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OF INDEPENDENT LBM DEALERS

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OF LOUWS TRUSS

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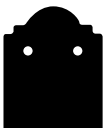


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INSIDE

AUGUST 2024



FEATURES

30 REAL ISSUES. REAL ANSWERS.
Readers share their insights on the future of independent LBM dealers.

34 PROFILE
With more than 70 years in operation, Louws Truss is no stranger to innovation. Third-generation owner and President BJ Louws said the company started out as a general construction company and then a lumberyard. Seeing a need in the area, the company began building trusses in the late 70s.

38 IN DEPTH | POWER AND HAND TOOLS
Do you know what your customers really need?

DEPARTMENTS

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

26 FIVE QUESTIONS
Steve Yates, CEO of Buildxact, explains how you can differentiate your company with complete project management.

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

48 TOUGH CALL
Anonymous messages from members of your team say that your age is holding the company back, and that it's time for you to go. What would you do?

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Leading Suppliers Council



INDUSTRY LEADERS

- 14 BUILDING SALES**
 Make the gratifying choice.
 RICK DAVIS
- 16 SALES + OPERATIONS**
 With today's technology, why do we need salespeople?
 BILL LEE
- 18 CREDIT Q+A**
 Credit confidence over convenience.
 THEA DUDLEY
- 20 MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS**
 Closing during a mid-reporting period.
 JOHN D. WAGNER
- 22 LEADERSHIP**
 What makes an effective team?
 RUSS KATHREIN

LBM EXTRAS

- 28 SUCCESSION PLANNING**
 A summary of tax implications of various ownership transition strategies you should know for long-term tax planning.
 SAM BROWNELL
- 36 CENTURY CLUB**
 We asked Hamilton Building Supply (est. 1924), and Henry Poor Lumber Co. (est. 1918), why they believe their businesses have had staying power in their communities.



28

FROM THE PUBLISHER

WHEN WE LAUNCHED *LBM Journal* in 2003, those brave few who started the magazine with me understood there was no guarantee of ever getting paid. It all came down to advertising—revenues had to exceed expenses beginning from our very first issue. Fortunately, they did. That was our first test. The second test came in 2008, when the Great Recession slashed our revenues to less than half of what they were in 2007. Many media companies and lumberyards had to close their doors. We cut expenses to the bone, and survived that, too.

I share those details for context of where we started. I never thought we'd turn away revenues—but that's exactly what we did this year, when we closed sponsorship sales for the upcoming LBM Strategies Conference. Why would a media company turn away revenues? It's a great question. The answer goes back to why we created LBM Strategies in the first place. Here's the story:



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

A decade or so ago, when LBM Journal was just a magazine, there were several national conferences serving our industry. The last one I attended felt off. A careful look at the attendee list showed the problem. Though promoted as an event for dealers and distributors, only about 1 in 5 attendees were dealers. The rest were sponsors. When the sponsors vastly outnumber attendees at an event, it's a problem. Dealers attend to network with and learn from other dealers, and sponsors pay hefty fees to connect with potential customers. When the ratio of sponsors to dealers is that lopsided, nobody wins (except the company hosting the event—because sponsorships are where the money is).

When we launched the LBM Strategies Conference, we knew we'd succeed only to the extent that we helped attendees and sponsors succeed. So, we asked members of the LBM community what they wanted in a national event. Then we listened. And worked hard to deliver.

The results have been rewarding. Each year, the number of registrations climbs. The fact that a healthy number of attendees are CEOs or other decision-makers shows that we're on the right track. To stay there, we're careful to maintain a healthy ratio of attendees to sponsors. That's why, for the first time ever, we have a waitlist of sponsors for this year's LBM Strategies Conference. But dealers and distributors are still welcome to register at LBMStrategies.com.

With tours of two Ganahl Lumber locations, ten Hot Topic Roundtable Sessions, and an unmatched agenda with proven LBM pros taking the stage, registrations have exceeded last year's—which was our biggest event ever. Once again, dealers and distributors will far outnumber sponsors. Because that's the only scenario where everybody wins.

Typically, this is the kind of info shared with investors or a board of directors. But as a privately-held company, we report only to you.

— Rick Schumacher
Executive Editor & Publisher

HAVE A QUESTION FOR RICK?
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LBMSTRATEGIES.COM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16

LUMBERYARD TOUR: Space is Limited

Ganahl Lumber—San Juan Capistrano and Costa Mesa yards

Includes pre-tour breakfast and bus transportation.

WOMEN OF LBM SESSION: Open to All Attendees

Leadership & Culture

Russ Kathrein

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Chess vs. Checkers: Winning the People Strategy Game

Moderator: Tina Breen

Amber Little | Lindsey DiGangi | Dana Cowart

BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

Breaking Stereotypes

Jason Blair

Employee Engagement for Retention

Amber Little

Building Your Culture of Communication with All the Gens

Tricia Kilrain

Skill Development & Training

Awilda Jimenez

WELCOME NIGHT RECEPTION

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17

KICK-OFF KEYNOTE:

Navigating the Future in Uncertain Times

Rick Davis

Ganahl Lumber's Story of Consistent Growth

Peter Ganahl | Dan Delaney | Brad Satterfield

How to Make Your Company a Great Place to Work

Jeff Dunn

Sparking Your Team & Fanning the Flames!

Patrick Goebel

Poka-Yoke: Creating a Mistake-Free Operation

Lance Latkiewicz

PROGRAM AGENDA SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN THE LBM COMMUNITY

We recognize Dealers of the Year, Century Club, 40 Under 40, LBM 100, and Innovation Award winners.

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Attracting Next Gen Pros: 40 Under 40

Moderator: Sunny Bowman

Emily Morgan | Aaron McGrean | Clara Collins | Mike Linden

What's Behind the Strong M&A Market?

John Wagner | Ted Rieple

HOT TOPIC ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS:

Lean Operations

led by Jeff Tweten & Rick Kyser

Navigating Change

led by Rick Davis

Recruiting Next Gen Pros

led by Sunny Bowman

Succession Planning

led by Sam Brownell

Mergers & Acquisitions

led by John Wagner & Ted Rieple

THURSDAY NIGHT RECEPTION

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18

(Programming ends at noon)

The Air Raid Sales Offense: A former QB/Current Sales Trainer's Guide to Quit Playing Defense and Start Driving New Sales

Bradley Hartmann

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Practical AI Advances & How to Benefit

Moderator: Jennifer Castenson

John Marshall | Ben Beachy | Kyle Little

HOT TOPIC ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS:

Sales Management

led by Bradley Hartmann

Digital Marketing & Social Media

led by Beth PopNikolov

Leveraging AI

led by Jennifer Castenson & John Marshall

Leadership

led by Russ Kathrein

Credit Management

led by Thea Dudley

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Industry Partner Programs
Buildxact



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Operations Manager
S.W. Collins Company



DENA CORDOVA-JACK
Organizational
Development Consultant



RICK DAVIS
Founder and Principal
Building Leaders, Inc.



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CFO
Ganahl Lumber



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Ganahl Lumber



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CEO
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PLM



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PLM



THEA DUDLEY
Credit Overlord &
Cashflow Specialist
Pocket Protectors LLC



JEFF DUNN
President & CEO
Mill Creek Lumber &
Supply Company



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Officer
Nation's Best Holdings



KYLE LITTLE
COO
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& Founder
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LBM Journal

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MAXIMUS BUILDING SUPPLY TO OPEN NEW LOCATION.



NAHB YOUNG PROS COMMITTEE RAISES \$13K.

BY THE YARD

Donna, TX-based **Texas Wood Supply** is marking 45 years in business. Texas Wood Supply began in 1979 as Valley Carpenters Inc. in Mission, TX. It later became South Texas Moulding Inc. and moved to Donna, TX in 1984. Expanding to six locations by the 2000s—Brownsville, Mission, Corpus Christi, Laredo, Houston, and San Antonio in 2022—the company has run over 500 million lineal feet of moulding.

Andrew Miller, CEO of **Stimson Lumber Company**, has announced that the wood products company will invest \$50 million into a new, high speed sawmill line at its Forest Grove, OR facility. The investment at the 95-year-old sawmill marks a significant upgrade and commitment to future operations at the facility. Starting later this year, Stimson will begin preparing the Forest Grove mill for a 350-foot-long HewSaw line. Miller said he expects the new sawline will be operational in early 2026 and that the existing line will continue operating without a lapse in production.

Old West Lumber of Choteau, MT is celebrating 20 years in business. The store sells a selection of tools, siding, plumbing materials and building materials, including dimensional lumber, pressure-treated lumber, plywood, engineered wood products, insulation, and drywall.

After a fire destroyed the **U.S. Lumber** facility in Claysburg, PA, the company has relocated. The company is currently operating in Bellwood, PA.

Maximus Building Supply will open a new location in Hernando, MS in early 2025. The new location will replace the company's Olive Branch lumberyard.

Houghton Building Supply invited the community to an open house to make up for not having a grand opening when the business opened in 2020 during the pandemic. In the last year, the business has added 20,000-sq.-ft. of lumberyard and now offers Bobcat loaders for rent.

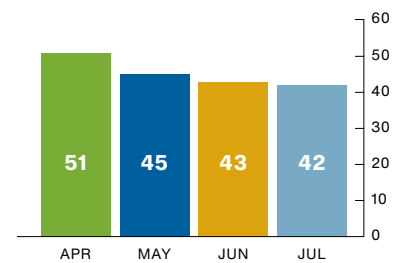
DISTRIBUTION NEWS

The **AZEK Company** and **Woodgrain, Inc.** announced that Woodgrain has expanded its distribution partnership with AZEK to now include its Albuquerque location, which will offer TimberTech by AZEK decking and railing products to customers throughout New Mexico, Southern Colorado, and West Texas.

ASSOCIATIONS

NAHB's Young Professionals Committee rallied together to raise more than \$13,000 for BUILD-PAC at a virtual golfing fundraiser following the 2024 NAHB Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. YP members include the home building industry's rising stars from around the country aged 45 and younger. Their willingness to donate to the PAC's mission in helping elect pro-housing, pro-building candidates shows there's a bright future ahead.

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High mortgage rates continue to hold back builder confidence

Mortgage rates that averaged 6.92% in June per Freddie Mac, along with elevated rates for construction and development loans, continue to put a damper on builder sentiment. Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes was 42 in July, down one point from June, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI). This is the lowest reading since December 2023.

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PEOPLE IN LBM

Hancock Lumber has announced the appointment of **Mark Smith** as the new general manager of its Damariscotta, ME location. According to the company, Smith brings extensive experience in the lumber and building materials industry to his new role. He has worked in retail and wholesale with Ring's End, Seacoast Building Supply, Emery-Waterhouse, and Ware Butler.

Central States has named **Gina Devaney** to the role of vice president of sales. Devaney will focus on maintaining Central States' service culture as well as leveraging training and development as the 100% employee-owned company continues to improve its processes, be outstanding business partners, and turn customers into loyal fans.

Tibbetts Lumber announced the company's leadership has hired **Shawn Harlacher** as regional sales manager for the Central region of Florida. Harlacher has over 30 years of industry experience. Previously he served as the vice president for Joyner Lumber and at PGT Windows as the director of sales.

Do it Best announced the hiring of **Chris Okapal** as the new director of business development. In this role, Okapal will spearhead strategic initiatives to expand the cooperative's reach and success. He will be responsible for fostering and enhancing partnerships with existing and prospective members, leveraging his expertise to develop innovative solutions that meet their needs and exceed their expectations.

LBM Advantage has appointed **Kirk Yoggy** as member sales manager for the Southeast region. Most recently, Yoggy founded and operated Unity Growth Partners. In his new role, he will focus on serving LBM Advantage's current members and expanding the cooperative's membership in North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

LBM Advantage announced its board of directors has chosen **Dave DeJoy** as Advantage's new president and CEO succeeding Steve Sallah who has been CEO for the past 16 years. DeJoy will officially step into his new role on Aug. 19. Since joining LBM Advantage in September 2021, DeJoy has displayed exceptional leadership and a wealth of experience spanning over three decades in finance, accounting, human resources, and sales operations.



Benjamin Obdyke, a leading supplier of moisture management products and innovations, has hired **Will Pearson** as its new sales associate for Washington state. Pearson will support builders, remodelers, pro dealers, and distributors throughout the state, providing consulting, product knowledge, installation education, and more.



Arcitell LLC has appointed **Erik Leonard** to regional sales manager for the company's flagship Qora Cladding brand, a dynamic, patented fiber-reinforced polymer siding panel that replicates the look and feel of stone, brick, and wood.



Feeney has kicked off its Ambassador Program with the announcement of its first-ever brand ambassadors—celebrity designer and TV personality **Chip Wade** and nationally-recognized design expert **Kerrie Kelly**. Through industry events, special high-profile collaborations and social media content, Chip and Kerrie will use their expertise to connect audiences to Feeney's architectural products and to illustrate how they can be used to create beautiful interior and outdoor spaces.



JELD-WEN announced that current JELD-WEN North America CFO and head of global financial planning and analysis, **Samantha L. Stoddard** has succeeded **Julie C. Albrecht**.



SPAX Engineered Fasteners, a brand of Altenloh, Brinck & Co. U.S., has added new employees to its dedicated team supporting the innovative fastener brand. These include:

- **Jim Nicholson**, SPAX Engineered Fasteners territory representative
- **Hayden Doehrmann**, digital marketing content specialist, Altenloh, Brinck & Co.
- **Stephanie Feyen**, eCommerce manager, Altenloh, Brinck & Co.

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WENDY@LBMJOURNAL.COM



PROVIA TO PURCHASE OHIO PROPERTIES.

INDUSTRY UPDATES

Bensonwood announced the company has officially completed the acquisition of its production facility located at 25 Production Avenue in Keene, NH. Founded in 1972, Bensonwood is a custom architectural designer specializing in green construction and offsite prefabrication.

Cabot, a premium exterior wood care brand, has introduced Cabot Heat-Reducing Solid Stain + Sealer with Cool Feel Technology, which blocks UV rays and reflects the sun's rays and can reportedly reduce surface temperatures by 20 degrees Fahrenheit when compared to other solid color stains.

Cameron Ashley Building Products has announced the opening of its distribution center in Visalia, CA. This new location is stocking drywall, insulation, roofing, as well as all the associated accessories.

Johnson Paint | A Ring's End Brand, after recently acquiring Wilmot's Decorating Centers, announced a new store opening in October 2024 at The Grove at Plymouth shopping plaza. The new paint center will bring Johnson Paint's store count to 14 locations across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine and parent company, Ring's End Inc.'s total store count to 34 locations, including 19 in Connecticut and one in Westchester County, NY.

Marvin opened its newest distribution center in Reno, NV. This expansion will enhance the efficiency of Marvin's distribution network and create additional jobs in the region.

ProVia has announced its intent to purchase two Dalton, OH properties. The main building is 303,000-sq.-ft. of retail and manufacturing space and the other 4-acre property contains a 22,500-sq.-ft. warehouse.

Smith Millwork, Inc. has announced the grand opening of its latest location in Rossville, GA. This new hub is strategically positioned to serve the growing demands of the Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia markets.

VERSATEX has opened a new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. The 96,500-sq.-ft. plant will double the company's production capacity and create about 80 new jobs in its Beaver County, PA, region.

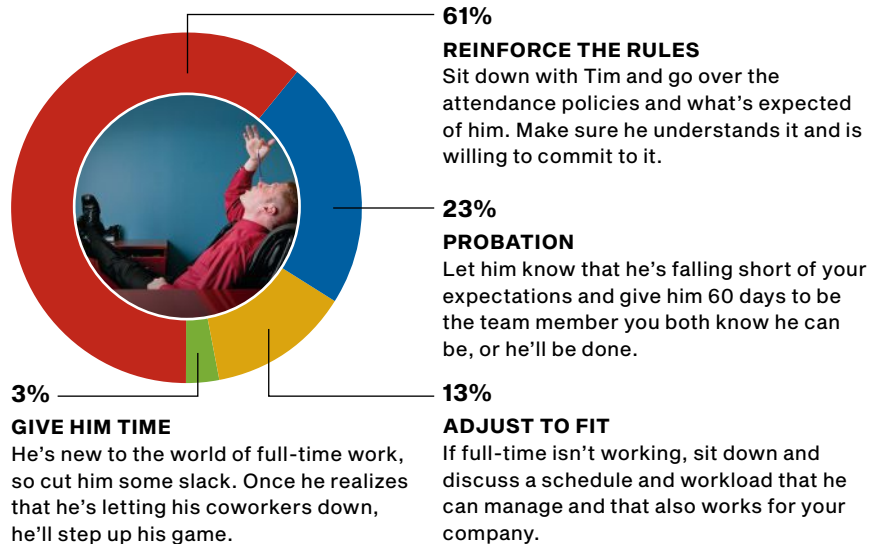
Western Pacific, a wholesale distributor of windows, doors, and mouldings, is opening a new location in Irving, TX, to serve home builders in the Dallas metroplex. Irving is Western Pacific's third location in Texas.

TOUGH CALL SOLUTIONS

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

Managing an underperformer

Tim, an able and personable young pro, worked for your company part-time during high school and was well-liked by customers and coworkers. After earning a degree in construction management from a local college in 2022, you didn't hesitate to offer him a position. But problems started soon after he came onboard full-time. He's had trouble showing up on time, and you've uncovered his work hasn't been getting done and others are covering for him. Here's how readers responded to this Tough Call.



READER RESPONSE:

"My take is Tim has a side hustle. He's contracting at night residing in the neighbors house until midnight—coming in late next morning and wanting to leave early because he's also got a cash job for a trim job. Or maybe he's building websites and running social media at night for some friends who are going out on their own. Tim isn't in the right job at the lumberyard but maybe there is a right job for Tim at the lumberyard he's not in. Talk to Tim."



ZUERN ACQUIRES SAEMAN LUMBER COMPANY.



GILLMAN DO IT BEST EXPANDS IN INDIANA.

MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

Zuern Building Products & Design Center has announced the acquisition of **Saeman Lumber Company**, located in Cross Plains, WI.

White Cap, a leading distributor of specialty construction supplies and safety products for professional contractors, has closed on an agreement to acquire **B&R Reinforcing, Inc.**, a supplier of concrete accessories and fabricated rebar located in Columbus, OH, serving non-residential and infrastructure end markets.

US LBM, a leading distributor of specialty building materials in the United States, has acquired **Automated Products, Inc.**, a top manufacturer and supplier of structural building components located in Wisconsin.

Sherburn, MN-based **Amborn Lumber** is now **Local Lumber** following its purchase by Marcus Eytcheson. The company will also become an ACE Hardware location as part of the transition and offers residential and agricultural building materials, doors and windows, flooring, and paint.

Gillman Do it Best Home Centers has acquired **Goecker Building Supplies**, a building materials supplier with locations in North Vernon and Seymour, IN. This announcement marks the company's 17th and 18th locations throughout central Indiana and southwestern Ohio.

Timberline Enterprises President and CEO Christopher Costello announced in late June the company has acquired the assets of **North East Building Supply** located in Hanson, MA.

With its acquisition of **Huntington Lumber & Supply Co.** in Hazlehurst, **Nation's Best** enters Mississippi and adds to its growing network of stores across the U.S., bringing their total location count to 60. Huntington Lumber & Supply Co. will maintain operations under their existing name with its team overseeing company operations alongside Nation's Best. Earlier this year, the company also acquired Big **Bear Hardware** in La Vernia, TX.

Beacon announced that it has completed the acquisition of **Roofers Mart of Southern California, Inc.** located in Walnut, CA. Roofers Mart has a 40-year history serving roofing contractors in the Los Angeles metro market. The company also announced the acquisition of **Extreme Metal Fabricators, LLC** with locations in Key Largo and Palm City, FL and **Integrity Metals, LLC** with locations in Gainesville and Vero Beach, FL.

Builders FirstSource announced via social media two acquisitions in early July. Founded in 1986, **Western Truss & Components** has established itself as a trusted roof and floor truss supplier for custom home builders in Flagstaff and all Northern Arizona. Founded in 1986, **CRI SoCal** is a single location dealer and installer of high-end windows and doors in Orange County, CA.

The Home Depot has completed the acquisition of **SRS Distribution, Inc.** for a total enterprise value of approximately \$18.25 billion. SRS is a leading residential specialty trade distribution company across several verticals serving the professional roofer, landscaper and pool contractor.

INDUSTRY EVENTS

2024

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/
2024-exhibitor-info](http://worldmillworkalliance.com/2024-exhibitor-info)

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 5-6
WESTERN BUILDING MATERIAL
ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Hillsboro, OR | wbma.org

NOV 13-15
NAWLA 2024 TRADERS MARKET
Phoenix, AZ
nawla.org/events/tradersmarket

DEC 11-12
LBM EXPO
Uncasville, CT | lbmexpo.net

2025

FEB 25-27
INTERNATIONAL BUILDERS' SHOW
Las Vegas, NV | buildersshow.com

MAR 6-8
LMC ANNUAL 2025
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WOOD PRESERVERS

BY RICK DAVIS

GOT SHAPE? I mean sales shape. Are you in top condition to succeed in sales? Sales success is a competitive endeavor, and part of the war is being fit enough to endure in the heat of battle.

Let's face it: Sales doesn't always provoke a healthy lifestyle. Time spent sitting in your vehicle or at a desk induces muscle stiffness. Meals with customers and sales meetings are constant temptations for overindulgence and alcohol. At the end of the day, motivation to get in an evening workout is trumped by the desire to unwind from the pressures of customer demands.

MAKE THE GRATIFYING CHOICE

We know the healthy decisions we should make, but still can't avoid the temptation for the fatty food, extra drink, and useless dessert. So why do we act in contrast to the known benefit of a different behavior? Martin Seligman, author of *Authentic Happiness*, noted that we too often choose pleasure over gratification. The French Dip sandwich with fries will induce pleasure, while the salad ends up being more gratifying. Yet, we choose the pleasure (short-term physical stimulation, which often leads to remorse) over gratification (long-term benefit and personal satisfaction).

The challenge of living a healthy lifestyle requires the conscious and consistent decisions to opt for gratification over pleasure. Besides becoming a healthier person, your sales and business performance will improve when you choose the difficult, yet gratifying, healthy choices in

your daily life. At the risk of stating the obvious gratifying choice, here are a few ideas that can help you avoid the short-term pleasurable one:

Exercise a minimum of 30 minutes per day. Yes, we've heard this. It's even better if you can average 60 minutes per day. Lift light weights. Take a family bike ride. Walk the golf course instead of riding the cart. Take the stairs instead of the escalator. Jog slowly. Enroll in a yoga class. Just get started and you'll discover that the first week and month of your program is tedious, but soon the program gets a little easier every day. Consistent small decisions are more beneficial than a periodic surge.

Drink water. Lots of it. There are many guidelines on how much water you should drink. The Mayo Clinic defines the requirement by gender—15.5 cups daily for men and 11.5 cups for women. One Harvard article suggests about 6 cups per day. In the end, all experts agree that our bodies need copious amounts of water. At the risk of being overly graphic, the best measure is to ensure that your urine is close to colorless, and that you aren't persistently mistaking thirst pangs for hunger.

Choose healthy food and drink. The biggest challenge of the sales profession is choosing the right food and drink at business meetings. You don't have to be so full from appetizers that the entrée is uncomfortable to eat. You don't *have* to drink alcohol because everyone else is. Alcohol dehydrates, adversely affects sleep patterns, hurts your digestive system, and leaves you feeling groggy the next day. The first healthy dining decision is the hardest, but the discovery it still satiates leads to future healthy (gratifying) decisions.

Turn off the news and turn on your mind. A world class athlete cannot compete on a diet of twinkies and cupcakes; a world class business leader cannot compete on a diet of negative mental inputs. The news is a commercially sponsored medium designed to arouse (negatively) and keep you glued to the broadcast. Ultimately, the news merely makes you feel angry and sad. Start your day without it and avoid watching it before bed. Your mental outlook will improve significantly ... and quickly!

There is a side benefit that occurs when you begin to make healthy lifestyle choices off the field of battle. Your discipline and confidence to make the right choices in the heat of battle will also improve. Slow down your decision making just a bit and start making the gratifying choices.



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.

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BY BILL LEE

WITH TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY, WHY DO WE NEED SALESPEOPLE?

I RECENTLY heard the question in this headline posed by a seminar leader. We sell commodities, right? Number 2 SPF is #2 SPF. Many times two competing salespeople could even be selling wood from the same mill. So if there are no differences of the quality of the products we sell, and if our customer service is so similar to our competitor's that a contractor cannot discern any differences between the offerings of the various salespeople who solicit his business, what is left to differentiate one salesperson from another?

Oh, I almost forgot, maybe it could be price. One salesperson might be selling at a lower or higher price than the other. That could be a difference.

And then there's the level of personal relationship between the salesperson and the buyer. That could be another difference. The contractor is human after all, so he or she may just simply prefer to do business with someone who has nothing to offer but perhaps a lower price.

While some salespeople may come across to buyers as little more than professional visitors, the main reason I believe we need salespeople is the simple fact that we need salespeople who can sell. Our industry is desperate for sales pros.



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

Companies field a sales force to move products at prices high enough to allow the company to earn a satisfactory profit. And this is where the majority of our industry's salespeople fall short: They believe they are not taking care of their customers unless they meet every lowball price in town.

Professionalism trumps price. When salespeople finally accept this fact and begin working on their professionalism as hard as they work on their jobs, it's amazing how their careers and their income begin to accelerate.

The most professional of salespeople have few price battles with their customers. Their customers trust them implicitly. Below are nine clues to help identify sales pros:

1. Sales pros in the construction supply industry are dressed and ready to answer their mobile phones no later than 6 a.m. Yet, they are not workaholics; they budget family time as well.
2. They work by appointment. They plan 80% of their day and reserve 20% for emergencies. They set alerts to make sure they live up to their commitments.
3. Their customers regard them as more than just salespeople; they are also valued business advisors.
4. Sales pros in our industry value education. They budget time and money to read sales books, listen to sales podcasts, subscribe to sales blogs, and attend sales seminars to stay on the leading edge of their profession.
5. Sales pros are great note takers. They don't depend on their memory.
6. Sales pros always set aside time to prospect for new business. They know that there is high turnover among contractors, so they develop a strategy for selling each prospect. They are ever mindful of the next step.
7. They embrace technology and use it as a sales, time management, and research tool.
8. Sales pros know they cannot be successful without support from their coworkers. They go out of their way to pat drivers, loaders, inside salespeople, credit managers, etc. on the back.
9. The most professional of salespeople have far fewer price battles with their customers. Their customers trust them implicitly and consider them to be an integral part of their business team.

I believe there will always be a place for sales professionals in our industry. Technology, however, especially the internet, is becoming more powerful every day, so the people who depend solely on quotes and sheer hope should take notice ... they may soon be obsolete.

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BY THEA DUDLEY

Hey Thea,
 We do a lot of business by credit card. What is our recourse if we take a credit card payment by phone and then the customer disputes it with the credit card company, even though it is a valid charge? Is this a safe practice? It seems to be pretty common and when I questioned it, I was told, "That's how it's always been done." Is this accurate?

— It's coming undone

Dear Undone,
 That has to be one of my favorite answers when I ask about a process or policy. "That's how we've always done it." It's tossed out like a golden phrase that explains all and solves any issues. Well thanks, that certainly clears everything up. My interpretation of that phrase is, "Go away, this works. Why are you making problems?"

"That's the way we have always done it," falls in the category of set it and forget it. Someone at some point in the company's history set up a policy or procedure and that is where the story ends. Never to be revisited again. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

CREDIT CONFIDENCE OVER CONVENIENCE



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.

It works until it doesn't. What worked in the past doesn't always translate to today's environment. Technology, economy, and people's integrity all change. It is the rare individual who does not know how the credit card game works.

It is a common practice in our industry to take those credit card payments by phone. People are busy, they want to deal with it once and move on. Telling a customer they have to take another step—either coming in with the card, or logging into your payment portal—upsets some customers, and not everyone on your team is comfortable having the conversation.

But seller beware: If you take a credit card by phone and the "customer" disputes it, you are now in a tangle with the debtor's credit card company. Credit card companies like to keep their customers happy. If the charge is disputed, the verdict almost always lands in favor of the disputer. It is now an unpaid accounts receivable. A gift that keeps giving. Only swiped or self-service via portal are considered secured transactions, and there is a higher level of difficulty in disputing. "It wasn't me," doesn't have as much teeth when the customer entered info themselves or swiped.

There are a few ways to remedy the issue:

Measure the pain. How often does this happen and at what cost? Just because you have always done it that way doesn't mean it is a sacred company cow. It may never have been efficient and best practice, it just stuck.

Develop an updated policy. Allowing the use of credit cards over the phone should only be a convenience for customers who have a completed credit application, and have been extended a line of credit and terms. They are established with you. Those customers are far less likely to dispute. You are in a relationship. We both have skin in the game.

Make it policy to never take a "newbie's" credit card by phone. That means cash customers, or anyone who is unknown to you. For cash customers that want the ability to "phone it in," they need to get a credit application. If I don't know who you are, I can't find you and collect. A name and address for the order doesn't count. For first timers, make it policy that they come in and get to know you. Oh and bring that card—we will give it a little swipe.

We haven't even touched on fraudulent and stolen cards. Identity theft is part of life at this point. That alone should be cause to update processes and procedures. The only phrase more frightening than the one above is, "Honey, my parents are coming to stay for the summer."



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BY JOHN D. WAGNER

MOST ACQUIRERS AND SELLERS prefer to close an acquisition at the end of an accounting and payroll period. That way, there's a clean break as the new owner assumes the operation, a clean slate on the first or the 15th of the month. When that timing works out, the acquirer gets a clean opening balance sheet, and payroll checks or ACHs are sent under the new owner's name; operations continue with clean books and a fresh start.

But some deals close in the middle of a reporting period, and here is how that timing is handled for the various calculations required at closing, such as cash due to seller, deal proceeds, etc.

CLOSING DURING A MID-REPORTING PERIOD

In the letter of intent that the acquirer drafts, and the seller and acquirer sign (after negotiating terms), there is a section that says that the NWC (Net Working Capital) "peg" has to be based on a date-certain balance sheet. Readers of this column know that the NWC is the crucial dollar figure that sets out how much money/inventory/AR needs to be left in the company upon sale, very often calculated on a trailing twelve month basis, to account for the seasonality of the LBM sector's cyclical business cycle.



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

Most acquirers say that the balance sheet used in that NWC calculus be the balance sheet available for the month-end nearest to closing. For instance, if the closing is set for May 20—a mid-reporting period date—you obviously can't use the May balance sheet for the NWC, because the balance sheet is only partial, fractionally offering just 20th-31st of the month. So, the acquirer and seller agree in the LOI to use the April balance sheet, the document completed nearest to/prior to the closing date. The Net Working Capital is calculated on April numbers, and the NWC "peg" is set.

But if you are closing on May 20th, and the Net Working Capital "peg" were set for use at closing at the end of April, there are 20 days of operations that have yet to be accounted for. What if, during that 20-day time period, say, the seller sold down inventory, so inventory levels dipped below the twelve month trailing average? That may result in a receivable moving to cash on the balance sheet ... cash that might rightfully belong to the acquirer, and not the seller.

Here's how that is handled: The day before the closing, say, May 19th, in our example, the seller generates a "spot report" balance sheet, a day-of-close document, admittedly incomplete for the month of May. The figures on that "spot report" balance sheet are examined for, among other things, the cash and cash equivalents that go to the seller in a debt-free/cash-free deal, for how close the seller is to honoring the NWC set with the April balance sheet. Everyone uses this "spot report" balance sheet at close, knowing that it will be revisited and reconciled post-close.

In the vast majority of deals, there is a true-up, often 90 days post-close, where the final balance sheet (a *complete* balance sheet prepared by the seller's CPA or accountant for "May," in our example) is used. The acquirer and the seller get together to compare notes as they examine (and pro-rate) the figures to account for the 20 days of operation the seller engaged in after the April balance sheet was used going into the closing.

By waiting 90 days post-close for this true-up reconciliation, the seller has a chance to get balance sheets completed; and the true-up allows all parties to look transparently at the date-certain final statements to make sure the at-close data used in the Net Working Capital figure was accurate, to the penny.

Of course, it is preferred that the acquisition close with a clean break on a new reporting period, but a surprising number of deals close outside of that time frame. This causes extra work, sure, and it depends on some good faith from the acquirer and seller that any loose ends will be addressed in the true-up, but a mid-reporting-period close can be accomplished.

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**See What's
in the Box**



BY RUSS KATHREIN

AS A PERSON leading a team, your goal is for that team to become more effective. But what makes a team effective? Is it everyone working hard? Is it everyone working fast? Is it a vocal leader driving the team to strong results? I prefer to think that an effective team is one that can achieve amazing results with minimum effort. Strong, intelligent, and capable people are a good start, but one of the most important components of an effective team is that everyone knows their role and is efficient at performing it.

Nowhere was that more evident than at a training session where I took my team of 12 people. The training lasted three days, and the ongoing project we were assigned to work on during breaks using the skills we learned would then be judged on the last day. The project consisted of a large canvas bag that held 14 pieces of wood—1x4s ranging in length from 2' to 4'—and a diagram of how those pieces needed to be laid flat on the ground with certain pieces overlapping others to form a shape resembling a lifeboat.

and just watched. Once they felt ready, the team timed their first attempt at assembly and came in at 2 minutes and 9 seconds. Not bad. During their break, they practiced a little more. Then, 1:50 became 1:35, which then became 1:20. Now the team was cooking. They knew they had it down, so instead of just wanting to pass the test, someone asked what the record was. They were told 13 seconds.

The team left the break in stunned silence. They knew that they had to drastically rethink how they were doing things. Some of the self-appointed leaders now consulted the people who had not been participating. These observers asked some insightful questions. Were they allowed to pre-stage the wood in the bag? The instructor told them they could do whatever they liked. Timing started when the bag was unzipped at the test. What if they staged people in a certain way? Then the group had the most important revelation of all. What if everyone participated, had just one role to play, and did it in the most efficient way possible?

WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE TEAM?

We were told nothing else other than that for our final exam we would be timed on how quickly we could assemble the lifeboat. I had told my team that I would step back and just observe. The first practice session started with the Type-A people on the team opening up the bag and grabbing the diagram. They began directing people on how to assemble the boat. Inevitably, some of the team hung back

Now everybody was assigned a board in a sequential order. The boards were stacked in the bag in the exact order they needed to come out. The group no longer needed a “leader” to read the diagram and instruct people where to put the boards. Everyone knew their assignment of where to stand, along with where and when they were to place their board. The leader was now assigned to unzip the bag and put the final board in place.

When it came time for the final exam, the team carefully placed down the bag, everyone stood at their assigned spot and placed their hands right next to the bag in the order that they were to grab their board. When the judge said to start, it was like watching a water ballet of synchronized swimmers. As the bag opened, hands started pulling out boards and gracefully swinging them over the group’s heads onto their correct place on the floor. Before you could inhale another breath, they were done. Their time was 9 seconds.

Being a team as effective as this did not require a leader to be there during the execution of the task. It required leadership from all of the team during the planning of the task. It meant getting everyone involved. Once obstacles had been identified and roles were assigned, each person figured out the most efficient way to perform their assignment. The result was that this efficient and capable team performed the task as effectively as anyone had ever done before.



Russ Kathrein is the Vice President of Lumber & Building Materials at Do it Best based in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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STEVE YATES

CEO | BUILDXACT

Buildxact was founded in Australia and has been successful there for many years—what factors have led to that success?

Buildxact's success is completely attributed to our ability to solve our clients' challenges with a servant leadership attitude. We see every customer as a collaborator from day one, learning from their direct feedback how we can improve our product and enhance their experience with their dealers.

We started as a digital takeoff service but have grown into a comprehensive platform that helps small- and medium-sized construction businesses manage projects from start to finish. We've continued to develop the capabilities of our takeoff, estimating, and quoting tools, while adding cost tracking and connections to the builder's homeowners and dealers.

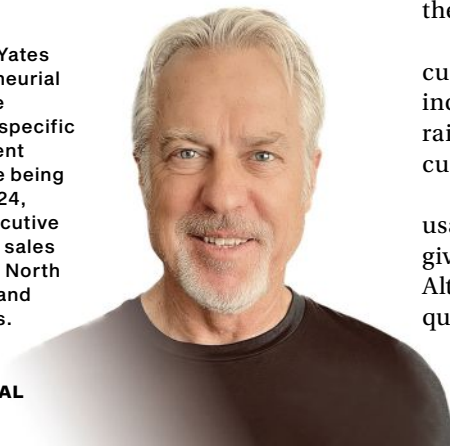
What similarities do you see between the Australia and U.S. markets?

The U.S. market is larger and more fragmented, with thousands of dealers compared to Australia's dozens. There are also significantly more technology solutions in the U.S. that are competing for the same customers, many starting as CRM tools that add takeoff capabilities as an afterthought.

Dealers and builders in both markets are dealing with a housing crisis, labor shortages, and rising building product prices. These challenges make Buildxact's solutions even more relevant, as the need for a more efficient digital connection between dealers and builders is more prevalent than ever.

We know from our research that while dealers find value in offering takeoff services, they prefer if builders have the option to self-serve. We're currently rolling out a modified version of our takeoff tool for dealer's websites that will

As CEO of Buildxact, Steve Yates brings decades of entrepreneurial leadership experience in the construction industry, with specific emphasis on creating efficient global supply chains. Before being appointed to CEO in May 2024, Steve had served as the executive vice president of enterprise sales since January 2020, driving North American market priorities and global industry partnerships.



allow builders to do a free takeoff, offering dealers an easy way to improve their customers' experience while boosting their company sales and reducing operational costs.

How can LBM dealers benefit from technology that addresses their unique challenges?

We know dealers have operational challenges with coordinating a platform integration into their existing systems and cultural challenges with getting long-time employees to adopt new tech and processes. However, technology is truly the only way forward, so it must be embraced in an effective way.

We believe in technology's value, but people come first. Buildxact creates efficiencies so people can focus on value-added tasks like building and providing expertise, instead of chasing lost orders or dealing with incorrect quantities in purchase orders.

How can Buildxact strengthen customer relationships in a relationship-driven business?

When dealers offer services like ours, pros recognize the added value to their business and that the dealer cares about helping their business succeed. For instance, a unique feature of Buildxact is the ability for a dealer to upload their price lists or connect to their ERP system, giving pros full cost visibility to better plan and manage their projects and time.

Our platform makes project pre-planning faster and more accurate, reducing back-and-forth communication, which save everyone time, money and stress.

How can technology investments help lower an LBM dealer's bottom line?

Buildxact gives dealers a quantified view of sales team activity, for easy insight into how many estimates turn into purchase orders. Dealers can also cut the time it takes to quote material cost by 50%, as Buildxact reduces back-and-forth communication and gives pro customers access to do their own takeoffs.

When a dealer uploads their price list into Buildxact, customers gain complete visibility to their catalog, which increases the dealer's share of wallet and can potentially raise their revenue by an average \$5,000 per connected pro customer.

Connected dealers also gain access to business and usage data, which creates immeasurable opportunities and gives connected dealers a unique competitive advantage. Although this capability is new for many dealers, it helps them quantify business opportunities and grow market share.



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LONG-TERM TAX PLANNING

BY SAM BROWNELL



TAXES ARE NOT an enjoyable subject for most people. However, understanding all the potential tax liabilities associated with your business is crucial for planning for the future. Aside from annual taxes on net income, two key taxes to consider are estate taxes and the tax implications from selling or transferring ownership of your business. Despite the media attention given to estate or “death” taxes, more owners will be subject to tax regulations on the transfer of their business interest, regardless of whether they are gifting shares or selling to a third party.


To better understand which taxes are going to matter to you, let’s start with an example of the estate tax. In 2024, the estate tax exemption is \$13.61 million for individuals and \$27.22 million for married couples filing jointly. Business owners only pay estate tax if their total estate exceeds this exemption. Further, married owners can transfer an unlimited amount to their spouse, potentially avoiding estate taxes altogether until the surviving spouse’s death.

To help clarify the impact of the estate tax, we will talk through an example. Assume that an LBM dealer is co-owned by a husband and wife. If they both die without transitioning the business, and their gross estate totals \$20 million, no federal estate tax is owed. However, it is important to note that certain states have their own estate tax, and those limits are typically lower than the federal government. Therefore, it is important for all dealers to know and update the value of their illiquid assets, specifically their business and real estate.


Going forward, if Congress does not act, the estate tax exemption will be reduced by 50% starting on January 1, 2026. Assuming a 3% increase in the estate tax exemption for the next two years, followed by a decrease of 50% on January 1, 2026, the estimated exemption would be \$7.22 million for individuals and \$14.44 million for married couples filing jointly. If the same dealer owner couple died in 2026, they would owe estate tax.

For succession planning purposes, it is critical to plan for this decrease in the estate tax exemption because it is very difficult to pay estate taxes if the bulk of your estate is in illiquid assets such as stock of a privately held business or real estate.


While the estate tax is likely to gain significance for business owners, it is important to recognize that all owners will inevitably transfer ownership, regardless of their level of preparation. When this transition occurs, taxes can have a material impact on the final amount of money received by the owner and their family. Here is a summary of the tax implications of various ownership transition strategies:




GIFT: An owner can gift his or her interest in the business to an immediate family member or to certain trusts. If the gift is less than the estate tax exemption, then no taxes are due. However, the owner who makes the gift will need to have the interest valued and file a gift tax return.




GRANT: An owner can grant his or her interest in the business to a non-family member or to another entity. The granting of an interest shifts the tax burden from the owner to the grantee. For example, if the granted interest is valued at \$1 million, then the recipient of the grant owes ordinary income taxes on the \$1 million value of the grant.



STOCK SALE: These transitions typically take place when the business interest is sold to a family member, key employee, ESOP, cooperative, or perpetual purpose trust. Stock sales are typically taxed at long-term capital gains rates. C Corporation stock that is sold in a stock sale is typically only taxed once.



ASSET SALE: These transactions typically take place when a business interest is sold to a competitor or private equity group. Asset sales are typically taxed at a mix of ordinary income and long-term capital gains rates. Further, C Corporation stock sold in an asset sale will be taxed twice.



DONATION: There are instances when a business interest can be donated to a tax-exempt organization. In this instance, the interest will need to be valued and the owner making the donation may be able to receive a tax deduction for some or all of the donated amount.

Every business owner will transfer ownership regardless of whether they have prepared for this transfer. Because your business has value, it will be subject to taxes. To ensure that your net worth is protected and can be passed to future generations, it is critical that you and your advisors perform estate and ownership transfer tax planning alongside your annual operational tax planning. ■

Stratus Wealth Advisors owner and founder Sam Brownell helps independent dealers by quarterbacking a comprehensive succession planning process to provide clients with essential data and advice to make the best decisions for their company and their family. sbrownell@stratuswealthadvisors.com.





THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT LBM DEALERS

BY LBM JOURNAL READERS

Here at LBM Journal, it seems like every week we hear about a new acquisition, whether it's a larger company buying a smaller location to grow its presence, or a local company buying another without a succession plan. Regardless of backstory, consolidation is becoming more and more common in the LBM industry, leading some to wonder what the future looks like for independent companies.

Nearly 70 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 QUESTION:**



We're an independent LBM dealer in our third generation of family ownership. Our business is strong and growing, but with so many other companies like ours being acquired by larger companies, younger members of our family are questioning how much longer companies like ours will be around. For younger family members thinking about their future, what should I tell them about the future of independent building material dealers like us? Any insights will be appreciated.

TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE TOP ANSWERS FROM THIS MONTH'S SURVEY.

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

"My younger brother and I recently went through this as now third generation owners. Our father passed away unexpectedly and we were at the crossroads of selling or buckling down and continuing to operate. There was no shortage of interested buyers and the dollar signs were enticing, however the legacy our grandfather and father built meant more to us. Maybe that's just pride but we felt we owed it to them to continue operating independently. While it's been a change and challenge, it has been extremely rewarding. I would tell the younger family members to think about the legacy, the employees (who in my experience are typically very seasoned employees who feel like extended family) and to not shy away from a challenge that can be extremely rewarding both personally and financially. On a final note, I would say there is something to be said about being your own boss."

"There is always a future for great independents and strong buying groups like LMC that make it possible. Customers recognize when conglomerates become too corporate, and they long for the attention and personal service that only independents can provide."

"Just go with the flow of the supply and demand."

"Do what you do better than the private equity yards. Join a co-op of independent yards to increase your buying power to that of the PE owned yards."

"It's your choice: you either work for yourself or you'll end up working for others."

"I think the younger members of your family have to ask themselves the question, what do they see themselves doing for the rest of their careers? I think there is a place in this industry for independents as long as they are properly serving their customers."

"Look into joint ventures with your peers. Join forces."

"For us, specializing in custom or quality materials has been our bread and butter and helps our business grow and continue to compete with the larger dealers/big box stores. We offer brands like Marvin Windows or TruStile Doors that aren't available everywhere. Having brand exclusivity can help bring customers in, who wouldn't typically shop at a local lumberyard. So, finding your niche for the market you're in will definitely help."

"I'd recommend working each day to get better personally and as an organization. If you get acquired, ideally, the new company can see your value and you'll be retained. However, if they release you, the work you did should allow you to be attractive to another organization. One more thought: control what you can control."

"Our value-add is through excellent customer service by experienced team members as well as carrying the highest quality building materials."

"You are 'strong and growing.' That should be your focus ... don't get distracted by 'other companies like ours being acquired.' The younger family members need to be developed to step up to the challenge like the generations before them did to build a strong and growing company. It wasn't without challenges then, and it isn't now. They need to bring their 'new generation skills' to the table and take pride in working to advance the legacy for the next couple of generations."

"Grow your business and hope to be acquired for generational wealth."

"The future is strong for the independent dealer. Local ownership allows for local decisions in real time, real relationships with customers, and better futures for employees. If I were a young person today, I would absolutely jump into the business with both feet and bet on myself instead of just becoming a cog in a massive corporate machine. Opportunity is what one makes of it."

"I think there will always be a place for independent lumberyards, as long as they provide quality materials and service, and are in a realm of competitiveness, there will be room to prosper. People like choices and bigger is not always better."

"Relationships and service are the key. Large corporate companies can't offer this. Focus on what you do well and the market segment that aligns with your business philosophy." ►

“They have to know and understand their passion. If they are truly committed to the business, don’t get distracted by the acquisition stories that surround all of us. Remember that many of the larger companies exercising this option are simply trying to keep shareholders engaged. There is still plenty of room for independents that form tight bonds with key supplier partners and understand their vision for serving their customers. If their heart is in it, they need to continue the legacy.”

“I believe the long-term market only looks better for strong independent operations as the consolidation continues.”

“Most customers love working with independent suppliers instead of the private equity, large corporations in our market. We also have seen that same interest in regard to potential employees that are sick of the larger corporations as well. I think it’s a super exciting time to be an independent dealer for those reasons.”

“Independent dealers are needed. If you love your family business and are willing to invest in resources to compete, you can compete. Your independence is what sets you apart from the big guys who do not have the relationships and whose biggest relationship is with the bottom line.”

“What can be said about this; every independent in this country is dealing with it. Maybe, in rural America, it will survive, but we don’t see it in the big cities. Wall Street types will drive independents to early retirement and it will be the end of generational yards.”

“My grandfather started the lumberyard in 1940 and after World War II was over, four other family lumberyards and a hardware store opened on our street. When I started in 1980, large home improvement stores opened up only two miles away, which only slightly affected the way we did business, but everyone stayed in business. Those two giants did not survive the test of time and they faded away in the 1990s. Then in 1994, Home Depot and Lowe’s opened 2 miles away. They had a large impact—I am the only survivor of the small family businesses. I had to navigate through several business ideas and found a specialty niche which made us a thriving business. So find a niche or department that the big guys do poorly and overcharge in, and outperform them with higher quality.”

“The future is very bright for independents focused on basic building materials sold with a focus on customer service and relationships. This can happen only as family members live out those values and support their staff.”

“Your future is what you make it. If you rest on your ancestors’ laurels, your future will be dim. Believing that your company’s legacy makes you safe only makes you that much more vulnerable to the powers of the large national chains. You need to be cutting edge, offer better services, and build the relationships that your customers can and will rely on. There is no such thing as ‘customer loyalty’ anymore—they will jump ship for 1% or a t-shirt. Put in the work and be as flexible as you are able.”

“The same skills you learn to run a family-owned business will play out in the corporate world. The biggest adjustment is not totally focusing on long-term growth and sustainability like you do as a family-business generational leader. Instead, in the corporate world, your focus is to operate to maximize results on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. It is corporate leadership that focuses on the long-term.”

“I think like many previous independently-owned dominated industries—jewelry, manufacturing, clothing—the lifespan of independent building material dealers is closer to the end than the beginning. If the right deal comes along, take it. In 20 years, those that are left will be regarded more as curiosities than prime movers. Can you tell I’m also closer to the end than the beginning?”

Responses from wholesale distributors, manufacturers, and service providers:

“Many times, the independent dealers are more passionate about their business, are leaner, and will go to the ‘mats’ for their customers. This gives them a leg up on the bureaucracy of big corporations. The independent thinks outside the box and often knows the market and their customers better than the big guys/gals!”

“Determine your vision and leadership of your company and stay focused on partnerships with vendors and builders. Look to add manufacturing and strong vendors that can support your vision.”

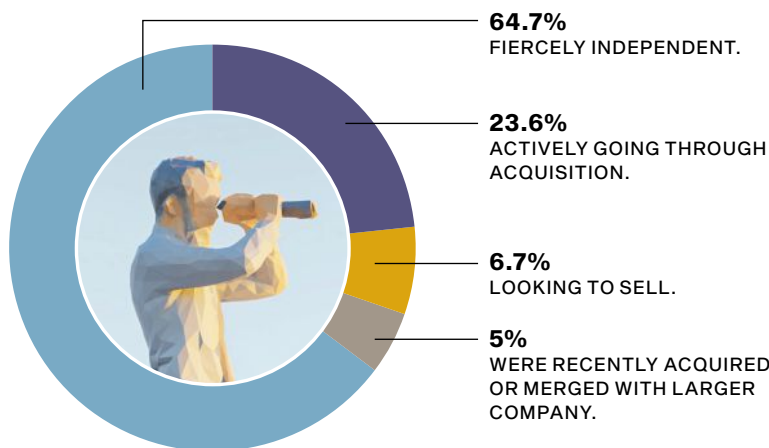
“Find success stories from around the country to visit with your younger family members. Most independent LBM dealers are supportive and welcoming to others in similar situations.”

“Younger members will probably have an expedient rise for more responsibilities and opportunities from a larger acquisition company. Not unusual for existing older management to retire during an acquisition, allowing for younger family members to have additional opportunities for advancement by the acquisition company.”

“You’re much safer in a family-owned and operated company than you are selling to a public. Every promise the merger and acquisition team tells you during your negotiations is BS. They will kill your company culture, change your name, and run off your loyal employees. The community you serve will be negatively impacted, and your little league teams will go without a sponsor. The acquisition engines that call themselves LBM dealers are easy to beat, you just have to know where to hit them. Don’t sell. No number is worth your family legacy, your employees, and your community.”



Which of the following best describes your company's status?



“My younger brother and I are third generation owners who recently went through the succession process after the untimely passing of my father. We were tempted to sell, however the legacy our grandfather and father built over the last 40 years meant more than the dollar signs, so we decided to continue to run the company.”

“We’re a fourth-generation family business with a legacy to uphold.”

“We’re family owned and operated, and we’ve acquired five other family-owned operations that were looking to get out of business.”

“We’re looking to expand our footprint in the next few years.”

“The consolidation we’ve seen in the past 15 years has been the single worst thing to ever happen to our industry. Builders FirstSource, US LBM and Kodiak are nothing but acquisition engines. There has been billions spent in mergers and acquisitions and we have no new home building capacity to show for it, no new innovation, and a poisonous corporate culture that pushes out the mavericks and gun slingers that once made the LBM, components, and construction industry a great sector to work in.”

“We are in the process of acquiring an independent lumberyard/building materials company.”

“We’re slowly growing as a small family business, the fourth generation has just joined the business, and another young entrepreneur just started in outside sales. So I am the experience that keeps their activities coordinated and running the company as the third generation, developing a plan for their smooth transition into leadership.”

“We were hardware store owners and recently acquired our first lumberyard and plan to continue to acquire more.”

“We’ve been family owned and operated for over 120 years.”

“We just completed a generational acquisition to keep business family owned by operating members.”

“We’re going through internal succession planning.” ■

ILLUSTRATION: ©ISTOCK.COM/SEZERYADIGAR

HAVE A REAL ISSUE?

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

“There is significant consolidation in the independent area. It might be a good time to evaluate selling.”

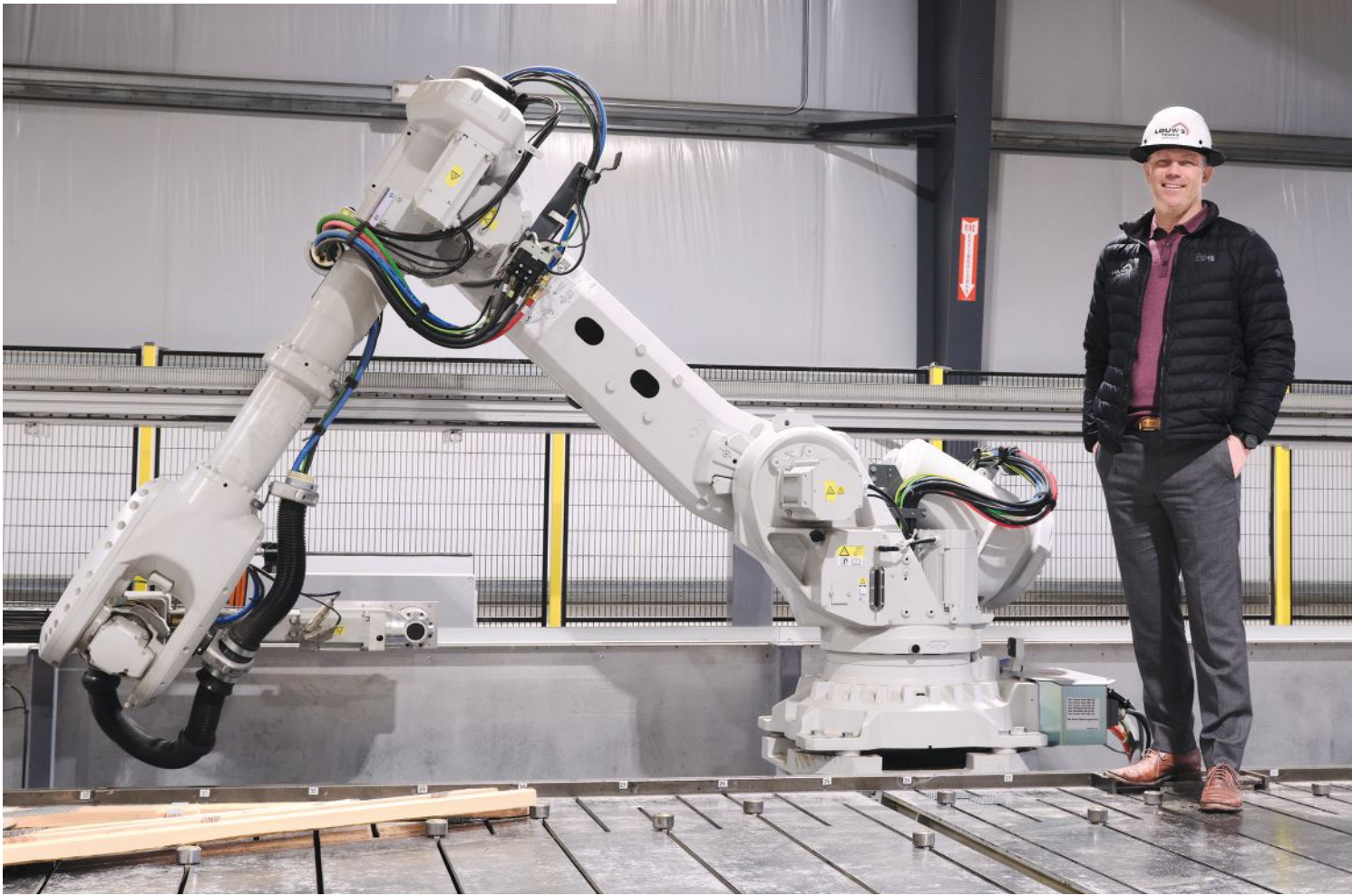
“We are also in our third-generation and if the opportunity should arise to sell, I would suggest it only if the third-generation owners could sustain their present lifestyle on the return for the next 40 years since they are in their early 30s. If not, there will always be a need for independent dealers such as us. It’s a big decision, just don’t jump until you are sure it will be a good fit not just for you but also your employees.”

“The future of independents is strong. Independents excel at customer service in ways that the large chains never will. If you want to cash out, sell. But if you want to continue the legacy of your family, you will find it very rewarding. You may need to take a look at the buying groups to understand how they can help you compete, both in product purchasing and in all facets of your business.”

“You are here to support the local community, and it is an image for your area business.”

“Being small and independent gives you an edge against larger companies. You should be able to react faster both in good and bad economies. You should have a better feel for your employees and customers since you are closer to them.”

“There will be opportunities in this industry for multiple generations to come. Stay the course. This is a very lucrative and rewarding, yet humbling business.”



BY WENDY STURGES

Family-owned business building toward the future

WITH MORE THAN 70 YEARS in operation, Louws Truss is no stranger to innovation. Third-generation owner and President BJ Louws said the company, founded by his grandfather, started out as a general construction company and then a lumberyard. Seeing a need in the area, the company began building trusses in the late 70s.

At the time, the company was small, but strong and family-based, which Louws said has helped the company survive through the decades.

“One of the stories I like is my grandmother—she passed away last year—but she would always complain, because they used to have the supervisor meetings in her kitchen, and she would make them breakfast and coffee, and they would wear their dirty boots into her kitchen. Even at 93 years old, she was still mad about that.”

Today, the Washington-based company is an independent truss manufacturer, specializing in roof and floor trusses for residential, commercial, and agricultural projects. Louws took over as president in 2011, going on to become the company’s sole owner, overseeing about 160 employees and four locations in Burlington, Ferndale, Cashmere, and Lacey.

Louws said he hadn’t expected to build a career in the industry, but having the opportunity to oversee a sector of the industry that combines so many processes into one piqued his natural curiosity.



In 2022, Louws Truss debuted its new robotic roof truss assembly plant, one of only a handful in the U.S. The company plans to debut a second robotics line in the future.

“I was resistant to coming into this business, because I thought it was boring. With component manufacturing, we’re in [the] construction industry from a supply perspective, but we’re not building houses,” he said. “But [here,] we’re doing design and engineering, and then we’re also manufacturing. And then we’re also delivering our trusses with crane trucks. And it ends up, when you put all those things together, being just a very dynamic industry. There are companies that do those things individually, and we’re doing them all together.”

Building toward the future

Having begun work with the company at the start of the Great Recession, Louws said finding innovative ways to increase efficiency has been key to staying afloat and at the forefront of the industry.

“I came into the business in July 2007, which was not a great time to enter the housing industry. We had to do everything we could to survive. I came in as a manager, but also I was out

building trusses and running saws and doing my management job just to keep the lights on. That really honed me as a leader, and got me into thinking that efficiency and innovation around what we do is really important.”

With that in mind, Louws said the company spent the next several years improving processes, and in 2022, Louws Truss debuted its new robotic roof truss assembly plant, one of only a handful in the U.S.

In addition to streamlining the company’s manufacturing process, Louws said the robotic system has also had the unexpected, but welcome, effect of improving employee retention, a not insignificant feat during a time of labor shortages and high turnover in the industry.

“It is more efficient, and it provides a higher quality product than we’re able to do manually as well. And there’s still a lot of people involved in manufacturing trusses, but it allows us to leverage the folks that we have,” he said. “I think it creates a better work environment too. So for the employee retention side, there’s excitement around working with advanced technology in a manufacturing location. We’ve seen less turnover in our plant since we’ve put the robotic line in.”

Partnering to expand resources

During a time where the industry has seen an increase in consolidation, Louws said strategizing for the future and continuing education has become more important than ever.

“We’re an independent truss manufacturer, and any independent is looking at how they can remain viable in an industry that is rapidly consolidating. It was a strategic initiative of ours, from over a decade ago, to get much larger over time, so that we could afford the technology that’s coming along. Not every truss plant can go out and buy a multi-million dollar piece of machinery to gain some efficiency.”

Beyond production, the company is a longtime member of the Northwest Truss Fabricators Association—with which Louws serves on the board of directors—as well as several industry associations. Louws said the company is also committed to working with organizations dedicated to relieving homelessness and food insecurity in the Western Washington region.

In addition to technology investments, Louws said the company’s partnership with LMC has been key to helping Louws Truss stay informed in the industry while leveraging the co-op’s buying power. The company has been with LMC since 2006.

“We use them to buy lumber from mills that are in our backyard, but they allow us the purchasing power of a very large organization. We’re just able to swing above our weight with them.”

Louws said the partnership with LMC also allows the company to participate in roundtable discussions with other companies, giving them more insight in the industry and the opportunity to compare best practices.

Looking forward, Louws Truss anticipates opening a second robotics line to further expand production, he said. “We’re trying to push the envelope, and people want to be a part of the vision that we have, and that’s been really cool. It does show people that we’re looking forward and trying to move forward, or doing everything we can to be on the front edge. Our company vision statement is, ‘Building an industry-leading company where everyone wins.’ So we want to be on the forefront of what’s going on. We want all of our decisions to have a positive impact on our employees, our clients, our community, and on our vendors.” ■

GET TO KNOW LOUWS TRUSS

YEAR FOUNDED:	1952
OWNERSHIP:	Family
LOCATIONS:	4
EMPLOYEES:	160
BUYING GROUP/CO-OP:	LMC



The LBM Century Club was founded on the simple belief that companies that have been around for 100 years deserve to be recognized. Launched in 2016, the LBM Century Club has grown to over 200 members, with more coming in each month. In all, the companies have provided more than 26,000 years of combined service to their communities.

We asked these companies why they believe their businesses have had staying power in their communities.



Hamilton Building Supply

Hamilton, NJ | hamiltonsupply.com

LOCATION: ONE

ESTABLISHED: 1924

“Over 100 Years, Hamilton Building Supply has evolved from a lumber and coal supply yard, to residential building materials and equipment, and now specialty manufacturing and large scale building material supply. Regardless of how our product scopes have changed throughout the years and over three generations, one thing remains constant—our commitment to providing rewarding and fulfilling careers for our dedicated employees and our commitment to adding value, support, and positive experiences to our customers.”

— John Perna, president & CEO

“Not long ago, there were 14 independent lumber and building material yards in our county alone, and now Hamilton Building Supply is only one of two yards that remain. That’s a testament to how our company has been able to adapt, evolve, and innovate over the years, while passing along good stewardship and fundamentals from generation to generation. We’re excited for our future ahead.”

— Keith Coleman, chairman



Henry Poor Lumber Co.

Lafayette, IN | henrypoor.com

LOCATIONS: THREE

ESTABLISHED: 1918

“100 years is a long time. We are very proud that this business has contributed to our community for so many years. Our team is the backbone of what we do. It is a total team effort at Henry Poor Lumber & Flooring Express. We are very grateful for our team members, our customers, and our many friends in the community. We look forward to the next 100-plus years.”

— Jay Andrew, president



Do you work for or know of a lumberyard or building materials retailer that is 100 or more years old? Visit the Century Club at lbmjournals.com/nominate and answer a few questions.

For a complete listing of LBM Century Club members, visit lbmjournals.com/lbm-century-club.



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\$1.3 billion in deal values.**

POWER & HAND TOOLS

BY MIKE BERGER

Do you know what your customers really need?

OF ALL THE THINGS that have helped spur the development of mankind as a species, it is perhaps the use of tools that has had the biggest impact. Our first tools go all the way back to the stone age when shaped rocks were used for hammering and cutting. Fast forward a few million years, and Frederick Trent Stanley refined things just a bit when he started producing hand tools in 1843 under the Stanley brand name.

Always looking for a way to work smarter, not harder, mankind was quick to apply electricity—once it was readily available—to tools shortly thereafter. In 1895, the German company C & E Fein developed the first power drill run by electricity. And while it was heavy, clumsy, and slow, it was a start. And in 1914, Duncan Black and Alonzo Decker decided to develop a more user-friendly version and created the modern handheld corded electric power drill, basing their design on the ergonomic pistol grip of the Colt .45 pistol. In 1961, the same company—Black and Decker—created the first battery-operated cordless tool, and the way things are built or remodeled has never been the same.

Rather than being static categories since then, innovation in both hand and power tools continues, and the choice of what power tools to stock and how to best sell them to their customer can leave LBM dealers feeling underpowered and overtaxed. But by knowing what's currently available in hand and power tools and understanding emerging customer needs, dealers will have more than enough power to drive home the sale.

Development trends

In this post-pandemic world that has been stressed by reduced workforces and ever tightening deadlines, tool manufacturers have been focused on providing offerings that deliver more power and efficiency, thus allowing the tool user to get more done in a shorter amount of time.

“Over the last 12 months, contractors have overwhelmingly been asking for ways to improve productivity but without giving up weight and balance,” says Jacek Romanski, channel marketing director of ITW Construction – Residential & Renovation. “They are looking for tools that keep up with them on the jobsite, but allow them to be more efficient without taking a major toll on their body. Contractors have also become more safety conscious on their jobsites. When it comes to power fastening tools, this means moving away from hoses and compressors that introduce trip hazards and additional complexities in construction spaces. Cordless nailers allow the pros to save time and increase productivity but also simplify the complexities in and around their work environment.”



Timber Drive from Simpson Strong-Tie is a solution for the repetitive installation of structural fasteners, such as for securing boards on wharfs, docks, wooden bridges, and boardwalks. It is also used to secure steel straps and splines in mass timber applications. Additionally, features such as variable fastener width and length adjustments and adjustable depth settings enable contractors to achieve precise results, even in challenging environments.

Explains Joe Bloomfield, product marketing manager at Milwaukee Tool, “The widespread adoption of cordless power has become the standard across residential and commercial jobsites. Users are actively seeking to transition from outdated corded, pneumatic, and gas tools to battery-powered solutions. With this significant shift comes high expectations for performance from cordless systems. In the last decade alone, the professional industry has seen remarkable advancements from manufacturers looking to provide solutions that improve the user experience in application.”

Robert Shirley, North America product marketing manager over fastening systems and OEM market segment for Simpson Strong-Tie, likewise points to the focus on developing power tools that make tasks more efficient. “Simpson Strong-Tie has pioneered several innovations aimed at making tasks easier, more ergonomic, and more efficient for contractors on the jobsite. One such advancement is the integration of ergonomic designs and lightweight materials in the Timber Drive Structural Screw Driving Systems, reducing operator fatigue and increasing maneuverability without compromising on power or performance.”

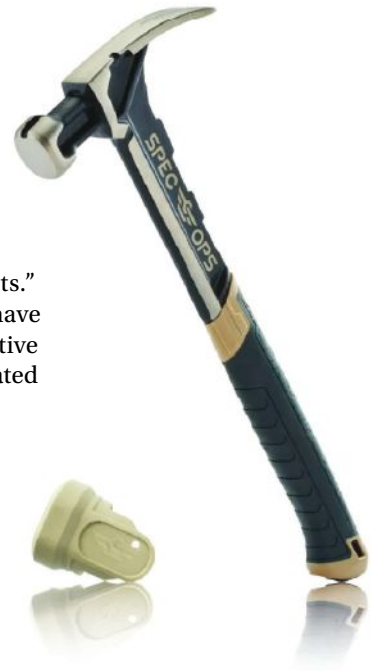
Part of that need for increased power and performance comes from the incorporation of non-traditional building materials into today’s homes. Power tool manufacturers are developing more new offerings that are specifically geared towards newer materials that are becoming more common in home construction. “Contractors are looking for solutions they face daily on jobsites from tool manufacturers,” points out John Dominice III, senior vice president of sales for MAX USA Corp. “As more LVL

and LSL, steel and concrete go into custom homes, contractors are searching for ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs.”

Like power tools, hand tools have also experienced some transformative changes. In a space long dominated by specific name brands, newer entries are making a name for themselves in the vacuum left by the diminishment of those name brands by offering innovation and performance differentiation. “The last 12 months have been extremely impactful in the hand tool space,” says Tyler Harwood, brand manager for Spec Ops Tools. “Legacy brands that have long been associated with quality hand tools are losing market share and outright disappearing. Some of the biggest players are investing in the hand tool space, specifically mechanical, electrical, plumbing categories, in a way that they hadn’t in the past. If you’re part of a brand that isn’t one of the very entrenched, recognizable few, you’ve got to be able to effectively differentiate and innovate. Competitors are saturating the digital and in-store space, so it demands a compelling reason-for-being from every entrant.”

Understanding needs

With the tool development that has taken place over the past few years, manufacturers point to a few specific trends that LBM dealers should watch in the coming 12 months—some continuations of previous trends and others new focuses. ▶



The 28-oz. smooth face framing hammer from Spec Ops Tools features a high-carbon steel head, a ballistically balanced design, a Santoprene rubber mallet cap for non-marring use on finished surfaces, and a MOA grip that absorbs shock. All Spec Ops tools are backed by a limited lifetime warranty, and with each purchase made, the company donates 3% of sales to veteran and first responder causes.



According to Milwaukee Tool, its next generation of circular saws delivers best-in-class performance, leveraging the latest in brushless motor technology, new blades, and the brand’s M18 FORGE battery packs.

Another new release from Milwaukee Tool is its M18 Fuel 1/2" Router, the first full cordless replacement within the mid-size router class.

Paslode's Cordless XPro Framing Nailer features a bump fire mode for rapid driving of up to three nails per second. It's reported to deliver 10% more power to drive flush into tough engineered lumber, and at just 7.8 lbs. with the battery, it is described as the lightest cordless framing nailer on the market.



Launching in August, Paslode's Cordless Positive Placement Metal Connector Nailer allows metal connecting with cordless convenience. The Positive Placement probe is engineered to deliver accuracy, quickly locating holes. It drives up to 1-1/2" x .148" nails, ideal for joist hangers, hurricane ties and many other metal connector fastening needs.

For example, in regards to cordless tools, power tool manufacturers continue to strive to deliver increased power and greater run time. "LBM dealers should be attuned to emerging trends in fastening system-related tools, ranging from cordless technology to advances in battery technology and increased torque in drill-drivers and impact drivers," recommends Simpson Strong-Tie's Shirley. "Simpson Strong-Tie recognizes the growing demand for cordless solutions that offer flexibility and mobility on the jobsite without sacrificing power or performance."

This focus on power and efficiency provides LBM dealers with multiple sales points they can emphasize to their customers, manufacturers point out. "With advancements in battery technology, contractors can now enjoy extended runtime and faster charging capabilities, ensuring uninterrupted workflow and enhanced productivity," says Shirley. "These enhancements in battery technology also lend to more fasteners being installed per battery charge, again leading to enhanced productivity.

According to MAX, its AKHL1320E PowerLite compressor offers 15% more power in CFM and increased air volume. It's equipped with a DC brushless motor and circuit inverter, and because it is compatible with both 100psi and 500psi tools, it offers flexibility, with two outlets for high-pressure applications and two for standard tools.



Moreover, ergonomic designs and intuitive controls have become key considerations, as contractors seek tools that are comfortable to use for prolonged periods and intuitive to operate in various applications."

The adoption of cordless and battery technology on the jobsite remains a dominant trend in the power tool industry on a large scale, says Milwaukee Tool's Bloomfield. "Increasingly, users are relying on cordless tools to accomplish tasks, and this trend shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. With the continued adoption of battery-powered solutions, some manufacturers are delivering more powerful batteries to continue driving performance on the job." He points to the recent development by Milwaukee Tool of its recently introduced XC8.0 and HD12.0 Redlithium Forge batteries as examples of such technology that can reportedly deliver substantially more power and thermal management for demanding applications.

As with power tools, developing trends for hand tools also provide LBM dealers with multiple sales paths, say manufacturers. "There are a lot of considerations to be made for the desires of the various tool consumers today," points out Spec Ops Tools' Harwood. "Some people will be more price conscious, some people are die-hard brand loyalists, but some consumers are seeking more quality differentiation in the hand tool space. The professional tool space is being impacted, like most everything, by social media and influencer marketing. When newer brands bring more 'premium' products to market, they have more updraft with notable influencers who have large followings. The best tools are aspirational for new pros, hobbyists, and homeowners, and the power of social media and comprehensive digital marketing means they get into these positions of premium perception very quickly. That is one element that is making relative newcomers more viable to carve out market share than ever."

Better service, better sales

Selling more power and hand tools might seem like an easy proposition. After all, your customers can't build what their customers want without the use of tools, so it may seem like they should sell themselves. Ask tool manufacturers, however, and you'll get a very different answer. Take nothing for granted, they recommend, and get to know your customers as thoroughly as possible so that you can best cater to their power and hand tool needs.

“It’s crucial to have a foundational understanding of your customer base, from professionals to DIYers, to ensure the appropriate mix of products is stocked within each store,” says Bloomfield. “Also, having a robust assortment of cordless tools provides the capability to complete a wide range of applications on the jobsite. Professionals are increasingly seeking cordless replacements for their entire arsenal of tools, including drills, impacts, saws, nailers, and more. Additionally, ensuring that each store has the right mix of batteries and chargers to meet varying levels of demand across user groups.”

Spec Ops Tools’ Harwood strongly agrees with the importance of knowing your customers and being able to offer them solutions. “Understanding your specific consumer cannot be overstated,” he stresses. “Obviously, every location will have its unique consumer profile. Knowing their needs is crucial to getting that business. We have built our mission to produce premium tools and give back to veteran causes, which are usually fairly popular notions, but not everywhere. Some consumers are extremely price sensitive and don’t want premium tools. Some areas don’t have much veteran presence and aren’t as connected to the philanthropy end of our work. We don’t do as well there, but in the places where we are well received, it’s usually a tremendous reception. Being everything to everyone is not a tenable strategy, but being everything to someone is ideal, if you understand that someone very well.”

It’s about offering a better purchasing experience, says MAX’s Dominic. “LBM dealers have the ability to distance themselves from [big] boxes by offering professional grade products and better service. Keeping up with the latest trends, attending industry trade shows and continued training for their employees will expose them to those products and services.”

Part of that better purchasing experience involves thinking beyond the tool, ITW’s Romanski points out. “In the power nailing category, the volume (and money) is in selling the fasteners. It’s a best practice to include tools as part of your merchandising as they act as a billboard for contractors letting them know your location is a destination for power tools. Having a display of tools that link to the fasteners drives awareness and improves the shopping experience, especially for the pro contractor that is looking for quick shopping so they can get back to the jobsite.”

WHEN SO MUCH of the bread and butter for LBM dealers consists of building materials, it can be easy to overlook power and hand tools. But rather than let them gather dust on your shelves, you can use the same selling strategies as you do for your building material inventory to turn tools into a profit center, and it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to do it.

“Focus on providing comprehensive solutions tailored to the specific needs and preferences of contractors,” recommends Simpson Strong-Tie’s Shirley. “By offering a diverse range of products that cater to different applications and skill levels, LBM dealers can empower contractors to tackle projects with confidence and efficiency. By positioning themselves as trusted advisors, LBM dealers can build long-term partnerships with contractors and capitalize on the growing demand for high-quality fastening solutions.” ■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS



Simpson Strong-Tie’s Quik Drive auto-feed screw driving systems allow for the repetitive installation of fasteners up to 3" in length, are designed for stand-up operation, saving the users’ knees, shoulders and back. These Quik Drive systems are designed for various applications such as deck boards, subfloors, drywall panels, roofing tiles and many sheathing-to-metal or metal-to-metal installations.

IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU DRILL

Next time you pick up a cordless tool, say a quiet “thank you” to the United States space program and NASA. While Black & Decker created the first cordless power tool in 1961, it was in 1965 that NASA put in an order for a space-going cordless battery-operated impact driver that astronauts could use during space walks to make repairs to the Gemini spacecraft while in zero gravity.

The Martin Marietta Corp. contracted with Black & Decker to design such a tool, and the result was a cordless driver that spun bolts without spinning the astronaut—no mean feat in zero gravity. Less than a decade later when the Apollo astronauts landed on the moon, Black & Decker was commissioned to build a cordless rotary hammer drill for those astronauts to extract samples from the moon’s surface.

The science used to develop those cordless tools for NASA was utilized in the creation of later consumer tool offerings. So every time you pull the trigger of your cordless tool, you’re sharing something in common with our astronauts.

PHOTO AND SOURCE MATERIAL: NASA





VERTICAL GRAIN ENGINEERED WOOD CLADDING

Pacific Northwest-based Defiance Forest Products has announced the nationwide availability of a line of vertical grain Western Red Cedar engineered cladding. Marketed under the Rainier Plank brand name, the products feature a finger-jointed, tight-knot core and are rated for both interior and exterior applications. They're available in tongue-and-groove board with a micro-V or fine line profile. Available dimensions include 1x4, 1x6, 1x8, and 2x6, all available in lengths from 8' to 16'. According to the manufacturer, because Rainier Plank products are made in the USA, they are more easily stocked, with shorter lead times, and a greater number of available lengths. They are sustainable and environmentally friendly, with a natural look and feel, and a luxury aesthetic. All Rainier Plank Products feature a 10-year limited warranty. rainierplank.com



SUPERFEET INSOLES

According to the manufacturer, Superfeet Work Cushion insoles provide lightly structured, durable support. Designed for work boots, work shoes, and safety toe footwear with space for extra cushioning, these flexible insoles are reported to deliver long-lasting comfort that stands up to the stress and strain of every shift. Premium dual-layer cushioning guards against foot fatigue, while the Moisturewick top cover helps reduce odors, keeping feet fresh. superfeet.com

CULPEPER COLUMN PLUS

Culpeper Wood Preservers has launched Culpeper Column PLUS, a hollow 6x6 laminated column made from southern yellow pine that, according to the manufacturer, is lighter weight, easier to handle, stronger, and less likely to twist and crack compared to traditional solid wood columns. The new Column PLUS is kiln-dried after treatment and then formed with glue, which is reported to make it much less likely to move when properly installed. Column PLUS can be painted, stained, or customized to achieve a variety of looks and serves as a real-wood alternative to PVC, fiberglass, or aluminum columns. Compared to traditional wood columns, Column PLUS is highly moisture-resistant and is treated to a higher retention level. Columns are treated to 0.23 for UC4B ground contact (compared to 0.15 of standard columns) for heavier retention and added longevity once installed in the substrate. culpeperwood.com



PLY GEM BLACK ACCESSORIES

The new Ply Gem line of exterior accessories in 498 Black is a bold and sleek high-contrast color that elevates exteriors with an eye-catching hue that the manufacturer says won't fade over time. This trending shade is available in all 36 block, mount, and vent SKUs that integrates across the entire Ply Gem brand portfolio, including black vinyl soffit, gutter, and trim coil, for completely cohesive designs.



As Ply Gem reports, black accessories lend a polished and modern appeal, elevating the overall design of home exteriors. These blocks, mounts and vents create dramatic contrast against more muted colors, such as white, to enhance the visual impact and character of a home. plygem.com

FASTENMASTER ICON SCREWJOIST SYSTEM

FastenMaster, a division of OMG, Inc., has introduced the FastenMaster ICON ScrewJoist, a hybrid deck joist system engineered to combine the strength and durability of steel with the lightness and workability of wood. According to the manufacturer, the new ICON System enables contractors to build exterior deck substructures faster, stronger, and safer than with traditional pressure treated joists. Patented ICON ScrewJoists offer a wide range of benefits when compared to traditional pressure treated lumber, including being significantly lighter for easier and safer handling on site and quicker to install without the need for metal hangers or connectors. In addition, the straighter and more dimensionally stable ICON ScrewJoists provide a consistently level deck surface without crowns or low spots. fastenmaster.com



VISTA CLAD BY EVA-LAST

VistaClad, designed and manufactured by Eva-Last, is an advanced composite board that the manufacturer says enhances the visual appeal of structures while also delivering benefits such as thermal insulation and ventilation, as well as the recognized benefits of composite including durability, weather resistance, and ease of installation. Engineered by extruding recycled plastic combined with eco-friendly bamboo fibers, the formulation reportedly results in a robust material that provides enhanced functionality.

Unlike traditional cladding materials such as wood, fiber-cement, or aluminum, VistaClad is reported to resist discoloration, decay, and deterioration caused by moisture, UV exposure, and temperature fluctuations.

eva-last.com



WOLF VANITY TOPS

Wolf Home Products has released four new quartz finishes to its in-stock Wolf Vanity Tops with Quick Ship. These four new, natural finishes are part of the Bella Series and include Carrara, Frost, Laza and Terra. As part of the Wolf Carstin Collection, the manufacturer reports that these quartz finishes effortlessly blend aesthetics with practicality, making it a beautiful long-term investment for any home. Quartz is a sought-after engineered stone for a reason, offering a natural elegance in addition to practical benefits including exceptional durability, resisting chips and scratches, and a non-porous surface for stain and moisture resistance. In addition, customers won't have to wait long for style and quality, as these four new finishes have been added to the Quick Ship lineup. That means the product is ready to ship and be delivered in days, not weeks. wolfhomeproducts.com



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**DEMO DEMON
CARBIDE TEETH
ROUGH-IN HOLE SAW**

Diablo Tools has introduced the Demo Demon Carbide Teeth Rough-In Hole Saw. Reported to offer up to 50X the cutting life of standard hole saws and up to 5X faster hole making, these hole saws, according to the manufacturer, deliver maximum productivity in nail-embedded wood, clean wood, and more. This efficient design means less wear on drills and battery power and more time dedicated to delivering results. The Demo Demon Carbide Teeth Rough-In Hole Saw is designed with Diablo's SnapLock PLUS mandrel compatibility, allowing users to quickly change between different cups and sizes depending on the application, offering 60mm (2-3/8") cutting depth versus the standard 40mm (1-5/8") in most hole saws, meaning 40% deeper holes in one-pass. diablotools.com

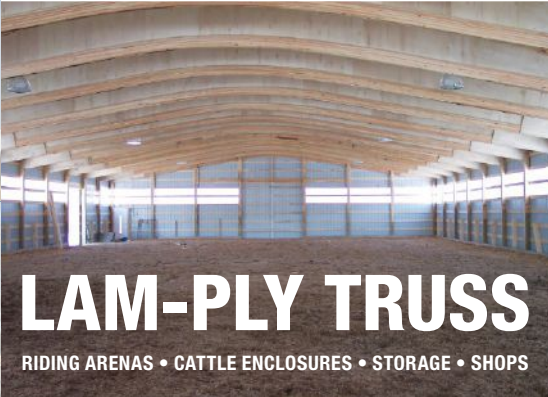



ASPIRE PAVERS

Aspire Pavers has recently launched new pavers that include the Bullnose with Legs, Bullnose Corner, Transition with Legs, and Transition Corner. The Aspire Bullnose Paver with Legs is designed to integrate with Aspire's existing line of Resurfacing Pavers. The Aspire Bullnose Corner Paver forms a 90° angle and is compatible with the Bullnose with Legs to form a border with a rounded edge that hides the grid below. The Transition Paver transitions from the 1.75" height down to the original landscaping level, providing a functional ramp for accessibility. The Transition Corner Paver complements this by forming a 90° angle that pairs with the Transition Paver, creating a ramped border. aspirepavers.com



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**NEW LITERATURE FOR SERIES 9
ALUMINUM RAILING**

Superior Aluminum Products has recently published a new 8-page, full-color brochure detailing their Series 9 Aluminum Railing which is ideal for multi-family environments. According to the manufacturer, this strong, maintenance-free, decorative railing meets OSHA, ADA and ICC safety criteria. The unique, no-weld design utilizes simple, cast aluminum fittings or machined openings for no-hassle, easy installation. Railing examples are shown with standard top rails, open double rails, and double top rails with through pickets. Series 9 Railing is ideal for new construction or retrofit projects on multifamily environments like condominiums and apartments, as well as hotels, churches, schools, commercial buildings, and more. superioraluminum.com

ICYNENE SERIES SPRAY POLYURETHANE FOAM INSULATION

Huntsman Building Solutions has launched its all-new Icynene Series spray polyurethane foam insulation product line. According to the manufacturer, the collection of spray foam systems offers the highest performance available in the industry and includes key product certifications. The product line includes a broad range of high-performance, energy efficient open- and closed-cell spray foam insulation systems. The brand's service and support package offered to Icynene Series customers is designed to support their needs throughout the entire spray foam process, from specification through installation. Premium services include hands-on building science assistance, technical service, marketing support, specifications, job referrals, and more. huntsmanbuildingsolutions.com



DEWALT XR POWERPACK TABLESS CELL BATTERY

DEWALT has announced the launch of its first 20V MAX tabless cell battery, the XR POWERPACK 8 Ah battery. Utilizing tabless battery cell technology, the XR POWERPACK 8 Ah battery is reported to deliver 50% more power and a longer lifespan. According to DEWALT, the battery revolutionizes energy flow by forcing energy through multiple tabs to distribute power, rather than passing through a single tab used in traditional cells. With a greater surface area, the battery can conduct more energy, therefore providing users with increased power outputs. dewalt.com

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OLD AND IN THE WAY?

Anonymous messages from members of your team say that your age is holding the company back, and that it's time for you to go. What would you do?

BACK IN high school, you knew nothing about lumber, but your need for gas money and the local lumberyard's need for extra help led to your first summer job. That was over 50 years ago. And in that time, you've done virtually every job there is at Career Lumber—everything from general yard laborer and inside sales to yard foreman and sales manager. Today, in your 15th year as general manager, most of Career Lumber's team are people you hired over your career. As the leading independent LBM dealer in your market, you're justifiably proud of what you've helped build.

One thing you're especially proud of is the success your company has had attracting, hiring, and retaining young pros. In an industry where many dealers are wrestling with this, you and your team have established a culture that meets the needs of next gen workers and rewards them for strong performance. You're a big believer in leveraging technology, so Career Lumber recently upgraded to a state-of-the-art ERP system. You work closely with your company's HR leader to make sure your pay and benefits are at or near the top of your market.

To make sure everyone on your team feels comfortable sharing their thoughts, you recently set up an email address where employees can offer anonymous suggestions to make things better at Career Lumber. The very first suggestion that arrived in that inbox hit you like a two-by-four: "The world is changing so fast that the older employees need to step out of the way and let the new crowd embrace all the tech that is out there."

Since you are the oldest employee, it's likely that this person meant *you* need to get out of the way. After a few days, the sting began to subside, then while reading through the next batch of suggestions, this message arrived: "Company leadership is living in their own fish bowls. They're old and in the way, and not seeing the value the next gen can bring to enhance the company moving forward."



If Career Lumber was a big company with hundreds of employees, these two messages would carry less weight. But given that your company has fewer than 30 employees, even two is troubling. You shared these with the owner, who's older than you but still very sharp, and she strongly disagreed. "Career Lumber is stronger than it's ever been, and without you pushing to hire more young pros, our team would be aging out. This is not about you," she said, "it's about them."

She may be right. But as the company's leader, you don't want members of your team believing that you're holding the company back. What would you do?

CAST YOUR VOTE ONLINE AT: LBMJOURNAL.COM

Ignore 'em. By all measurable metrics, Career Lumber is stronger than it's ever been. Turnover is low, production is high, and you can't worry about two disgruntled employees.

Start a dialogue. Without calling anyone out, at the next company meeting leave time for open brainstorming to show you value new technology and ideas.

Rethink structure. Offer leadership training for younger employees that show promise and make sure the next generations are part of the conversation.

Be transparent. Succession planning is key for small companies; show your team that you have plans in place for when your generation has retired.

PHOTO: ©ISTOCK.COM/GIULIO FORNASAR

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.

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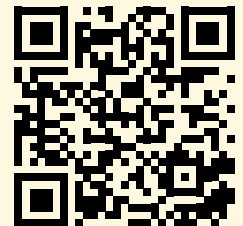
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