have gotten so savvy with how they want their backyard spaces to function," Deckorator's Hendricks responds. "They want a full 365 experience, with all kinds of elements for different seasons and purposes. That means projects can take longer and require more coordination with ancillary contractors. We help minimize the impacts of those challenges by saving our contractors time and labor on the job. For example, Deckorators Voyage Decking and Picture Frame Board lines now offer step treads and, what would typically take an entire day's worth of labor can now be completed in about an hour—without sacrificing durability and style."

The wholesaler and dealer have a responsibility to educate the builder about the latest design trends and what's available to them, says ADI's Guittar. "At Absolute Distribution Inc. (ADI), we offer The ADI Advantage. ADI specializes in working closely with both the dealer and the builder to provide education on deck railings and accessories relevant to their specific markets. Lately, outdoor lighting has increased in popularity. As a result, ADI has introduced our DekPro EFFEX low-voltage LED lighting system to meet this demand. Builders now have an attractive exterior lighting option to match many deck rail systems on the market today."

Inspire, then educate

One of the traps LBM dealers can fall into when it comes to deck railings and accessories is to view themselves simply as a selling center. For the greatest wins, manufacturers stress the importance of being an inspiration center. "For LBM dealers looking to enhance their service and become indispensable resources to their customers, embracing a holistic approach is key, says Feeney's Ralston. "Think of your showroom as more than a store—it's a source of inspiration and knowledge. Cultivating an engaging online presence, alongside a showroom that tells a story, can transform visits into experiences. Equip your team with the know-how to guide customers, turning every project discussion into a brainstorming session of possibilities. It's about creating a space where customers come for the nails but stay for the narrative." ►

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Trex is expanding its premium Signature railing line with two new specialty options including X-Series Cable Rail and X-Series Frameless Glass Rail. Crafted with premium-grade aluminum, both options are sold in kits to simplify specification and are backed by a 25-year Limited Residential Warranty.



Deckorators' Hendricks agrees, pointing out that it can be difficult for customers to visualize decking products and accessories without context. "Showroom displays help address that challenge. By showcasing different decking materials, colors, and textures as they might be seen in the outdoor living space, where customers have the chance to see and feel the products firsthand, and can ultimately make more informed decisions."

She emphasizes the importance of product knowledge training as well. "Dealers should ensure that staff are well-trained and knowledgeable about different decking materials, including wood, traditional composite, mineral-based composite, and other alternatives," she says. "They should understand the pros and cons of each material, as well as their specific applications and maintenance requirements."

"By providing materials like brochures, guides and online resources that include maintenance and installation tips, dealers can help customers understand the decking options available to them," she adds. "It's also great to see dealers host workshops for deck building, maintenance, and design to share insights with customers."

In the end, it boils down to providing the best customer service, says Alicia Zywko, regional sales manager for Keylink. "Excellent customer service and responsiveness are essential to dealer success, of course. To take business to the next level, it's important that dealers really lean into training and education for their teams, making sure that their staff are product experts who are aware of all the resources out there. And a presence on social media is also important. Use the digital space to tell your story and show what you are doing for your customers—things like events, shows, and promos—and show how you're investing in your people and your community."

And of course, take advantage of distributor sales staff to educate your associates to provide that top level of customer experiences, recommends ADI's Guittar. "Update and refresh your showroom displays and count on your distributor to help with that. Make certain to choose partners who have a solid business model to help you with your marketing efforts and sales process."

Despite not knowing what direction interest rates and inflation may trend—especially considering the impacts of an election year—deck railing and accessory manufacturers seem to share the opinion that the segment will deliver steady sales throughout the remainder of 2024. And by providing inspiration, knowledge, and product, LBM dealers can expect positive results. It's as Trex's Martz says: "The stocked, trained, and committed dealer with display space or a showroom provides the best service in the industry. A balanced strategy between the manufacturer, distributor and dealer that embraces the strengths of all parties is a way to differentiate from the masses." ■

DekPro EFFEX Under-Rail LED Lighting from ADI is a lighting option designed for use with the company's RailFX aluminum rail and cable system. The light strips create an ambiance of warm white light around the entire perimeter of the deck and softly highlights the railing during low light hours. A diffuser lens ensures all the light is dispersed evenly along the length of the railing.



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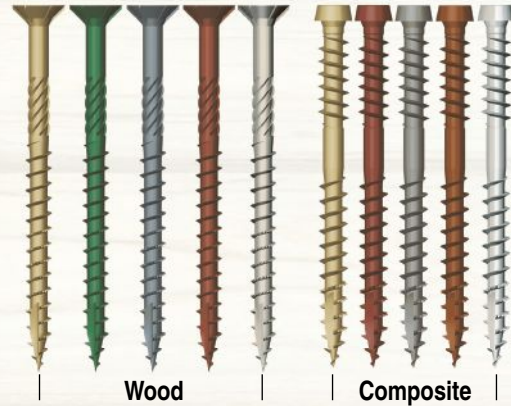
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316 S.S.		✓			✓			✓	
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Red/Comp.			✓			✓			✓
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 **MIDWEST**
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BY MIKE BERGER

The desire for elevated aesthetics drives development of new deck fasteners.

Did you know that fasteners can be archeologists' best friends? For example, nails are artifacts commonly found at historic sites, and the frequency of their occurrence in digs has encouraged archaeologists to use them as dating tools. In fact, it's one of the common methods used by the archeologists on the History Channel's "The Curse of Oak Island" to date the age of the various strata they are excavating.

How does it work? The general manufacture type leaves readily identifiable features on nails. Because these features are indicative of the technology used in their manufacture, and because nail manufacturing technology changed over the course of time, those features can be used to date an excavation.

For example, some of the nail types that might be encountered include hand-forged rose head, T-head or downturned, machine cut wrought head, machine cut L head, machine cut side pinched, and machine face pinched. And while there are certainly more types than just these, knowing the era in which each type of nail was made helps identify the age of a dig site.

Compared to fasteners of old, today's deck fasteners are uniquely designed, and each type or brand has their own unique features that serve to not simply identify them but also to secure decking to substructure. And it's through understanding those unique properties that LBM dealers can best serve their customers in a continuing-to-grow deck building environment. ▶

DECK FASTENERS

Simpson Strong-Tie recently introduced Timber Drive, a stand-up, structural screw fastening system designed to drive structural fasteners up to 6-1/4" in length, providing what the manufacturer says is a new level of installation ease, safety and ergonomics for tough installations.



Midwest Fasteners has recently expanded its offering of 316 stainless steel deck screws in its premium SaberDrive brand, which now carries six varieties of deck screws; Red, Green, Tan, Gray, 304 Stainless Steel, and 316 Stainless Steel.



Outdoor living drives demand

As reported in the other In Depth features in this issue, outdoor living shows no signs of slowing down. Decks and deck accessories continue to be in high demand, the need for deck fasteners is predicted to stay high, say industry experts. “Indicators seem strong for outdoor living and deck demand this year, as homeowners may stay in their homes and improve what they have due to tight housing availability,” says Brett Katsma, product management leader for SPAX. “Outdoor living continues to remain a focus for Americans as they look to push the boundaries on their square footage, often blending their indoors and outdoors. Decking additions provide a great choice for homeowners looking to add usable square footage to their spaces for entertainment and relaxation.”

This isn’t to say that there hasn’t been cause for concern. Rising interest rates and the continued threat of inflation have had significant impact on spending in the decking segment. Nevertheless, with the economic

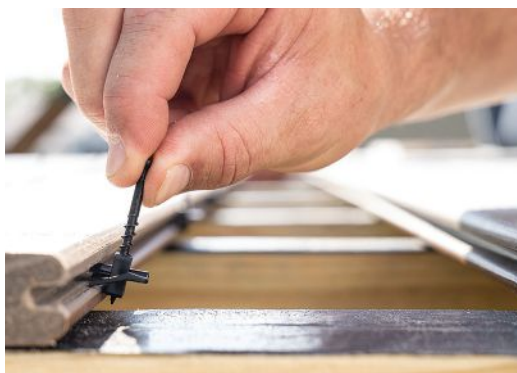
forecasts pointing towards potentially easing conditions, fastener manufacturers are cautiously optimistic. “I feel this is a segment that will continue to grow,” says Robert Shirley, product marketing manager for Simpson Strong-Tie, “With the higher interest rates, many people are staying in their existing home due to the low mortgage rates they have secured. That decision to stay in an existing home for a longer period generally leads people to invest in it. Customers continue to focus on improving their backyard experience, and the deck is a central part of that equation.”

Explains Nick Thies, category manager for Midwest Fastener, “Generally, we expect 2023 headwinds to continue into 2024, but we do expect 2024 to be a bit better. The federal reserve and most economists expect interest rates to move downward in 2024. Based on this, we expect to see growth in single-family home constructions, and since the percentage of new homes that are built with a deck has remained relatively steady for the past 10 years, more single-family home builds in 2024 means more decks built. Lower interest rates will also increase existing home sales, home equity loans, and other consumer actions that result in improvements to existing homes. Decks have always been a popular home improvement, so this will also drive growth in the deck fastener segment in 2024.”

Lee Tedesco, marketing director for Grabber Construction Products, agrees with Thies regarding home improvement driving fastener sales growth. “The good news is that the market for remodeling homes is growing, which means more and more people are looking to create beautiful and functional outdoor spaces,” he points out. “Homeowners want decks that are versatile, long-lasting, and tailored to their specific needs. As more Americans seek to add value to their homes by building decks, this trend will likely continue, meaning there will be even more gorgeous outdoor spaces to enjoy!”

Roderick Kabel, marketing director for DeckWise, also sees improving economic conditions on the horizon. “Although there is still uncertainty, inflation and interest rates are going down. We see this as a positive predictor for the warmer building season upon us,” he explains. “Although it’s going to be imperative to stay informed about these factors throughout the year and adapt strategies accordingly. As for deck fastener growth, it is doubtful the demand will decrease and it should stay steady.” ▶

Engineered to wedge into the grooves of any deck board, the new CAMO WEDGE Clips are designed for one-handed installation. According to the manufacturer, the 316 Stainless Steel Marine Grade clip offers the best corrosion resistance for coastal applications or projects in highly corrosive environments, such as saltwater pool decks.



One of the newer products from Pan American Screw Fastener Group is a composite fascia board screw that routs its own hole that’s larger than the shank of the screw to allow for expansion and contraction, and the larger head covers the hole for a finished look.



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Still, nothing is guaranteed, and the economic picture will remain fluid throughout the coming year. “We still see growth in the deck fastener market but not at the same levels we saw during COVID times when consumers were stuck at home, remodeling and building outdoor living spaces because they couldn’t travel,” points out Phil Lail, president of Pan American Screw Fastener Group. “Our growth is forecasted to come from increasing our geographical footprint as we are continuing to aggressively hire new territory salespeople in currently uncovered areas of the U.S.”

GRK Fasteners is adding black-colored RSS Structural Screws to deliver a bold finish to outdoor and decking applications. The black Climatek coating is approved for exterior use in pressure treated lumber.



Elevated aesthetics lead trends

When it comes to trends for deck fasteners, much of the product development is being driven by the continued homeowner interest in outdoor living and creating spaces with refined aesthetics. “Composite and PVC deck manufacturers continue to develop an increasing variety of board colors and textures, as they refine the composition of the board materials,” says Simpson Strong-Tie’s Shirley. “Simpson Strong-Tie provides a vast array of Deck-Drive DCU Composite premium decking screws to match these board color schemes, providing a means of installing face-mounted fasteners to the deck boards while blending the fasteners into the board finish.”

“Today, many consumers are seeking outdoor living spaces that are sophisticated, customizable, and comfortable,” says Grabber’s Tedesco. “They want spaces that are versatile, long-lasting, and high-quality. The decking industry benefits from these lifestyle changes as consumers continue investing in their outdoor spaces. Timber decking remains a popular choice for enhancing outdoor spaces with its warm and inviting ambiance. Offering durable, high-quality products is key to supporting these growing trends.”

The ThermoClip hidden deck fasteners from DeckWise are specifically made for thermally modified wood. Available in black and brown, the new hidden fasteners will be available this spring.



SPAX Joist Tape and Beam Tape is designed to extend the life of wooden decks. When placed directly on the top of joists and beams, it acts as a moisture barrier by forming a tight seal around deck fasteners to prevent moisture penetration. The ridged polyethylene surface is slip resistant, and the tapes can be applied to horizontal and vertical surfaces.

As a method of achieving that refined aesthetic, hidden deck fasteners continue to be a strong trend as homeowners value clean looking decks boards, much like the floors inside their own homes, says fastener manufacturers. While hidden fasteners have often only been an option for engineered decking, fastening systems like those from GRK Fasteners and CAMO enable builds using wood decking to achieve the same seamless appearance.

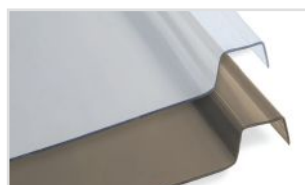
Along with these trends also comes the use of new product categories in the deck fastening arena. “We find that dealers, contractors and homeowners are focused on the composite decking story, but often left out of the conversation is the substructure of the new deck,” SPAX’s Katsma points out. “SPAX Deck Joist and Beam Tape provides the added peace of mind for homeowners knowing that they are optimizing the life of the deck to ensure a long-lasting, professional installation where the fasteners and wood are protected from water damage. This product carries significant importance in longevity to the deck structure, given the extreme and unprecedented weather of 2023 into 2024, especially moisture issues in coastal regions. The joist and beam tape combined with the SPAX (4-in-1) Deck Spacer provides consistent spacing and drainage between deck boards for added protection.”

Broader adoption of new decking materials is also bringing about the development of new types of fasteners. “We have seen hints of new products out there with the use of steel framing instead of traditional wood frame decks, and have started to see a shift in structural composite lumber for deck framing which is a brand new item to this category,” explains Mike Engle, senior director of product management for PrimeSour Building Products. ▶

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decorative hardware by Simpson Strong-Tie is a complete line of black powder-coated structural connectors and fasteners that make it easy to add both beauty and strength to outdoor structures.



“The most exciting emerging product isn’t necessarily new, but is gaining quite a bit of ground,” says DeckWise’s Kabel. “Thermally modified softwoods (Ash, Pine, Red Oak, and Spruce) being installed for decking and cladding is extremely exciting. DeckWise has aligned with a few of the heavy hitters in the industry and developed a hidden fastener system for these woods.”

Deck fasteners are also adapting to the specific needs of mass timber construction, says Pan American Screw Fastener Group’s Lail. “Our Big Timber product line has recently merged all of our stainless steel decking screws to be made of marine grade 316 grade material,” he says. “With the small cost difference between 304 / 305 and 316 grade, we decided to consolidate our offering to just the premium 316 marine grade to make it an easier choice for our customers and save shelf space in their stores. We continue to see growth in mass timber and cross laminated timber applications. Once it was prominent in only a select few geographical areas of the country, but we are seeing that market expand quickly across

The new GRK Fasteners Deck Elite AnglePro hidden fastening system delivers an all-in-one solution that provide clean, premium-finish look for deck boards. GRK’s new tool is designed to install the brand’s GRK decking screws at angle into 5/4 or 2x6 wooden top boards hidden from plane sight.



Grabber’s UltraPro screws were developed to deal with driving into harder materials. According to Grabber, the screw’s design helps reduce wobble, cam-outs, and slivers while maintaining high torque that can drive off angle and deliver an exceptional bit tip life.



the U.S. and Canada. Sales of our Big Timber BTX and STX construction lags screws were up over 35% last year and we are seeing growth from North Carolina to California and all points in between.”

Work smarter, not harder

As everyone is no doubt painfully aware, the need for labor in the construction and remodeling segments remains very high. According to a proprietary model developed by Associated Builders and Contractors, the construction industry will need to attract an estimated 501,000 additional workers on top of the normal pace of hiring in 2024 to meet the demand for labor. Deck fastener manufacturers have taken note and are developing new products to help ease the labor situation.

“Simpson Strong-Tie dedicates significant resources to innovate and create new products to help contractors, installers and remodelers perform their tasks faster, safer and more ergonomically, while providing stronger, more durable solutions,” says Simpson Strong-Tie’s Shirley. “Quik Drive auto-feed screw driving systems provide a means of doing just that. Tasks that require repetitive fastening can be accomplished faster, safer, and more ergonomically. Contractors find that these solutions are not only a benefit during the installation process, but also provide a cost savings by reducing time-associated labor costs.”

Pan American Screw Fastener Group’s Lail also sees labor being a valid concern for deck builders. “We are seeing more end users interested in products like our pneumatic Mantis clip installation tool. As the labor market shrinks, tools like this help the deck builder finish products faster and more efficiently using less labor hours. One of our newer designed products is a composite fascia board screw that routs its own hole larger than the shank of the screw to allow for expansion and contraction and the larger head covers the hole for a finished modern look. No separate drill bit needed as it routs and finishes in one easy step.”

Working smarter, not harder, to keep costs down when building decks or other remodeling projects is key, says Jacek Romanski, channel marketing director for ITW Construction. “Contractors continue to work smarter, not harder, to keep their costs down when building decks or other remodeling projects. They are looking for products that improve their productivity, allowing them to either finish ►

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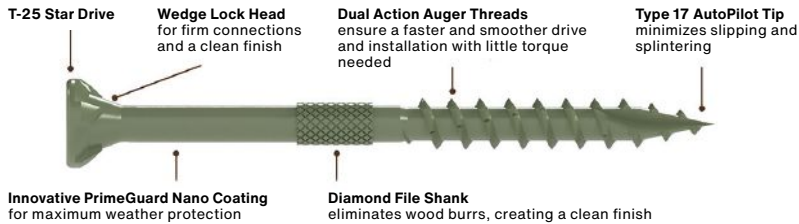
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Product Page



Demo Video



According to PrimeSource, the new Grip-Rite DeckForce premium exterior screws offer superior performance and longevity thanks to an innovative PrimeGuard Nano Coating that's engineered for strength, durability, and corrosion resistance, and it carries a lifetime guarantee.

faster and move to the next job or put money back in their pocket. For example, our new GRK Fasteners AugerBolt Fastening system saves contractors 50% or more during the installation of 6" x 6" post to beam connections by allowing them to drill and install code approved through bolts in one easy operation."

In addition, inflation continues to be a challenge for deck builders going into 2024. Not only are they experiencing inflation with the building products and fastener costs, they have no choice but to pass on their inflationary labor costs as well, unless they improve their own productivity.

GRK Fasteners is excited to introduce AugerBolt Through Bolt Fastening simplifying code approved through bolt installation by combining the drilling of an auger bit and the installation of a through bolt all in one easy step for greater productivity. The patented recessed tip revolutionizes through bolted installation simplifying the notched 6x6 connection for Pro deck builders.

Says Midwest Fastener's Thies, "We believe material cost will continue to be a challenge for deck builders and their customers. Although down from their record highs in 2021 & 2022, inflation has kept building material costs up significantly in many areas from where they were pre-pandemic. Lumber has come farther back down to earth than many other material segments, which is a relief for deck builders, but overall construction costs have still jumped significantly over a relatively short 3-year time period. This jump has been a tough pill for homeowners to swallow, leading to more price conscious mindset when shopping around for a deck builder or comparing bids. We have a variety of value-priced deck fasteners including our new BuildRight Contractor Pack line that we developed to help these price conscious builders and consumers get a quality product that checks the most important boxes at a very competitive price point.

Part of effectively dealing with the challenges of cost and inflation is understanding real value on the part of both the LBM dealer and the end user, say manufacturers. Initial purchase price is, of course, an important factor in the purchase decision, but it's one that is often too focused upon, leaving issues like labor savings, call-backs, and warranties out of the conversation. "You continue to see major brands pushing for the 'system sell' and providing more of a warranty," laments PrimeSource Building Products' Engle. "The problem with that is these brands don't understand the fastening space, and the complexities of supply chain in this category." ▶



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The new GRK Fasteners AugerBolt Fastening System is reported to save contractors 50% or more during the installation of 6x6 post to beam connections by allowing them to drill and install code-approved through bolts in one easy operation.



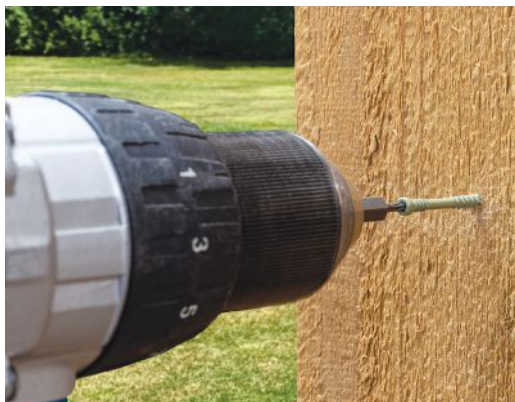
With myriad deck board choices on the market, it's more important than ever for LBM dealers to be able to point their customers in the right purchase decision, one that best works with the decking product being used. "Knowing the products and their characteristics is important when choosing the proper fastening method," DeckWise's Kabel points out. "We have seen and heard some upheaval in the market over screw snapping, or not holding in place properly."

Product knowledge equals success

To overcome these challenges, manufacturers recommend specific strategies, the top of which is product education and training (which should come as no surprise), not just on product features and benefits but also about codes and building requirements.

"Education is still the key to helping your customers make the right decisions," says Pan American Screw Fastener Group's Lail. "Making sure all of your critical structural fasteners are code approved by a third party testing agency is necessary to reduce liability and make sure your customer is using the right fastener for the job. You may be surprised

Simpson Strong-Tie recently launched the Finish Trim Screw. According to the manufacturer, the Finish Trim screw is ideal for everything from installing trim, molding, and other home improvement projects. Its compact, low-profile cylinder head provides a concealed appearance, its under head threads provide a clean countersink and pulls materials tight, and its patented SawTooth point eliminates the need for predrilling and makes driving easy.



how many brands represented in our industry are not approved, which could cause problems with certain building inspectors."

DeckWise's Kabel agrees, pointing out how the deck industry is seeing some changes with the popularity of different materials becoming available. "Product knowledge and training is the most important resource a LBM dealer can provide to their customers," he recommends. "Ensuring that all staff members are well-trained and knowledgeable—or at least know where they can get the proper information—on all the different products that are out there, is key. It is vital that LBM dealers are capable and able to support their customers with the most up to date information especially when it comes to what is actually on their shelves for sale."

Hand in hand with all that product knowledge is being able to effectively offer and present deck fastener solutions in adequate square feet of selling space—a best practice that ITW Construction's Romanski says is often overlooked during the busy season. "Put the work on your distributor and manufacturer partners to help you measure your planograms to focus on top movers while working through/discontinuing any products that are not selling or meeting your inventory turn targets," he says. "This allows dealers to make room for more of what is selling and gives space to try the newest products. Optimizing your planograms in this way will lead to better productivity for your store and less inventory to count at the end of the season."

If there's one word that can be used to sum up the deck fastener segment for the next twelve months, it's innovation. The products shown in this in-depth look are just a fraction of what's now available to the industry, and by putting into place the advice given here from industry experts—which won't leave you digging for answers like an archeologist—LBM dealers should be able to expect wins when it comes to sales. As ITW Construction's Romanski puts it, "The decking segment will stay steady. Due to the rising interest rates, many homeowners are deciding to stay put and instead invest in their homes which in theory will counter rising inflationary prices of restoring a deck. Updated decks allow them to add value to their homes so they are ready to sell at even more of a premium once interest rates settle back down." ■

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A thermally modified wood that is both sourced and modified in North America, KLAASWOOD uses a 2nd generation hydrolysis technology that allows wood modification to be achieved without the use of harmful chemicals and at lower temperatures, which is less stressful on the wood and, according to the manufacturer, results in a stronger, more stable product. The enhanced durability allows KLAASWOOD to be certified at Class 1 durability, the highest available class that extends the warranty to 20 years. klaaswood.com



RMAX BELOW GRADE

Rmax, a division of the Sika Corporation that specializes in developing and producing insulation solutions, has launched Rmax Below Grade. According to the manufacturer, this insulation solution provides superior insulation and protection to below-grade foundation applications, while meeting energy code requirements. Made from polyiso insulation, Rmax Below Grade incorporates a durable water-resistant facer onto the closed-cell foam core, ensuring the optimal solution for below-grade applications. The product is reported to meet R-10 code requirements with only 1.5" of polyiso, which is 25% less material to achieve the same standard as traditional XPS boards. rmax.com



RDI RAILING'S NEW WEBSITE

RDI Railing has launched its new website, rdirail.com. For architects, contractors and property managers, the website includes all the necessary resources needed to provide superior service, including marketing materials; installation instructions and videos; CAD files; BIM models and product spec information. The new website is intended to inspire homeowners, designers and builders while simplifying the process for selecting and buying materials. Moreover, the site is meant to help advance projects by providing access to experienced contractors through the company's network. rdirail.com



FASTENMASTER FRAMEFAST

FastenMaster introduces the new FrameFAST fastener, now featuring the patented TORX ttap Drive system. This new design empowers pros with the choice of using a standard impact driver or the award winning FrameFAST tool. According to FastenMaster, FrameFAST replaces many commonly used hurricane ties, installing 5X faster without the need for compressors, nailers, and hoses. The new 50-piece box and 250-piece bucket will include a free alignment guide ensuring a code compliant connection and TORX ttap driver bits that deliver a wobble-free drive. The new fastener is certified for continuous load path applications including securing roof trusses, wall studs and plates, in addition to attaching deck joists to carrying beams. Backed by FastenMaster's ProjectLife Guarantee, FrameFAST is guaranteed for the life of the project and is approved for use in ACQ pressure treated wood. fastenmaster.com



ECOSMART STUD

The EcoSmart Construction Stud is reported by the manufacturer to provide better R-Factor, less weight, and increased strength. The EcoSmart Stud places strategic slots and gaps in a solid 2x6 wood stud to allow higher value insulation to fill in those gaps. With insulation filling the gaps, the R-value of the EcoSmart stud is over 100% better than a standard solid 2x6. The EcoSmart stud with the higher R-value lowers the thermal bridging energy loss from the standard stud. Less Thermal Bridging loss equals lower energy bills. ecosmartstud.com



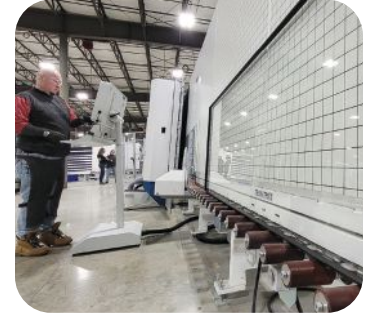
STEEL BOARD & BATTEN SIDING

Central States recently launched its latest offering, Central States Board & Batten steel siding. According to the manufacturer, residential contractors and custom home builders, homeowners, commercial building owners, and architects and designers can now utilize the strength and durability of metal while imparting a welcoming and enduring character and delivering lasting value in fifteen painted and three wood grain finishes. Metal board and batten eliminates the need for painting or repainting throughout its lifespan. As one of the most environmentally-friendly building materials, metal is 100% recyclable, and it dissipates heat, contributing to cooler interiors. The siding offers custom lengths up to 30' and widths up to 25.25". Crafted from 26-gauge steel, one of the heaviest gauges available, the siding comes with a lifetime paint warranty. centralstatesco.com



MI WINDOWS SUNRISE COLLECTION

MITER Brands' MI Windows Sunrise Collection uses the brand's new 4SG spacer system. According to the manufacturer, the one-piece, warm-edge spacer replaces the spacer bar, primary seal, and desiccant common on competitive spacer systems, with a permanently flexible edge that is more forgiving under heat, pressure, and other environmental conditions for improved energy efficiency. The 4SG spacer system meets or exceeds ENERGY STAR requirements in all four climate zones, and it chemically bonds to the glass, creating a nearly unbreakable seal that locks in the insulating gas virtually for decades. The chemical bond stays strong without expansion or compression cycling. Combined with high elasticity thermoplastic material, the spacer is designed to withstand extreme temperatures and pressure variations. miwindows.com





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TREX SEAL SUB-LEDGER TAPE

This new butyl tape is engineered specifically for use behind the ledger board. Measuring 22" wide, Trex Seal Sub-Ledger Tape creates a continuous water-tight seal between the ledger board and the house wrap to prevent water from infiltrating the house. Reinforced with an aluminum liner, the self-adhering, butyl-based tape fully covers the back of the ledger board and integrates with the house wrap to provide a continuous seal for optimal protection against moisture and water penetration. It also creates a water-tight seal around ledger fasteners. According to Trex, the tape is designed for easy application with a convenient triple-release liner that allows installers to bend and set it in place without it flexing back like other flashing tapes.

trexseal.com



ACCOYA COLOR DECKING

Accoya wood and distribution partner Sierra Forest Products have teamed up to debut the new Accoya Color Grey decking. According to the manufacturer, Accoya Color is the next generation of high-performance wood with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Declare labeled, and Cradle to Cradle Certified Gold certifications. The wood is transformed into a uniquely durable, nontoxic exterior solution for decking and siding profiles, playgrounds, and landscaping designs through a modification process called acetylation.

accoya.com



CUTEK PRODUCTS

Cutek's range of products are designed to prepare, protect, and enhance natural wood products. According to the manufacturer, they are meant to be used as a protection system used in a two-step procedure—first, to properly prepare wood for coating, whatever condition it is in, then protect its natural beauty and provide added dimensional stability for long-term protection. The Prepare line of products include Cutek Wood Reviver, Cutek Quickclean, and Cutek Wood Stripper that is formulated to clean, strip, or restore exterior wood to its original state: For long-term protection that penetrates deeply into the wood, Cutek offers a Protect line: Cutek Extreme protects from the inside out by displacing water, maintaining dimensional stability, and significantly reducing cupping, warping, checking, and splitting; Cutek Colortone will provide transparent UV protection and help retain or alter the color of the freshly oiled wood; Cutek Extreme stays permanently mobile in the wood, migrating to cuts or perforations with a self-healing action.

cutekstain.com



CLiC GLASS SWITCHABLE PRIVACY GLASS

Now available from Marvin, CLiC Glass switchable privacy glass uses a proprietary liquid crystal technology to transition between clear views or a privacy setting in less than one second. When in the clear state, liquid crystals align for glass that is clear from edge to edge and from any angle. When in the privacy state, liquid crystals scatter to create uniform diffused illumination across the window's glass surface, providing privacy while still allowing light to enter a space.

marvin.com



ROCKY BOOTS MONOCREPE COLLECTION

The Rocky MonoCrepe Collection of western work boots brings on a proprietary lightweight oil and slip resisting Rocky MonoCrepe outsole and the Rocky Air-Port Lite sponge PU footbed with memory foam. Waterproof full grain leather combined with all around waterproofing by Rocky guarantees to keep feet dry and protected, says the manufacturer. Made to last with the help of a double stitch flex welt construction and a fiberglass shank for added support, the boot offers a stable platform that helps reduce foot fatigue and discomfort. An expansion fit seam allows for easy on and off after a long day of work. In addition, the boot meets ASTM F2892 electrical hazard standard and is offered in soft toe or steel toe.



VENTILATED INTERIOR DOOR FROM VANAIR

At this year's International Builders' Show, VanAir unveiled the VanAir Door, featuring a patented, built-in ventilation system along with reported exceptional acoustics and superb aesthetics. Designed for both commercial and residential applications, the VanAir Door features staggered slot openings on the door's opposing faces to create a unique through-door airflow channel for enhanced air circulation. According to VanAir, the improved air circulation helps reduce air pollutants such as CO2, which can lead to respiratory illnesses, poor sleep, and breathing disorders. Proper ventilation also helps dissipate humidity to prevent mold and bacteria growth in bathrooms, balances air pressure and temperatures throughout a building, and prevents heat buildup in laundry and mechanical rooms. vanairdesign.com



DELTA-TERRAXX DRAINBOARD SYSTEM

Dörken Systems Inc., a manufacturer of high-performance air and moisture barriers and building envelope products, has launched a new drainboard system in North America. Named DELTA-TERRAXX and DELTA-TERRAXX PLUS, new drainboard systems are for horizontal, vertical, and blindsided drainage requirements. The unique TYPAR geotextile bonded to a dimple sheet allows for a higher drainage capacity than the average mineral-drainage layer. Most importantly, the quality geotextile withstands heavy structural loads, backfill, or soil overburden, meaning the drainage space won't clog and drainage capacity stays steady. DELTA-TERRAXX PLUS comes in large, optimally sized rolls that are easy to cut and detail; large spaces can be covered faster and with less ballast, creating more useable working areas. dorken.com/en/



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THE LBM JOURNAL 100 listing highlights the industry's leading companies. But it's more than just a list. Along with ranking LBM dealers and specialty distributors by revenue, we will spotlight companies large and small that are setting new standards for operations and innovation.

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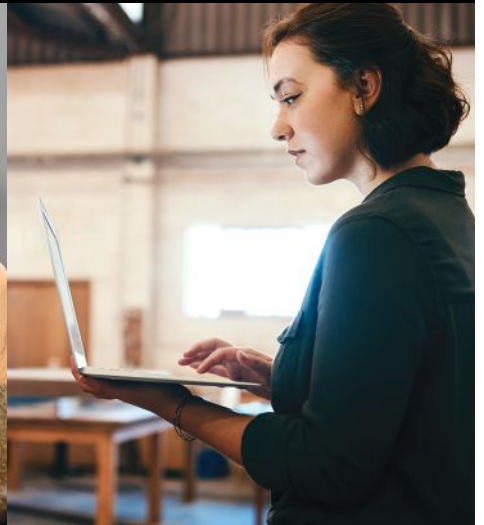
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DISCONTINUED DECKING AND THE ASPIRING DIYER

A well-connected customer—but inexperienced deck builder—worked through your entire stock of a discontinued decking product, and their project is only 95% complete.

AS A FULL-LINE LBM dealer, you carry the full range of products needed to build a home. Plus, as someone who enjoys nothing more than grilling on the deck for friends and family, you've earned a reputation as the go-to dealer for decking and railings.

A longtime supplier discovered a small amount of a discontinued color of their most popular line—enough for a 1,500-sq. ft. deck. You remember being disappointed when the manufacturer discontinued this color years ago, as it was very popular in your market. Since you could get the last of it at a bargain price, you snapped it up.

Meanwhile, a prominent member of your community was looking to replace an old deck on her home. Leveraging your store's in-house deck design software, you worked with her and her husband, a DIYer who was going to do the work himself, to come up with a design that would fit their home and their budget. As it happened, their 1,000-sq. ft. deck was an ideal project for your newly acquired discontinued product. You let them know you were able to buy the last of this available anywhere and had only a limited amount. However, you assured them that you had plenty for their project, and since you bought it at a discount, you'd pass the savings along to them. They loved the color and the style and happily signed on the dotted line.

Through experience, you've learned to be cautious when dealing with limited amounts of material. Instead of having just enough for the project plus 10% waste—the fact that you had enough to account for 50% waste—you were comfortable that you had more than enough stock for this high-profile project. After making sure your sales team knew that the remaining inventory of that product was off-limits, you didn't give their project another thought.

Unfortunately, instead of being an experienced DIYer, her husband was more of an *aspiring* DIYer who once built a birdhouse. Unaware of fundamentals of deck construction, he jumped right in, planning to “learn from his mistakes.”



As it turned out, he made a LOT of mistakes, quickly burning through the initial delivery with 10% overage, and ordered fresh material. He did this again and again, until you were completely out of stock of a decking product that was no longer available anywhere—for a deck that was only about 95% complete.

When this local VIP and her husband stormed into your office to demand that you “find” enough material to complete the deck or refund their money. Her angry diatribe included the veiled threat, “*Do you know who I am?!*”

You've got a well-connected customer in your store demanding that you somehow come up with more of a product that's no longer available. What would you do?

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Look everywhere. Call the manufacturer, explain the situation, and ask them to help you cobble together enough boards from other dealers' old inventory to complete the job.

Bring in a pro. Hire a deck-builder customer to visit their home and sort through the excessive volume of discarded boards and see if the project can be completed with the waste.

Get creative. Determine if a complementary color decking could be incorporated as a design element to complete the project. Then pay to have the work done right.

Plan a counteroffensive. While it's never ideal to battle a customer—especially a well-connected one—get your ducks in a row in case the battle comes. Craft social media and PR messages in the event she decides to go public in a nasty way, but gamble on her bluster being nothing but noise.

PHOTO: ©ISTOCK.COM/ALEKSANDAR NAKIC

SOMETHING ELSE? If you'd take a different plan of attack, email your suggested solution to Rick@LBMJournal.com. If we publish your reply, we'll send you an LBM Journal mug.



CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER

There's no question that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive in the lumber/building material industry. A hearty congratulations to **LBM JOURNAL'S 2024 DEALER OF THE YEAR** award winners.

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