

LBM JOURNAL[®]

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

A man with a beard and short brown hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt under a grey vest with a Lugbill logo, stands with his arms crossed in front of a building. The building has a blue awning with a white logo and a sign that says "Lugbill Supply Center". To the right, a "Do it Best" sign is visible on the building's exterior.

OHIO DEALER FOCUSES ON CUSTOMERS AMID GROWTH

WITH BUILDERS LOOKING FOR
NEW SOLUTIONS, EWP IS POISED
TO REACH NEW HEIGHTS

LBM PROS SHARE THEIR VIEWS ON
VENDOR CONSOLIDATION

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HANDLING SYSTEMS HELP
PREPARE FOR YEARS AHEAD

ISAAC WEBER, OWNER OF OHIO-BASED LUGBILL SUPPLY CENTER

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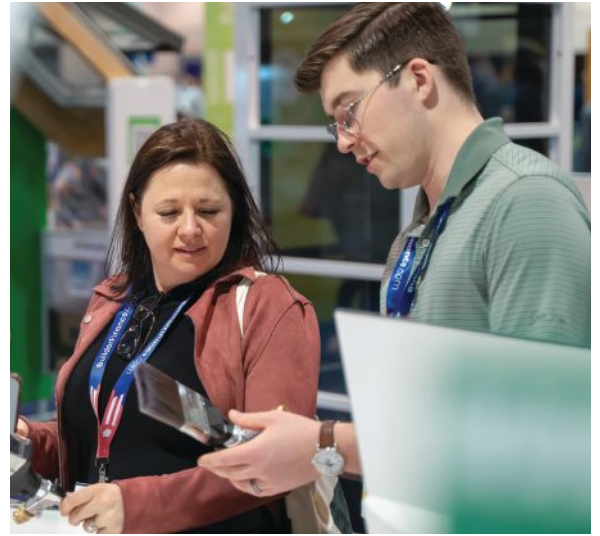
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SEPTEMBER 2024



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LBM JOURNAL VOLUME 22, NO. 9 (ISSN#1930-5516) is published monthly with the exception of the combined November/December issue by Custom Built Publishing, LLC. Copyright 2024 by Custom Built Publishing, LLC, 10880 175th Court West, Ste. 240, Lakeville, MN, 55044, 952.892.7793. All rights reserved. Annual subscription rate: \$48 U.S.; \$60 Canada; and \$120 all other countries. Single copy price \$15 + S&H. Periodicals postage paid at Lakeville, MN, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the USA.

U.S. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to LBM Journal, 10880 175th Court West, Ste. 240, Lakeville, MN, 55044.



PUBLISHER / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Rick Schumacher
Rick@LBMJournal.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Richard Hart
Design@LBMJournal.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Wendy Sturges
Wendy@LBMJournal.com

SENIOR EDITOR
Michael Berger
Mike@LBMJournal.com

SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR
Sally Traxler-Lacey
Sally@lbmjournal.com

CONTRIBUTING SALES EDITOR
Rick Davis

CONTRIBUTORS
Sam Brownell
Thea Dudley
Russ Kathrein
Bill Lee
John D. Wagner

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & EVENTS
Michelle Fischer
Operations@LBMJournal.com

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR
Tina Saucke
Tina@LBMJournal.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Lindsay Scott
lindsay@lbmjournal.com

MEDIA CONSULTANTS

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Jodie Cook Redwood
Jodie@LBMJournal.com
800.324.3492

NORTHEAST + SOUTHEAST

Michele Randazzo
Michele@LBMJournal.com
904.310.9540

CENTRAL + WEST

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30 CENTURY CLUB

We asked Maze Lumber (est. 1848), and Tracy Lumber (est. 1909), why they believe their businesses have had staying power in their communities.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

WHILE I'M PROUD OF every issue we produce, this edition of *LBM Journal* really hits the mark—from cover to cover. I encourage you to take time to read the entire magazine, there are a couple of items I want to call to your attention.

Dealer Profile: Lugbill Supply (p 46). In this profile, Managing Editor Wendy Sturges shares how Isaac Weber worked at Lugbill Supply Center as a teen, and how he and his wife, Leslie, are injecting new energy into the company since buying it in 2022. If Isaac (featured on this month's cover) looks familiar, it may be because he's been on our cover once before—as one of the inaugural members of the LBM 40 Under 40.

I love this story because, to me, it epitomizes the can-do and will-do spirit that's alive and well in the LBM community. If you question how an LBM dealer can survive—and thrive—in rural America, read this story.



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

LBM Century Club (p 30). It's no secret that America's lumber/building material industry has a rich legacy. We created the LBM Century Club to recognize and honor the hundreds of companies who've served their communities for more than 100 years and continue to carry on that important work today. The Club is large and growing—with more than 215 member companies representing 27,136 combined years in business!

This month, we ask two member companies, Maze Lumber, Peru, IL, and Tracy Lumber, Fayetteville, NY, why they believe their businesses have had staying power in their communities. Their answers, along with one current and one historic picture of each, are featured. Check out all the map and listing of all Century Club members at lbmjournals.com/lbm-century-club. Plus, Century Club members in attendance at the upcoming LBM Strategies conference are recognized and welcomed onstage.

In Memoriam: Walter Foxworth (p 10). Sir Isaac Newton famously said, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." The LBM community lost just such a giant of a leader, and genuinely good human being, when Walter Foxworth died in early August. Ever since I joined this industry in 1990, I knew Walter as a passionate advocate for the lumber industry. During his 60-year career with Foxworth-Galbraith Lumber, he was deeply committed to serving our community, through his work with industry associations. Walter earned numerous awards on the local, state, and national level through his tireless efforts on behalf of others. Walter leaves our industry stronger than he found it. He will be missed.

— Rick Schumacher
Executive Editor & Publisher

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LUMBERYARD TOUR: Space is Limited

Ganahl Lumber—San Juan Capistrano and Costa Mesa yards

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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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& Founder
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Buildxact



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S.W. Collins Company



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Organizational
Development Consultant



RICK DAVIS
Founder and Principal
Building Leaders, Inc.



DAN DELANEY
CFO
Ganahl Lumber



PETER GANAHL
Chairman
Ganahl Lumber



BRAD SATTERFIELD
CEO
Ganahl Lumber



LINDSEY DiGANGI
Asst. VP of Marketing
PLM



TRICIA KILRAIN
Asst. VP Field Operations
PLM



THEA DUDLEY
Credit Overlord &
Cashflow Specialist
Pocket Protectors LLC



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Mill Creek Lumber &
Supply Company



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Star Lumber



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Materials
Do it Best



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Division Operations
Manager
Gilcrest-Jewett Lumber



LANCE LATKIEWICZ
Director of Operations
Mans Lumber



MIKE LINDEN
VP of Sales & Purchasing
Hamilton Building Supply



AMBER LITTLE
Chief Human Resources
Officer
Nation's Best Holdings



KYLE LITTLE
COO
Sherwood Lumber



JOHN MARSHALL
Co-Founder
AI Growth Partners



AARON MCGREAN
Business Analyst
Beisser Lumber



EMILY MORGAN
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Ashby Lumber



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Venveo



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Managing Partner
& Founder
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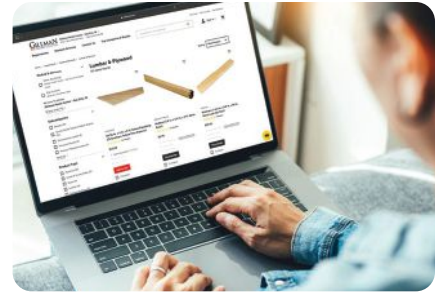




KOOPMAN LUMBER MARKS 85 YEARS



BAGWELL LUMBER TO EXPAND
PHOTO: DIEGO DE JESUS/HIGHLANDS NEWS



DO IT BEST ENHANCES ONLINE TOOLS

BY THE YARD

2024 marks the 85th anniversary of the founding of **Koopman Lumber**, a building, lumber and home improvement supplier across Massachusetts. With 13 locations, the Koopman Lumber team is celebrating this milestone at select locations, throughout 2024.

Bagwell Lumber has broken ground for the construction of its new storage facility on North Central Avenue in Avon Park, FL. It's expected to be completed within six to eight months. The 12,000-sq.-ft. facility will provide more room as well as organization for the lumber company.

84 Lumber has opened its newest door shop in Lawrence, PA. The new door shop, housed in a 41,250-sq.-ft. facility, is equipped with a door line and stair machine and will be dedicated to hanging interior doors, as well as building installation-ready stairs for the market's regional and national homebuilders.

Thomae Lumber, located in the Billings and Laurel, MT business community since 1982, has announced its official name change and rebranding to **Mead Lumber**. In 2007, the company was acquired by Mead Lumber. In 2023, the company underwent a comprehensive rebranding effort, aiming to add consistency to all the business units under Mead Lumber.



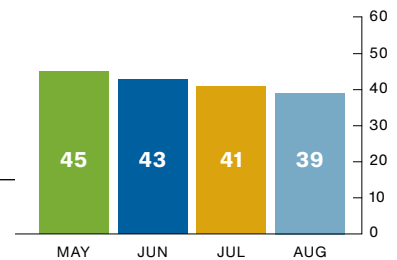
Massachusetts-based **Cummington Supply** marked 50 years of business in Cummington, MA. According to the company, Peter and Frances Kipp bought Cummington Supply in 1974. In 2018, their son, Gus Perkins, took over operations. The store carries lumber, building materials, hardware, paint, tools, windows and doors, plumbing and electrical supplies and more.

CO-OP & BUYER'S GROUPS

Tech company LBMX Inc. and **LMC**, finalized a significant commercial upgrade to expand the existing LBMX services. This will result in a full end-to-end LBMX Group Platform for LMC and its members. LMC will take advantage of LBMX's fully managed EDI services, leveraging the power of real-time data to view full analytics for the group and dealer members, manage claims, deliver statements, and complete full central billing activities.

Do it Best has announced expanded capabilities for selling lumber online. The initiative provides additional sales channels for members and improves the shopping experience for their customers, with an enhanced platform featuring over 1,500 lumber items. Do it Best will monitor key performance indicators such as direct online sales and overall site traffic to measure the success of the online lumber sales. Additionally, the company will track the influence of online visibility on in-store purchases.

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Builder confidence moves lower as market waits for rate cuts

Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes was 39 in August, down two points from a downwardly revised reading of 41 in July, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI). This is the lowest reading since December 2023.

Challenging housing affordability conditions remain the top concern for prospective home buyers in the current reading of the HMI, as both present sales and traffic readings showed weakness. However, with current inflation data pointing to interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve and mortgage rates down markedly in the second week of August, buyer interest and builder sentiment should improve in the months ahead.

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PEOPLE IN LBM

Patrick Lumber has promoted **Natalie Heacock** from chief financial officer to president. In her 11th year with the company, she succeeds Patrick Burns, who will continue to play an active role in trading.



Bliffert Lumber has announced the appointment of **Dave Dejewski** as the company's chief financial officer. Dejewski, who joined Bliffert Lumber in 2022 as controller, brings 15 years of financial experience to his new role.



Kodiak Building Partners announced significant changes in its information technology (IT) leadership. After over a decade of building and leading Kodiak's IT organization, **Brad Becker**, Kodiak's Chief Information Officer, will retire from his current position. **Chad Finnigan**, VP of IT & Cybersecurity, and **Andrew Roise**, VP of Enterprise Applications, will now lead the IT department.



BECKER



FINNIGAN



ROISE

Wilson Lumber has announced the appointment of **Ryan McAnally** as the company's new marketing and communications manager, and **Sallie Keene Denton** as marketing specialist.

Hillman Solutions Corp. announced that **Jon Michael Adinolfi**, Hillman's current chief operating officer, will transition to the role of president and CEO; and **Doug Cahill**, Hillman's current chairman, president, and CEO, will transition to the role of executive chairman effective Jan. 1, 2025.

Do it Best announced the appointment of **Randy Rusk** as the new executive director of the Do it Best Foundation. In this newly created role, Rusk will focus on expanding the foundation's impact and presence in the communities it serves.



LBM Advantage made four new appointments:

- **Daniel Bricker**, Forest Products Manager, New Windsor, NY
- **Justin Smith**, Forest Products Manager, Conroe, TX
- **Keith Gritters**, Forest Products Manager, Grand Rapids, MI
- **Dave Merryman**, National Accounts and Data Operations Manager, New Windsor, NY

LMC has announced the appointment of two new regional managers who will bring their extensive experience and industry knowledge to their respective regions.

Patrick Bracken has been promoted to Northeast regional manager, and **Paul Sbragia** joins the company as the new regional manager for the North Central region.



BRACKEN



SBRAGIA

IN MEMORIAM

Longtime leader **Walter Foxworth**, former president, chairman, chairman emeritus, and director of **Foxworth-Galbraith Lumber Company**, died in early August. Foxworth was an active member of the Lumbermen's Association of Texas, where he served on the board, as president in 1990, and was honored as Lumberman of the Year in 1993 and with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022. He was also active with NLBMDA, serving on the board and receiving numerous awards.



INDUSTRY UPDATES

MITER Brands hosted a drive-thru hurricane relief supplies distribution event to donate emergency supplies to assist those affected by Hurricane Beryl. MITER Brands partnered with Builders FirstSource and the Greater Houston Builders Association (GHBA), to host the six-hour event on July 17 in Houston, TX. Representatives and volunteers passed out relief supplies, including more than 38,000 bottles of water, 3,556 batteries, 200 flashlights, gloves, and extension cords, among other items.

DeckWise and **Arbor Wood Co.** have announced a strategic partnership that brings their technologies to the thermally modified wood decking industry. This collaboration brings together DeckWise's fastening solutions and Arbor Wood's wood products to offer quality and performance for outdoor decking projects.

Digger Specialties Inc. (DSI) has expanded its range of durable aluminum columns for residential and commercial properties. Produced from premium quality, lightweight aluminum, Aluminum Westbury Columns are now available in an industry-leading 12 standard colors and feature both textured and non-textured finishes.

Beacon has opened new locations in Athens, GA and in Midlothian, TX. The new branch in Athens serves the area's residential and commercial markets including the University of Georgia. The new branch in Midlothian serves the area's residential and commercial markets.



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DISTRIBUTION NEWS

Westlake Royal Building Products has expanded its partnership with Boise Cascade. Boise Cascade will distribute Cedar Renditions Aluminum Siding and Versetta Stone at its Denver, CO and Billings, MT locations. Boise Cascade will also distribute Versetta Stone through a new point of distribution in Vancouver, WA. This is the first Westlake Royal product to be distributed at the Vancouver location.

Parksite Inc. is expanding its offering of **IG Railing**, a brand of frameless glass railing to its territories of Ohio and Florida. IG Railing is built on a base mount, called a spigot, that houses a Wi-Fi controlled LED light system, and holds 1/2" tempered low iron glass.

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INDUSTRY EVENTS

2024

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

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
Phoenix, AZ | lmc.net

MAR 21-23
DO IT BEST SPRING MARKET
Orlando, FL | doitbestonline.com

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MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

Kodiak Building Partners announced the acquisition of **Thomas Building Center**, a combination that reinforces both companies' commitment to expanding local market leadership in the Pacific Northwest. Established in 1972, Thomas Building Center is a supplier of building materials and services across Sequim, Port Angeles, the Olympic Peninsula and surrounding areas.

ABC Supply Co., Inc. has acquired the assets of **America Building Materials**, located in Los Angeles, CA. This acquisition establishes the first ABC Supply location in Los Angeles and the tenth within the surrounding market.

Sears Trostel Lumber & Millwork, a lumber supplier and millwork manufacturer based in Fort Collins, CO since 1929, announced its sale to new owner, David Seidl, a Fort Collins entrepreneur. The company was previously owned by Curt Viehmeyer and Steve Schwartz, who have played a pivotal role in its success and longevity since purchasing the business from the family of Bob Sears in 1981.

Simpson Strong-Tie has acquired Fulton, MO-based **Monet DeSaw Inc.**, a manufacturer of large saws used in the fabrication of trusses within the U.S. and Canada. Since 1992, Monet DeSaw has been building a variety of quality saws ranging from push-button operation to top-of-the-line servo-driven, automated saws.

Cambium announced that it has acquired **Forward Forestry**, the largest network of arborists and tree care companies selling logs in the U.S. With this deal, Cambium will add arborists to its sustainable supply chain OS, increase the supply of fallen trees into its supply chain to boost the production of Carbon Smart Wood.

US LBM has acquired **L.D. Mullins Lumber Company**, a building products distributor serving builders and remodelers in South Florida. Founded in 1946, Mullins Lumber is located in Riviera Beach and will operate as part of US LBM's Raymond Building Supply. With this acquisition, US LBM now operates 18 locations in Florida. Scott and Lev Mullins, who have led the organization since 2005, will continue running day-to-day operations.

MITER Brands announced the sale of **Martin Door** and **CRI SoCal** to Midland Garage Door and Builders FirstSource, Inc., respectively.

Beacon announced that it has completed the acquisition of **Passaic Metal and Building Supplies Co.** (PAMPKO) and certain affiliated companies headquartered in Clifton, NJ. PAMPKO has five branches in New Jersey and one in upstate New York.

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WHAT'S TRENDING



These stories topped the charts in the past month. To see these stories and more, head to LBMJournal.com, and sign up for our daily newsletter.



Sherwin-Williams predicts 2025 color trends



ProVia announces intent to purchase Dalton, OH properties



Beacon opens new locations in Georgia and Texas



Louws Truss: Family-owned business building toward the future

TOUGH CALL SOLUTIONS

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

Dealing with poachers

A large competitor known for poaching talent from existing yards is coming to your market and wooing your key people. The company has earned a reputation for entering small- to medium-sized markets, then crippling existing yards by poaching their key staff members. As much as you disagree with the ethics of their approach, you understand why they do what they do. After all, what better way to take out a competitor than by hiring away its best people? Here's how readers responded to this Tough Call.



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BY RICK DAVIS

FOR MANY YEARS, the prevailing theory of sales presentations has emphasized “feature-benefit” selling. Typically, this teaches a salesperson to describe an abundant list of features and corresponding benefits that completely describes a product or service from A to Z. To that, I say, “Yawn.”

Feature-benefit presentation training starts during the manufacturing tour when classes emphasize things like “good-better-best” selling or rote product presentations. This was a good sales model in the 1990s, but perhaps not so much today. This is not to say that a good product presentation should be avoided, only that it should be more efficient in our modern world of soundbites and short attention spans.

FEATURE-BENEFIT YAWN

Yes, the fancy car might have special safety features, acceleration ratios, atmospheric maximization assets, rack and pinion maneuverability, nighttime lighting efficiency, optimum energy performance, and more. The only thing the buyer might care about is the cool shade of green available. The real issue at hand is that a single one-size-fits-all approach to a presentation is usually not the best option.

On the upside, feature-benefit presentations cover the gamut of your capabilities and get your story out. They also provide a list of legitimate benefits you offer. Conversely, they are long-winded and often cause salespeople

to overstay their welcome. They can also deliver superfluous information that waters down the essential message to influence buyers.

So, what is the alternative? Try the “If, then...” presentation approach. For instance, if a buyer describes a specific problem scheduling orders, then the salesperson should present an option to enhance efficiency. If a buyer states that they are struggling to find good subcontractors, then a referral will enhance a business relationship nicely.

The “If-then” presentation requires a bit of listening and understanding prior to a sales pitch. The process of listening is of course essential to the sales process. It provides an opportunity to deliver a short, well-directed presentation that addresses the one or two specific issues challenging a buyer.

Consider the various audiences you deal with every day in your sales career. There are contractors, subcontractors, remodelers, new home builders, and the occasional consumer visit conducted side-by-side with the contractor. Within each of these audience categories, there are people performing different roles that require different levels of support at different times during the process.

For an LBM salesperson, it’s vital to recognize these different audiences and stages of the sales process. Early in the relationship building process, it’s the owner and marketing wing of a contractor organization that must be persuaded to use your products in their projects. After that, the sale is to the staff in charge of execution that must be sold and trained. This requires tailored listening skills to reveal the right presentation strategies.

For example, a builder will value a presentation about a product that produces enhanced profit on a project while an architect will be much more interested in product features and specifications. A consumer will want to know about long-term maintenance of a product and corresponding warranties, subjects that might not compel a builder.

Ultimately the best sales presenters are those who can influence buyers by understanding the situation and audience, then specifically addressing their unique challenges. Sometimes this means slowing the sales process in the short-term to produce better long-term results.

Try to catch yourself during presentations to determine if you’re delivering a message that will tailor to your specific buyer. If not, or in doubt, then ask a question. It’s the surest way to get on track. Most importantly, first figure out the key issues faced by your buying audience and the quality of your presentations will flow naturally. And if you’re asking me what rack and pinion maneuverability is, I haven’t a clue. I just like the way my car looks in my driveway.



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

I HAVE SPENT OVER 1,000 hours researching building material salespeople who have acquired sufficient knowledge, wisdom, and judgment to sell at a relatively high gross margin. Notice the words I used. I did not use luck or false promises. Selling at a reasonably high gross margin requires dedication and commitment.

Fortunately for me, I had a boss who recognized my passion for studying this subject and instilled in me the importance of keeping good notes each time I interviewed a salesperson who provided solid evidence of how he or she approached pricing.

While virtually all salespeople strive for their customer base to believe they are keeping them competitive in the marketplace, those with the highest gross margins don't emphasize price; rather, they emphasize accuracy, timeliness, and a highly professional level of communication.

Pricing isn't really much of a factor unless all else is equal. It is the job of the salesperson to supply the evidence that all else is not equal. The key word is evidence. Most salespeople claim to have outstanding service, but only a few keep score. In fact, I don't believe I have ever heard a salesperson say to a prospect, "We have really crappy service, but rock bottom prices." Virtually all salespeople claim to have terrific service.

WISDOM HELPS SALESPEOPLE IMPROVE GROSS MARGIN



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

If salespeople can't produce documentation that their company performs at a consistently higher level than their competitors, it is extremely difficult to avoid service squabbles. So keep score! Document your company's service level and use that documentation as a sales tool.

One of my favorite questions to ask salespeople in seminars is, "If I do business with you on this job, what are the odds that your material will arrive on the job by the time you say it will?"

The answer I usually hear is, "Pretty good." What I'd like to hear is, "Well, year-to-date, 91.7% of the time, we have had material on the job by the time we committed it would be there."

No matter how hard they try, contractors run out of material. They forget to place an order. They need an emergency delivery yesterday. Their window order missed the deadline. They need a Saturday delivery and your drivers don't work on weekends.

This is the real world. How well does your company solve real world problems?

Avoid doing business with price buyers. When you sell price buyers, you don't have enough profit to afford the services contractors need to be efficient. Price buyers will change suppliers over a 10-cent difference in price, and are often your most demanding customers.

Salespeople who live by the sword (price) usually die by the sword (price). It is difficult to remain competitive when you're selling price buyers. Your price is almost never consistently low enough.

Companies in our industry that earn top dollar—9% to 12% before income taxes—rarely have the lowest price, but they frequently provide the highest level of service. They can afford to buy the delivery equipment to enable their contractor customers to better control their costs. They can afford to field a high-quality, well-trained, sales force.

As a salesperson, do you look, act, and feel as if you are worth every dollar you charge for the products you sell? Top dollar salespeople look like they are successful. They are confident in themselves, but no one would ever accuse them of being arrogant. They ask excellent questions. They want to know what they must do to be even more valuable to their customers. They enjoy being of service.

On just about every sales force there are a handful of salespeople whose gross margins lead the field. Their customers rarely question anything these salespeople have to say. They are respected. They are trustworthy. And they are leaders both on the job and off the job. Their customers seek their wise counsel.

These men and women are known for their wisdom.

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BY THEA DUDLEY

CLEARING OUT CREDIT APPLICATIONS

Hello there Thea,
How long do we have to keep inactive customer credit applications in our files?

— Itching for some Spring Cleaning

Dear Spring Cleaner,

Credit files are like your closet. How long do you keep your old prom dresses, jeans that will never get past your knees, concert t-shirts, and other assorted wearable memorabilia? It depends on who you are. Some people toss all that stuff the minute it becomes apparent it no longer is an active part of their existence. Others keep items they've had since the sixth grade because you never know when you may need to bust out a SpongeBob sweatshirt.

There is no law that requires you to keep an inactive customer's credit application. But let's be clear—by inactive, I mean they do not owe you any money or are in some other legal entanglement with your company.

Let's go a step further. There is inactivating an account for lack of purchasing and then there is purging your files. What is your company's view on non-purchasing accounts? Do you leave them open indefinitely? They may be back and bless you with an order (usually once they are cut off from their current favorite supplier). Do you mark the account inactive at six months, a year, two years? It comes down to your policy and comfort level.

If they haven't purchased from me in six months, I want to know where they have been all those months. I may not

make them fill out a new credit application, but I sure am going to pull a credit report and ask my sales rep where they have been getting their materials and how did the magical reconnection occur? Are they needing a product line only we have? Did they reach their limit at our competitor? Ran into them at church and now they feel beholden to you? Where have they been purchasing and how did we catch their eye again?

Once those questions have been addressed, we can backtrack to the purging I mentioned. One of the many benefits of tech has been scanning customer credit files and eliminating all those lovely metal filing cabinets. Credit files are the catchall of random bits of information that are no longer useful, but our paranoid—for good reason—credit hearts can't seem to let go. Interesting in a "saw it in a museum" kind of way, but useless. No one is looking for a trade reference or credit report from 1946. Purge all those useless bits but keep what has historical value: The credit application.

I'll repeat: dump the useless bits and keep the application. If you haven't already, scan them and attach it to the customer's account or however your company stores that data. If your lost little sheep comes back, require a new credit application and process it like a brand spanking new account. The old app provides you valuable insight: you can compare the ownership and other details to see what has changed, if anything.

Inactive accounts that pass the two-year mark can be archived, complete with any and all credit applications. All you lose is a little storage space. If the customer is completely out of business, it's your call on hitting the delete button.

That is the longer answer to your simple question. You don't have to keep them. Just like any fashion trend, customers come and go and while they may look the same, the devil is in the details. That old app may provide some great insight and make you look great by comparison—SpongeBob sweatshirt optional.



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

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BY JOHN D. WAGNER

STARTING TO think about seeking an acquirer? Prepare in advance by classifying your accounts receivable (AR) with a cold eye to determine what's collectible, what's doubtful, and what's just plain old bad debt. As you begin, note that there's no shame in having some bad debt. Everyone company has some; it's unavoidable.

Undertaking this AR review (or more accurately an exercise to score the collectability of your AR) will almost certainly be more intense when prepping for an acquisition than if you were just continuing under private ownership. As a private company that's not seeking acquisition, your accounts receivable management is likely a little personal. In other words, you likely know the holders of the accounts that are getting close to those 60- or 90-day trigger points. You and your credit manager may have even let someone slide into danger zones of overly dated AR because that customer has always paid *eventually*, or that you know they are waiting on an escrow release, or that their lot draw-down got delayed, which delayed the bank draw. And why lose a customer over a few days (or a few dozens of days) delay in getting your money?

This entirely changes when you seek to be acquired. Whether the acquirer is backed by private equity, or is a public corporation, or a competitor across town, these acquirers will bring a (potentially uncomfortable) rigor and ruthlessness to examining accounts receivable.

BEING REALISTIC WITH TYPES OF ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE



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

Sophisticated acquirers won't be sentimental about "XYZ" Construction's 90-plus day AR bill, just because you happen to play softball or go fishing with XYZ's owners. Your credit manager can make the case all day long that, "Well, sure, XYZ is consistently 80-plus days out, but they do eventually pay!" Sorry, that's not going to fly under new ownership.

Let's say that you have found an acquirer, you've signed a letter of intent (LOI), and you are now in *exclusivity* with that acquirer. Exclusivity means you've selected the winning bidder and turned away other suitors. Now you enter "due diligence," and the acquirer will ask for—among many other reports—an AR report that includes *aging*. This report will show accrual for bad debt (if you accrue), bad/uncollectible debt, doubtful accounts, and AR that's aged sub-30, 30-60, 60-90, and 90-plus days.

The acquirer will work with you and your investment banker (the seller's representative in the sale) to review a Net Working Capital "peg" that shows which accounts receivable will convey to the acquirer when the deal closes. You'll find that the acquirer will want only the accounts receivable that is mutually deemed *collectible*. It's highly unlikely that the acquirer will take overly aged accounts receivable. If they do assume aged accounts receivable that's deemed *potentially* collectable, there will be a negotiated allowance of, say, between 90 and 180 days post-close, to see if the accounts receivable actually comes in. If it

doesn't come in, you, the seller, have to buy that debt, dollar for dollar, from the acquirer, which is effectively a reduction of purchase price for that dollar amount.

How should you prepare accounts receivable when going into an acquisition? First, note that the condition of your accounts receivable will be looked

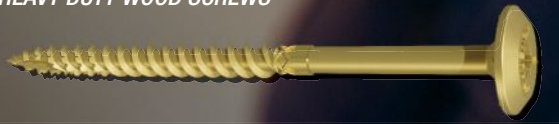
upon as a leading indicator of your overall accounting "hygiene." So, long before seeking acquisition, work with your credit manager to accrue for bad debt, either A) as a percent of your overall sales, or B) by scoring the collectability of accounts receivable, in buckets of 30, 60, 90, and 90-plus. Be realistic. If you suspect or know the debt will never be paid, or is even *on the bubble* for collectability, write it off. Then, as your investment banker prepares the deal offering document—called a *confidential informational memorandum*, or CIM—you can confidently state that all the bad debt has been cleaned up, which will be reflected in a line item of the New Working Capital "peg," a figure that determines how much money will be left in the business at the closing. Believe me, it's a "very good look" to have this done ahead of time.

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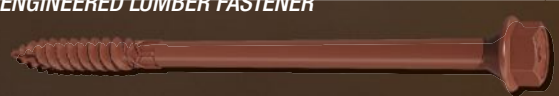
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BY RUSS KATHREIN

MOST OF US HAVE SEEN the post on LinkedIn of a list titled, “10 Things That Require Zero Talent.” They are common-sense traits that will make a person stand out when they start a job, regardless of one’s experience. As a leader, you have the opportunity to not only share these qualities, but you can coach your people on how to live up to them. I like to use analogies and phrases because they stick in people’s minds.

COACH THE 10 THINGS THAT REQUIRE ZERO TALENT

Here are some ways to coach these traits:

1. Be on time: At a person’s start time or meeting, they should be there ready to start, not walking in. Teach about “Lombardi Time,” where Coach Vince Lombardi taught his team, “If you are on time, you are late.” Even as a lifelong Bears fan, I still share this quote.

2. Work ethic: A job worth doing, is worth doing well. For young people, working for you may be their first job. Coach them with, “There are seven days in a week. Someday is not one of them.”

3. Effort: People often associate effort with trying. I agree with Yoda, who said “Do or do not. There is no try.” The initial effort is easy, but putting in extra effort when no one is looking or when things get hard makes a difference. If you think you can, you can. If you think you can’t, you’re right!



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

4. Body language: Many people entering the workplace are used to communicating through texting. People just coming out of school spent much of their time being taught via video. They may not know how to read body language, and they might not know how their own body language sends a message. Assume your people aren’t aware of the vibe they are giving off, and give them some subtle coaching. Emotion always has its roots in the unconscious and manifests itself in the body.

5. Energy (Motivation): You can’t teach people to be motivated, but as a leader, you can inspire them. Be the leader you would want to follow.

6. Attitude: A positive attitude is tough to teach, but a positive attitude brings positive results. I’ll take a middle-of-the-road talent with a positive attitude over a talented person who is toxic any day.

7. Passion: The fire of passion gets stoked by a good leader, and nothing will kill a person’s passion faster than a poor leader. Giving people responsibilities and letting them fail is much more effective in the long run, rather than micro-managing someone to succeed.

8. Be coachable: Help your people take coaching as encouragement, not criticism. The key is in how you deliver the message. People won’t remember what you did, people won’t remember what you said, but people will always remember how you made them feel.

9. Do extra: There is an easy and quick way and a better way. When given a choice between the high road and the low road, always choose the high road. It may take more effort, but it has a heck of a view!

10. Be prepared: Fast is slow, and slow is fast. Taking the time to get one’s thoughts in order before communicating something will make for a more concise message and save time because people will understand what is being said. Joe Hardy of 84 Lumber would tell his people, “Always bring a pen and paper to a meeting. You might not write down anything important, but at least I feel like you are listening to me.”

Taking the time to coach the 10 traits that require zero talent can significantly impact your team’s performance and culture. As a leader, your ability to inspire, guide, and support your people by helping them embody these traits will lead to more motivated and successful associates.

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Savings vary. Find out why in the seller's fact sheet on R-values. "R" means resistance to heat flow. Higher R-values mean greater insulating power.

5 CONSIDERATIONS TO HELP CUSTOMERS CHOOSE THE RIGHT DECKING PRODUCTS

With a broad range of decking options to choose from, decision-making may get a little stressful for consumers, whether you're working with them directly at the counter or via a contractor customer. Here are a few questions to ask and things to consider to help narrow the choices.

Budget: While composite decking tends to be more expensive than treated wood, there are a broad range of options to meet nearly any budget. For example, TimberTech® by AZEK® offers both capped polymer decking with their TimberTech® Advanced PVC and capped composite decking with their TimberTech® Composite decking lines. Both options offer a variety of collections with colors to suit any aesthetic.

Performance Expectations: Are the homeowners replacing a rotting wood deck or otherwise looking for a material that requires less maintenance? Step one will be pointing them toward an engineered product, like TimberTech® Advanced PVC or TimberTech® Composite decking, which is moisture resistant, easy to clean, won't splinter, and comes with a fade and stain limited warranty.

Innovation: TimberTech® Composite decking innovates beyond traditional composite decking with realistic wood looks and a proprietary, protective polymer cap that locks out moisture and locks in rich color. From there, buyers can narrow down aesthetics and price points, such as the reclaimed wood look of the Reserve Collection or the subtle wood grain of the Terrain+ Collection®.

TimberTech® Advanced PVC decking delivers the company's most realistic wood looks with unparalleled performance compared to anything else on the market. Advanced PVC decking also comes in several collections, including exotic hardwood looks in the Vintage Collection®, as well as with multi-width decking and porch options.

Patterns and Combinations: Depending on the size of the deck and its primary uses, customers may want to blend different colors and board sizes. For example, larger expanses can be broken up with boards in a different hue, picture-framed to add contrast, or installed with different widths or in a herringbone pattern to add visual interest. Inlays and borders can set off "rooms" of the deck, such as a conversation space or dining area.

Color: There's no single best color for decking. The customer's best option will depend on what they value most in terms of aesthetics, performance, and function. Consider these factors:

- **Materials:** Certain deck materials fade more than others. While wood will inevitably fade and discolor over time, engineered decking like TimberTech® Advanced PVC is designed to retain its color for the long-haul.
- **Landscaping:** Landscaping will affect which deck colors go best with the yard. Lush green lawns pair well with rich brown decking, while a colorful garden may pair best with neutral gray decking.
- **Sun exposure:** What level of sun exposure will the deck receive? TimberTech® decking stays cooler to the touch and friendlier to bare feet than many other deck board products. While all decking products will get hot in the sun the darker the decking color, the hotter it will feel; for hotter climates, consider choosing a lighter color.
- **Interior flooring:** Customers can either coordinate the colors of their decking with interior flooring for a seamless transition or can contrast them for a defined line.
- **Home color:** The most eye-catching homes are those that feature a color palette of a primary, secondary, and tertiary color, with primary being the most prominent color.



CHOOSING A MANUFACTURER

Along with these decisions, aligning with one manufacturer for all decking, railing, fasteners, accessories, and aluminum framing offers a number of benefits to both contractors and the homeowners.

For example, contractors working with products manufactured by TimberTech® across all categories can enjoy labor warranties, rebate benefits, and customer support and training, along with the benefits of working with a single manufacturer on warranties.

For homeowners, choosing TimberTech® for their outdoor oasis brings a broad range of product styles, colors, and price points while delivering reassurance on performance and fire resistance. Plus, working with a TimberTech®-certified contractor brings peace of mind that the job will be done right, the first time.

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There's more to composites than just a pretty face

KEVIN TURNER

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS
NEWTECHWOOD

LBM pros have many options when it comes to composite materials. What should they know about these options when making a product choice?

There are so many good products in the market to choose from. Educating yourself on the different brands and the materials they are comprised of is the real difference. High-quality, High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) like NewTechWood is a leader in capped composite. What is the core material made of? Is it a fully capped board? Is the cap stock consistent around the entire board? Aesthetics play a part, but if the board fails, what good is the color?

How do you see the growth of interest in green building, sustainability, and resiliency?

Recycled, sustainable products are on the rise with designers and architects. Consumers want to use products that they connect with and know they are doing their part in

protecting our natural resources. For manufacturers, it's all about having the highest quality product with the highest recycled content. It's incumbent on us all to strive for better products with the least impact on the earth.

What changes or upcoming trends do you see in the near future for composite materials?


Higher quality recycled consumer and post-industrial recycled, materials that we can reuse into other products. The technology and the optics of the finished products we are now making are amazing. We are constantly striving to create better products that blow away the consumer's expectations for aesthetics. We strive for the "wow" factor with all our products.

In a world where builders are constantly dealing with diminished workforces, how can composite products help builders work smarter or faster?

Beyond the great looks, we are value-engineering our products for ease of installation. Finding labor these days is tough. We continually engage contractors to provide feedback on, "How can we make this easier to install, and where can we cut installation time?" Then we take seriously the feedback and do trial installations. Over the years, this process has proven to be the impetus of better products with greater performance.

How can composite products be used in ways other than decking?

At NewTechWood we have a full complement of siding and cladding. Both in European designs that are more modern and contemporary, as well as simple lap-style profiles. The colors are robust and there are many to choose from. There are also deck tiles, furniture, and trim. Currently, we are launching a line of composite material over an aluminum substrate called Alusions. Composites are also going to the interior of homes. This category has so much growth and evolution still ahead!



Kevin Turner has been in the lumber and building products industry since 1985, working in retail sales and management, lumber, and manufacturing distribution—and for the last 20 years in composite manufacturing of decking, railing, siding, and trim. He has held various management positions and is now one of the senior leaders with NewTechWood.

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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.



Maze Lumber

Peru, IL | mazelumber.com

LOCATIONS: 1

ESTABLISHED: 1848

“Business longevity is certainly not attained through magic. Consistent and genuine attention to customer needs is a fundamental philosophy our family business has practiced since 1848. Right out of college, and prior to my career here at Maze Lumber, I worked for a lumber wholesaler in Bloomington, IL. In the office at the time was a large poster of a lion, with the heading, ‘CUSTOMER IS KING!’ I still recall my 21-year-old self and some other younger coworkers scoffing at such a ridiculous claim. Over the years, I have come to understand how timeless those words of wisdom are. Surrounding oneself with like-thinking employees is key, and we have been fortunate to do that. In this interesting political climate, I think of James Carville’s phrase in the early ‘90s that, ‘It’s the economy, stupid.’ Well, in the long run, it’s not the economy, it’s the people!”

— Pete Loveland, general manager



Tracy Lumber

Fayetteville, NY | tracylumber.com

LOCATIONS: 1

ESTABLISHED: 1909

“Our 115th anniversary is a testament to the enduring legacy of B.H. Tracy & Sons. For over a century, we’ve been privileged to serve the Fayetteville community, and we’re incredibly grateful for the trust and support of our customers, partners, and employees throughout the years. We really want to thank our customer base because without them we wouldn’t be here. They have been very good and loyal to us and we try to reciprocate.”

— Ed Tracy, owner and CEO



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.

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This Sprenger yard in Moorhead, MN covers almost 10 acres and includes a rack-supported building, large warehouse, and more.

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When Sprenger Midwest Wholesale Lumber has a big construction project, they have one number on speed dial.

Sometimes it's not that complicated. For Steve Sprenger, owner of Sprenger Midwest, that's largely been the case. "We're a wholesaler, so our yard and facility needs aren't particularly complex – but they're almost always big." And for the last 2+ decades, they have turned to two names for help with the big ones: CT Darnell Construction and Sunbelt Rack.

According to Steve, **"We keep going back to CT Darnell because we've had success with every project they've done. They are industry specific, they know the lumber and building supplies business, the racking is top-notch, and the storage space is ample."**

So, it was no surprise that when Steve and Operations Manager, Jeff Lanner, were ready to build a new massive storage warehouse at their Moorhead location, they picked up the phone and called Rick Stout at CT Darnell.

When you have 20+ years of partnership and projects under your belt, ramp-up time and lengthy exploratory calls aren't necessary. According to Rick, "Jeff and Steve knew what they wanted, I was able to offer some tweaks to maximize their flow and productivity, and we were off to the races."

"We trust Rick and the guys at CT Darnell," expressed Jeff, "they know their business. And better yet, they know our business. I just give Rick the SKUs we are looking to supply and he comes up with the best plan to maximize volume, space, and access." Steve emphatically agreed, **"If you're looking to expand or improve your yard, your first call should be to CT Darnell."**

Project Scope:

- 6,000 sq. ft. 3-sided bulk storage shed
- 32,000 sq. ft. warehouse building
- 11,500 sq. ft. double-aisle cantilever rack-supported drive-thru building
- 115' and 155' runs of 17' tall cantilever rack for lumber storage

Scan to Watch the Video



Zuern Building Products and Design Center undertook a project to transform its 60,000-sq.-ft. warehouse. Working with CT Darnell and Sunbelt Rack, the company now uses a mix of standard and customized steel racks for their over 600 SKUs.

Investments in systems now help prepare for years ahead

BY WENDY STURGES

MATERIAL HANDLING

IF YOU'VE EVER HAD TO install an organization system in a garage where there wasn't one before, you know what a difference it can make to your mindset. Enough space to hang all your tools, with room for future purchases? Check. Proper storage for paint and chemicals? Check. Special containers for individual nails, bolts and screws? Triple check. Without the disorganization, you can rest easy knowing exactly where everything is. You might even finally start a project on your to-do list.

Imagine that feeling on a lumberyard scale: how easily you could find inventory on-hand and be able to use your space to its fullest potential.

That's what Zuern Building Products envisioned when it embarked on a project to utilize a 60,000-sq.-ft warehouse for centralized storage for windows, doors, millwork, and cabinetry. The Wisconsin-based building materials dealer partnered with Sunbelt Rack and CT Darnell Construction to create a climate-controlled hub for customized storage.

Zuern Financial Controller Brendon Kons said the project has been a gamechanger: trim orders are picked faster, the number of trucks needed has reduced from seven to five, and the ability to maximize space on those trucks has increased, leading to more deliveries overall.

"Since the completion of the project, we have grown our millwork category sales by 51% over a three-year time span," he said. "Based on the storage solutions put in place by CT Darnell and Sunbelt Rack, we have used the model as a marketing tool to showcase best-in-class handling and storage of millwork related items, which in turn has led to new business. So much so that we have placed numerous repeat orders for storage solution components—mainly millwork racks as we have ordered an additional 240 since the inception of the project. The ability to utilize the storage solutions as proposed has allowed us to bring in additional materials, reduce the number of times the products is



handled, and limit the number of headcount additions within the operation.”

Beyond the basic operational needs, the project goes to show how much of an impact custom storage can have for a yard or facility. So much so, Kons said the company has already completed work on another storage project.

“We just completed a 24,000-sq.-ft. addition to our facility in Slinger, which CT Darnell and Sunbelt Rack provided the racking solution for that space as they did the initial build-out. We have a rack-supported building on order for our Watertown facility, which construction should begin on later this year,” he said. “Given the partnership and repeat business with both CT Darnell and Sunbelt Rack, it is evident we trust them as partner in our business and will look to build on material handling solutions for years to come.”

An answer to labor woes?

While the U.S. unemployment rate—currently sitting at about 4% as of June 2024—has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, according to Department of Labor figures, finding the right people for open roles remains one of the largest concerns for many LBM dealers.

In fact, in our “LBM 100” survey conducted earlier this year, more than 70% of dealers reported that hiring and retaining talent has remained an issue. And 51% of those companies reported that yard workers were among the toughest to hire, second only to drivers.

Additionally, the rising costs of both labor and goods has made the need for efficiency more important than ever, because as we all know, time is money. According to data from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, average hourly wages have been steadily on the rise since late 2021.

While it’s not a cure-all, Sue Silva, marketing director for Sunbelt Rack/CT Darnell Construction, argues that having the right system in place can make a huge difference.

“The issue today is more about rising labor costs rather than labor shortages. So, for LBM dealers, there’s a premium on finding ways to reduce labor inputs. Using the right racking systems and material-handling equipment, like multi-directional forklifts and automated bin systems, can dramatically increase efficiency,” she says. “For example, we recently

completed a ... facility for a lumberyard in the Southeast. The branch manager remarked that at one of its older yards, it could take two employees 3.5 hours to pull a standard 2,000-sq.-ft. house framing package. Now at this new yard, one employee can do the same job in about an hour. That’s a huge gain in manpower efficiency, all due to using the right lumberyard layout, and storage and handling solutions.” ▶



According to Sunbelt Rack, its board-bin mezzanines are designed to deliver maximum storage in small areas. Built for hand-loading long-length items such as lumber, pipe, and vinyl siding into pigeonhole-type bins, the racks are available in any number of openings and any height, width or depth.



Sunbelt Rack’s millwork stack racks are movable, stackable storage systems for windows, doors and other products. Because they’re movable, millwork can be loaded directly at the assembly area and then be moved to a warehouse or staging area. According to Sunbelt, they can be stacked up to three racks high, allowing for high-density storage and saving warehouse floor space.

Kons agreed, adding that their improvements allow for less material handling, leading to an overall increase in quality.

“Eliminating touches on product does so much more than eliminate labor costs,” he said. “While it is hard to truly measure the number of touches on a product, we all know that lessening the number of touches is the ultimate win. By eliminating touches on millwork products you are ensuring the product quality and integrity to ensure customer and end-user satisfaction. The ability to modernize millwork material handling with the use of equipment and racking components that allow utilization of height within buildings instead of additional square footage requirements is a cost that we underestimated going into this project. The storage and racking solutions provided by CT Darnell and Sunbelt Rack have eliminated the need to build additional facility and allow other facilities to be repurposed for storage of other product categories.”

In addition to creating more efficiencies, Dell White, sales and marketing manager for Sellick Equipment Limited, adds that investing

in upgraded facilities in equipment can help with employee retainment by giving them a more comfortable place to work.

“LBM dealers that maintain newer fleets and provide operators with options like enclosed air-conditioned cabs, and hydraulic fork positioners to improve productivity, will benefit from retaining longer-term employees,” White explained.

Busier seasons on the horizon

Another trend seen in the LBM industry that contributes to demand in materials and handling is consolidation, Silva says.

“Although there’s some concern that interest rates will stay high due to lingering inflation, we are seeing a modest increase in demand and expect it to be sustained over the next year. A major reason for this is that the more successful lumberyards are only getting stronger. Along with continuing to invest in their facilities, they are acquiring weaker-performing yards and upgrading them to make them more efficient and profitable. Additional demand for LBM storage and material-handling solutions

CT Darnell’s Sue Silva recommends working with a company with experience creating customized systems for LBM dealers, such as Griffin Lumber & Hardware’s warehouse redesign pictured below.





FAR LEFT: In addition to accessible SKUs on grade and catwalk levels, Krauter's Auto-Stak System now includes an added mezzanine level to utilize 100% of the cubic space. According to the manufacturer, case studies have shown an increase in SKU density of 30-40%, with the added bonus of capturing back the square footage via top mezzanine platform.

LEFT: Built for Shell Lumber, this fully galvanized cantilever drive-thru canopy from Krauter Auto-Stak is in a location with wind loads up to 168 mph.

is coming from the home-improvement big-box stores. Small-scale and DIY renovations are down significantly from recent years, and these retailers are now making changes to cater more to professional business.”

With interest rates not dropping as quickly as previously expected, analysts are seeing signs of a more approachable housing market. As of this writing in Summer 2024, mortgage applications were on the rise and inflation has begun to ease, signaling growing confidence in the industry.

“While there are some trouble spots on the economic horizon, fortunately, not all areas of the economy are negatively impacted. Resource based economies should see continue growth and the LBM dealers in those regions should still remain vibrant and be in need to replace material handling equipment,” said Sellick’s White.

Additionally, White said companies gearing up for growing demand should ensure their equipment is up to the task.

“It seems loads are getting heavier, trusses are getting larger, so when specifying equipment, the trend is to go up in capacity to ensure the machinery meets the requirements.”

Silva said dealers who might be hesitant to make improvements to their material handling and storage should consider working with a company to find customized solutions that work for them, rather than overspending on basic warehouse systems.

“Often, hesitation about making changes stems from the assumption that improvements will be cost-prohibitive. So, the one piece of advice I would give to all dealers is to work with a company that specializes in LBM facility

design. You want someone who starts the process by taking a holistic view of your current facility and understanding what it is you want to accomplish. Beyond that, every yard is different, and any advice or recommendations should be tailored to each particular operation. Drive-thru sheds and changes in layout could be a game-changer for one yard; for another, it might be adding stack racks and an automated bin system. Ultimately, the result should be improvements in capacity, traffic flow, material handling efficiency, and the customer experience, along with reduced cull and labor costs. Gains in these areas are what produce a timely ROI.” ■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS



The Sunbelt Rack Power Bin handles and stores lumber, siding, moulding, composite decking, and other materials. According to the manufacturer, a battery-operated loader places material into pigeonhole bins equipped with heavy-duty rollers in approximately one minute. The bins can be customized and configured to specific needs.

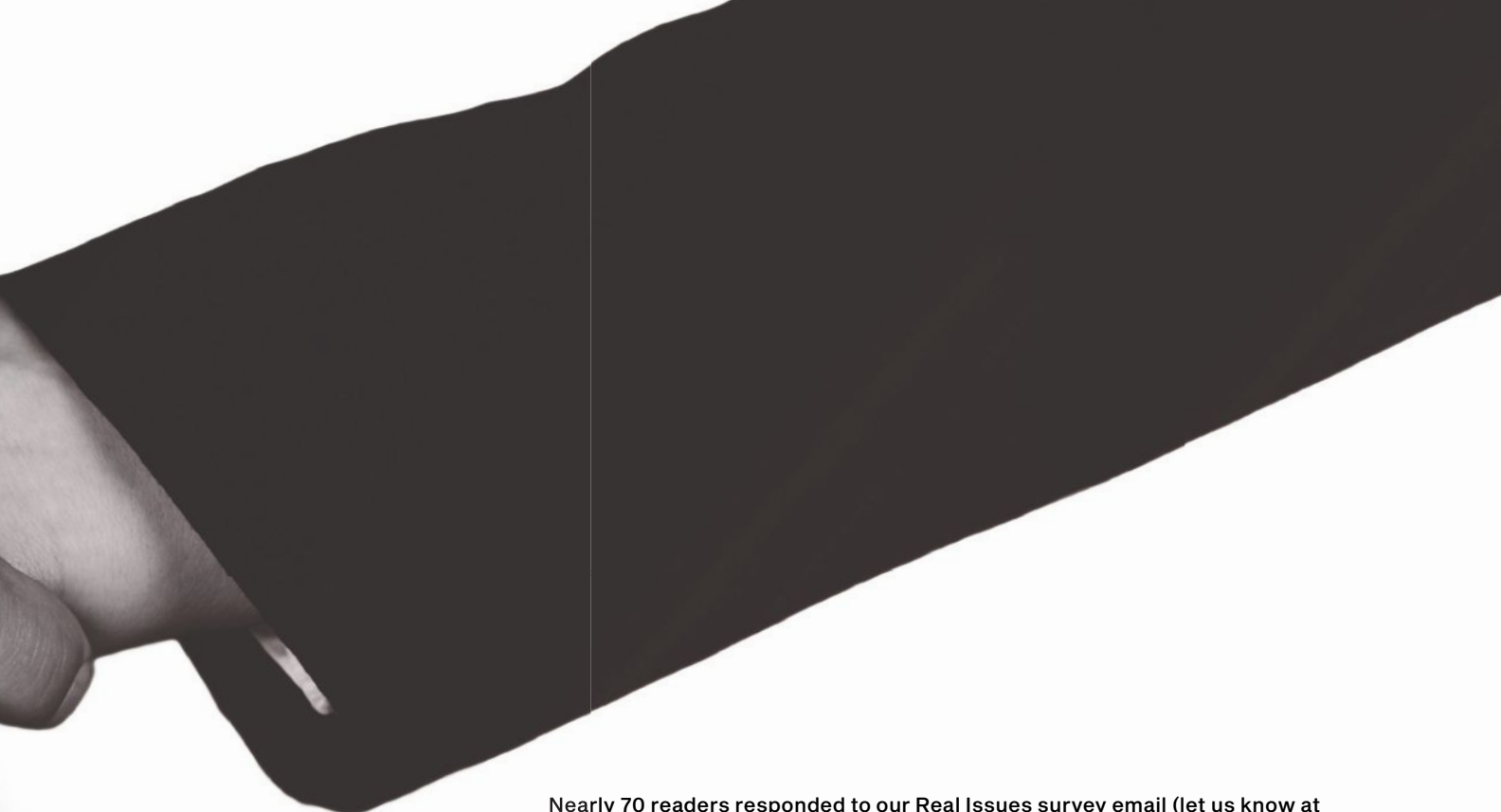
REAL ISSUES. REAL ANSWERS.



FALLOUT FROM VENDOR CONSOLIDATION

BY LBM JOURNAL READERS

Longtime LBM dealers are no stranger to consolidation within the industry. But dealing with the aftermath of vendor and/or wholesaler distributor acquisitions can be a whole different story. From changing longtime relationships to new inventory issues, it can be a lot to handle, particularly for smaller dealers.



Nearly 70 readers responded to our Real Issues survey email (let us know at operations@lbmjournals.com if you'd like to be on the list). **THE QUESTION:**



Our challenge has to do with the consolidation of our wholesale-distributor partners. We've noticed that the communication from our long-time wholesale distributor partners has gone sharply downhill since they were acquired. Plus, we're seeing more problems with inventory availability and supply chain issues than since the peak of Covid a few years ago. We'd love to learn how others are dealing with this. 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:

"You're not alone and I feel your pain. It's getting increasingly more challenging to be an independent in the land of giants, especially when the giants keep buying up the smaller independent distributors."

"Can't control what others do. Do what you have to do."

"Have the hard conversation, find out the reason, and do what is right for your company. Let them know they may lose your business due to lack of performance. We have had luck with this and performance has improved. Unfortunately, vendors get comfortable with people they think are loyal to them and slack off. Every now and then they need to be reminded that this is a competitive market and they need to be an asset to you or you will move on and find a new partner."

"Do business with the people that you can count on—move on from the 'non-performers.'"

"Bring up your concerns with your sales rep and his manager, and if there is no improvement, you have to start looking for new partners because someone else's shortfalls should not affect your business or your service levels that you provide to your customers."

"We have given business to other wholesalers but unfortunately for some products we only have one distributor in our area and when they don't have material we need when we need it—it is a nightmare."

"We are finding other vendors to fill the gap left by the previous vendor. This is a time consuming exercise." ►

“We have had the same experience with lack of communication with our vendors. Not only from consolidation but from turnover. On top of that, it seems more and more vendors are setting up to make everything self-serve, so they expect you to take care of everything yourself— i.e. online ordering, online warranties, etc. It really takes the personal relationships we used to cultivate with our vendors out of the picture and I think it affects confidence and loyalty between us and them. Unfortunately, we have not come up with a solution to the problem either, but when we notice this happening with a particular vendor we have reached out and expressed our concerns to their management. Some have responded positively and made adjustments.”

“Using buying groups.”

“Too much centralized decision making with regional impact. We are trying to strengthen our relationship with remaining independent distributors. We push larger consolidated wholesalers/ manufacturers to provide service and pricing at agreed upon levels.”

“Covid-19 affected all availability and lead times on inventory and shipping costs. It’s slightly better now.”

“Search for multiple suppliers in the category.”

“Keep relationships open with other vendors for this very reason. Give their competitor a few orders and see if their service is better than your primary vendor.”

“Service is poor at best. It is no longer about relationships and only about money. Longtime A-list vendors have become average at best.”

“I am trying to operate very efficiently. We do a lot of special orders.”

“This is very similar to what we have experienced. We have also lost long term partners who were key to many of our successes. A 20-30-year vet to a 6-year or less manager.”

“This hasn’t affected us significantly.”

“We get frustrated first, then work to deal with the problem. We have seen reduced turns by having more inventory to cover their outages offset by a higher sell price to make up for it. But we satisfy our customers’ needs. We also need to be even more diligent at reviewing every delivery, confirmation and email I order to make sure an order is correct.”

“Tighten up your internal communication processes and insist on the same excellence from your vendors as well as your customers.”

“Just keep swimming.”

“Lack of communication and lack of relationship, just no connection other than price.”

“Consolidation of vendors leaves shortages of materials as you only have one vendor.”

“Not a problem for our business.”

“You know, when I was a young man I had the mistaken impression that life would be easier as I got older and (hopefully) wiser. I now know that it doesn’t get easier and each day will have its own unique challenges. Once you reach the top of one hill you find another, more challenging hill ahead. My advice to this dealer would be to embrace the challenge and, eventually, find the solution that makes your company not only as strong/competitive/efficient as before, but better. There are a good many wholesaler/distributors out there. A new one may be the solution to this predicament.”



You and your competitors are all in the same boat, it’s a level playing field out there, you just have to work harder to maintain and grow your business.”





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Responses from wholesale distributors, manufacturers, and service providers:

“We have had to do many face-to-face meetings with the management team and still haven’t seen an improvement. The local management understands the challenge, but their upper management doesn’t seem capable of action.”

“The communication issues could be coming with changes in personnel. The new ownership needs to be more proactive to keep the business (customers) that just came with the acquisition.”

“Honest communication.”

“Consolidated companies are mostly concerned with inventory turns and improving return on investment. It is difficult to transfer that mindset to better customer service with a more diversified inventory.”

“As a stand-alone, family-owned distributor, we have gained momentum from surrounding competitors being gobbled up and seemingly lost their focus after being brought into a larger business entity with investors to please. My suggestion would be to search for independent customer focused distributors—trust me, we are out there!”

“We are seeing the same issues and have been forced to locate other suppliers who can provide the quality service we expect.”

“Companies get acquired and then all of the systems need to be migrated together or they operate different systems which makes things challenging. The true issue is that companies get so big that they stop focusing on the customer and service and look at data only.”

“Hyper communication and focus is the only way to stay on top of this.”

“Wholesale distributors should not be having communication issues, or inventory issues, at this time. The industry is down from peak volumes at the distributor-level, and customer service should be excellent. I would recommend scanning the market for other suppliers that are ready to be responsive and help you succeed in the market.”

“It is a must to have quality current purchase history reports. As a rule, we recommend to keep a 60-day supply of A items on-hand, and a 30-day supply for B-D items.”

“Supply chain issues do not exist as of now.”

“We are also seeing communication and service drop significantly. It’s as if the acquiring company doesn’t care about current relationships. ‘This is how we do things now,’ seems to be the response to problems. We’re seeing billing problems with invoices not matching purchase orders. Our team is spending hours trying to figure out what the ‘new’ vendor is doing. It’s very frustrating. Likely our team will look for another vendor to meet our needs, which is sad as we’ve had this relationship for over 20 years.”

“They seem to have decided that their overhead is now our overhead.”

“Not yet. Since Covid-19, most vinyl and wood window manufacturers added 30%+ production volume. When interest rates start to come down, supply issues will become a factor in the window supply chain.”

“Look for other—possibly smaller—service-focused partners. Large conglomerates that perform well are rare.”



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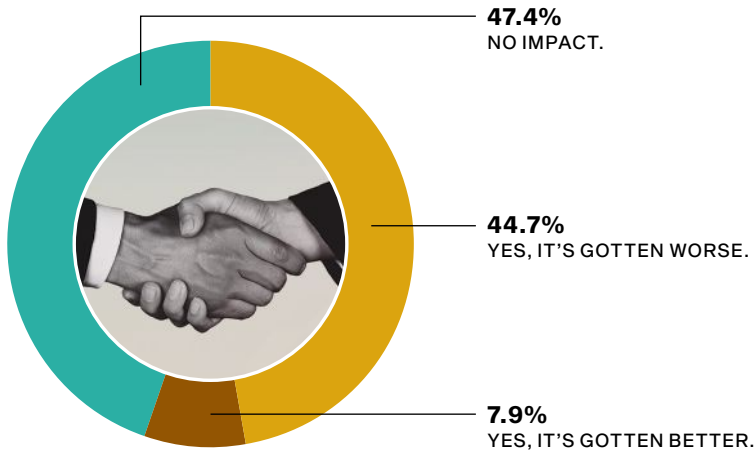
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Has consolidation among vendors impacted communication or inventory and supply-chain issues for your company?



Responses from dealers:

“My truss supplier was bought by a corporate overlord and has slowly become more expensive and slower in their process, quoting, and shipping. My sales rep has also changed. Anytime I have an issue, I end up contacting my former sales rep who is still with the company to fix it.”

“Post-acquisition nightmares with AP and then quality.”

“We had a nationwide distributor recently purchase a local family-run competitor of theirs and became the sole distributor for the product line I purchase. Now I don’t have any other option to buy the product from, which has made things rather difficult.”

“Consolidation or relocation may help suppliers bottom line but rarely improves service.”

“Competition keeps vendors sharp. Need at least a dual supplier model.”

“We haven’t noticed any communication issues yet.”

“We have seen some vendor consolidation, so far it has not negatively impacted our business significantly. However, we also have not experienced the advantages that the vendors have advertised.”

“Too frequently supply chain disruptions with large manufacturers are going ‘off market.’”

“This is a loaded question—dealing with multiple vendors and products has been better with some and worse with others.”

“Many of the better vendors are seeming to get swallowed up by not-so-great vendors. Less choices means less competition, means higher prices and worse service. It’s sad.”

“The more ‘corporate’ they are, the harder they are to deal with.”

“Every time we have experienced a merger, prices seem to go up, customer service and quality go down.”

“We are a very small business and as they get bigger, we get smaller.”

Responses from vendors:

“Interactions like billing and payments are automated.”

“We as distributors have not had any issues with consolidation. With that said, I do see the effects from some of our dealers which has strengthened our position with them.”

“New owners don’t care about customers’ needs. Old owners (who are staying on during the transition) don’t have any control to fix problems.”

“As a wholesale distributor, the manufacturers that we work with have had steady ownership.”

“The historical lines of doing business, manufacturer, two-step distribution, and end user has blurred quite dramatically the past few years. We find that a few of our partner mills that we have done business with for the past 40 years and have basically taught them the business in our local market are now going to business through competing channels, and we have seen our sales drop with a few vendors by 65% or more. These same vendors would be our last resort for purchasing products from and are now more competitors than suppliers.”

“The consolidation of quarries with a top heavy management team has delayed product, caused confusion as to what they will be quarrying and caused issues with product availability. The management team seem to be numbers people that really don’t understand the true business.”

“If something goes wrong, you have to ask your buyer or salesperson to intervene. Too many times and they see you as a problem customer or supplier.”

“A smaller company with specialty parts was acquired by a larger corporation, and the service level as well as order fulfillment was greatly impacted.”

“We’re losing sense of urgency and missing the relationship aspect that are important in this industry.” ■

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Ohio dealer focuses on customers amid growth

Since taking ownership in 2022, Owner Isaac Weber has been working to make upgrades to Lugbill Supply Center while maintaining customer service.

BY WENDY STURGES

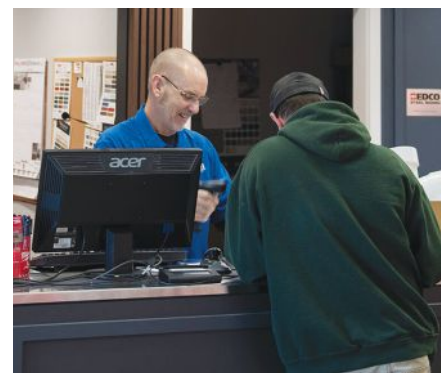
For Isaac Weber, coming back to Lugbill Supply Center was a bit of a full-circle moment. As a teen, working at Lugbill in Archbold, OH, was his first official job. Years later, he would become the company's newest owner.

After years of owning other businesses across different industries, Weber and his wife, Leslie—both of whom are Ohio natives—took ownership of Lugbill Supply Center in 2022. From there, the Webers quickly went to work with buying group Do it Best to give the 60-year-old store a facelift.

In 2023, the store underwent major renovations to make upgrades and add a 2,000-sq.-ft. outdoor living center. The Webers also made upgrades to the company's fleet, purchasing three new forklifts, two trailers, and a new pickup truck for deliveries.

"We've been just updating and upgrading things that were kind of overdue," Weber said. "It's a lot of work because we remodeled our entire store. The first challenge with that was, I've never done anything like that, but I [general contracted] it myself, and I had help with people here and contractors, and then Do it Best helped quite a bit as well with design, and was there as a resource."

Then, earlier this year, the company announced it had acquired Affiliated Lumber in nearby Swanton, OH, as part of its overall growth strategy. The 70-plus-year-old company is expected to keep its name, and several employees stayed on during the transition, allowing Lugbill to build on its reputation in the community. Weber said while the acquisition and merging internal systems was a new challenge,



the acquisition has added to the company's overall buying power, savings that Lugbill and Affiliated can pass along to customers.

"The reason it was a challenge was that it's all new. We hadn't done it before ... but it's really helping with buying power. I can stock up more here knowing they're going to use some of it and transfer it over there. It just allows me to buy it when the price is right."

Maintaining a mindset

While Weber said he's helped implement a number of changes since taking ownership, Lugbill Supply Center remains committed to providing a high level of service for its customers, even as it continues to grow.

"A while back I went to [a big-box store] to find a light, and I can't find anybody, not a single person, around to help me out. It was ridiculous. At that moment, I realized I want to have bigger stores, but I don't want such big stores that we lack on the service of being there for the customer."

Additionally, Weber said he wants to disprove the common misconception that smaller businesses can't compete with larger chains or big-box stores.

"We're competitive price-wise. I'm trying to break that mindset of small town, big price, because I think that's the common mindset with people in these big box stores," he said. "I'm a contractor myself—I want quality. If we're price competitive with the big box and have service on top of that, there's no competition there."

In addition to lumber, hardware, and building supplies, the store also offers glass cutting, window and screen repair, and custom kitchen and bath design, as well as computerized deck designs.

The store also gives back to the community. In addition to working with nonprofits like Defiance Dream Center, which works with individuals to provide workforce development, community service projects and life coaching, Lugbill Supply Center also hosts an annual community event at the store with food, live music, and games, with proceeds going back to the community, Weber said.

Looking ahead

In the near future, Weber said the company hopes to expand its e-commerce game and is exploring how to best implement new shopping options like same-day order pick-up. However, Lugbill has already implemented technology in a number of other areas, including housing take-offs.

Weber said the company is transitioning from manual to a more automated way of managing takeoffs for customers, but in a controlled way to ensure accuracy.

"If somebody gave us house plans, we'll figure out the materials for them. We have an individual that does it and he is so spot on, perfect, and does it by hand. But he's going to be retiring here in the next couple years," Weber said. "So we have since hired somebody that uses software online to do it. And there's good and bad with it. The good is what might take two to three days to do [by hand], you can do in two to



three hours. But if you don't have the proper data entered into that system before you measure it out, your quantity is going to be all goofed up. So we're still using what I call the old school way and the new school way, comparing them, trying to help the new school way spot the errors. So when these guys do retire, it's a smooth transition."

Looking ahead, Weber said he hopes to add an additional location under the Lugbill Supply Center name, but, like many dealers, is also watching the local economy for signs of market shifts. "We're just kind of in uncharted territories that we haven't been in yet. So I just want to be careful. I'm a risk taker, but I'm also conservative. Growth is painful sometimes, and it's expensive."

However, he said Lugbill is committed to keeping up with technology and growth to ensure the company is ready for whatever the next few years hold.

"It's all about finding that new balance. This is the future, so we're getting prepared for it now to make sure we're ready for it." ■

GET TO KNOW LUGBILL SUPPLY CENTER

YEAR FOUNDED:	1962
OWNERSHIP:	Corporate, family
LOCATIONS:	2
EMPLOYEES:	About 30
BUYING GROUP/CO-OP:	Do it Best
ERP SOFTWARE:	Epicor



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New from Pacific WoodTech, its PWT Treated LVL is reported to be the only manufactured treated LVL on the market. Utilizing what the company calls TRU-CORE technology, a proprietary heat press system evenly distributes treatment chemicals throughout the wood. According to PWT, the manufacturing process creates a durable LVL that is protected against damage caused by fungal rot, decay, and wood-destroying insects including Formosan termites.

With builders looking for new solutions, EWP is poised to reach new heights

BY MIKE BERGER

UNTIL RECENTLY, the construction of large, multistory buildings was relegated to the use of either reinforced concrete or steel for the structure. Engineered wood products (EWP) have brought about a revolution in building techniques, with the introduction of products such as cross-laminated timber (CLT) and nail-laminated timber (NLT) enabling architects and builders to create taller structures.

For example, the T3 office building—with T3 standing for “Timber, Technology, Transit”—in Minneapolis, MN, designed by Michael Green Architecture and architect-of-record DLR Group for real estate firm Hines, is a seven-story, 220,000-sq.-ft. office building that opened in 2016. At the time, the building was reported to be the largest mass timber building in the United States.

Engineered wood products are rising in popularity. According to industry research firm IBISWorld, the engineered wood market in the U.S. has been growing, with revenue increasing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3% over the past five years. Similarly, SkyQuest Technology Group, a global market intelligence organization, predicts the market to grow at a CAGR of 6.12% in the forecast period of 2023-2030.

EWP manufacturers are crossing their collective fingers that these numbers hold true, and they remain guardedly hopeful the market remains cooperative. “Amidst a dynamic year,

the EWP sector saw strong demand as the resiliency of new home construction propelled the market forward,” says Duane Smith, vice president of marketing and business development for PWT. “Despite persistently elevated mortgage rates, new home construction continues to show long term strength. EWP demand will remain robust as we look toward the coming year.”

While recognizing the struggles of the past year, Jared Schulte, director of EWP for BlueLinx, sees positive indicators for the near future, but is still cautious. “After a lackluster first half of 2023, demand rebounded in the back

half as recession fears abated due to positive economic data continuing to defy expectations,” he explains. “Moving into 2024, a strong labor market coupled with declining inflation has bolstered consumer spending and given rise to the belief that an economic ‘soft landing’ is now the most likely scenario.”

He goes on to say, “On the pricing front, heavy deflation in the first half of 2023 has given way to a more stable environment with most of the pressure stemming from a flood of European LVL due to a weaker economy across the pond. Looking ahead, despite recent positive inflation data, sentiment has begun to sour as higher interest rates and home prices dampen the demand for new homes. Everyone knows the housing market is underbuilt and pent-up demand exists, but there are concerns the fed may engineer an unnecessary recession by delaying rate cuts, thereby delaying demand for new homes. Throw the election into the mix, and you have a recipe for some volatility in the second half.” ▶



According to Weyerhaeuser, its Parallam PSL beams add strength and reliability to structures, makes longer spans possible, and allows for more design options with open, spacious floor plans.

RIGHT: According to Boise Cascade, its VERSA-LAM LVL beams and headers eliminate twisting, shrinking and splitting, and deliver flatter, quieter floors and structures. Because they have no camber and strength is consistent throughout, VERSA-LAM LVL products support heavier loads and longer spans than comparable glulam or dimension lumber products.

Chris Webb, general manager of Canfor EWP Sales, also sees positive indicators on the horizon. “Business has been steady,” he points out. “As the Federal Reserve gets inflation under control, interest rates will start to come down, creating more demand for single-family homes. LBM dealers should expect little to no EWP supply side disruptions near term; product will be readily available across all EWP product categories (Glulam, I Joist, and SCL) for the balance of 2024 into 2025.”

“The main challenge we see in the upcoming year is ever present market volatility,” says Paul Pfingsten, OSB sales manager at RoyOMartin. “Over the past 12 months, we have seen an OSB panel market that has dramatically changed. We have gone from hearing dealers report being over inventoried with very little need to make open market purchases, to an environment currently where lead times have more than doubled. Buyers are now having trouble securing the volumes they need to service their customers in a timely manner. This type of volatility impacts FOB mill pricing, as well as transportation costs associated with moving these goods around the country.”

An evolving market

If the overall market is being viewed with cautious optimism by EWP manufacturers, there are certain segments and trends that they point to as driving market growth. For example, PWT’s Smith points to the repair and remodel segment as being a strong driver of EWP growth, along with the continued interest in the outdoor living segment.

Canfor’s Webb sees offsite building as an area of focus where manufacturers can add value and efficiency to the supply chain. “Our Short Span Header product is gaining traction with wall panel producers as an alternative to multi-ply lumber,” he explains. “The one-



piece application of the glulam header adds value as to labor costs in manufacturing over built-up lumber. When building with glulam the technician doesn’t have to turn the panel and reattach.”

As well, he predicts commercial construction—specifically the mass timber segment—as being another area of growth focus. “Canfor is making investments in new technology,” he adds. “We have a new 48” technologically advanced glulam press and lay-up system. This new technology will allow us to offer wider width and deeper depth glulam options for our customers, especially those focusing on commercial, industrial, and mass timber markets.”

The evolution of building codes is also driving both product sales and product development, says BlueLinx’s Schulte. “We continue to see the increased adoption of new building codes focused on energy efficiency and building performance,” he says. “This has contributed to the increased use of deeper depths of engineered lumber that allow for increased insulation and holes for duct work, plumbing, and electrical without sacrificing floor performance.”

Wendy Minichiello, vice president of EWP sales for Weyerhaeuser, agrees, recognizing code changes as they are adopted by communities in various geographies driving the development of specific performance-driven EWP products, such as those that improve fire suppression, moisture management, and bug/rot prevention.

And of course, the economy itself and the state of the building industry is in and of itself driving EWP product growth, explains Paul Pfingsten, OSB sales manager at RoyOMartin. “With housing affordability a continued concern for many buyers, they are considering more affordable options, such as manufactured housing. For RoyOMartin, that means that we are looking to push out more of our new commodity T&G flooring product, TuffTier. As always, we continuously analyze the market and our capabilities to develop products that meet the needs of our customers and their customers.” ▶

BELOW: RoyOMartin’s TuffTier OSB Sub-Flooring (scant and full-faced) is available in 19/32” and 23/32” and in sanded or unsanded versions. According to the manufacturer, the TuffTier is designed for applications requiring a structural subfloor, is ideally suited for both residential and commercial construction, and delivers exceptional strength and rigidity.



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RIGHT: Huber's AdvanTech X-Factor is a new class of premium subflooring that features a fade-resistant, water-shedding surface along with a built-in protective top layer that, according to Huber, provides a smooth, even subfloor surface that is marker-friendly and easy to clean. When used in conjunction with the company's AdvanTech subfloor adhesive, it offers a Squeak-Free Guarantee.



Meeting customer's needs

In today's market, builders are looking for solutions that improve consistency, efficiency, and cost savings, all factors that can help simplify the building process and are provided by engineered wood products.

As BlueLinX's Schulte explains, "Engineered lumber is manufactured to be more uniform in strength, size, and quality compared to dimensional lumber. This consistency ensures predictable performance and simplifies the construction processes. The strength and stability coupled with the availability of large sizes allows for longer spans and greater load-bearing capacity, reducing the amount of material needed. In addition, the ability to source a wide variety of pre-cut lengths and sizes reduces on-site cutting and waste and simplifies inventory management. Taken together, the benefits of engineered lumber allow builders to produce a better product more efficiently, and help solve their biggest challenge today—the cost and availability of skilled labor."

RoyOMartin's Pfingsten shares Schulte's opinion, adding in how the lack of skilled tradespeople is causing builders and remod-

elers to look for innovative solutions. "Builders are continuously looking for more economical and efficient ways to build as skilled, dependable labor continues to be a hurdle," he says. "They need something that withstands the elements, is resilient, and easy to handle. Not only that, but we believe that service and support after the sell is equally important."

And it's not just the LBM dealer or builders who are feeling the strains of a diminished workforce, points out Weyerhaeuser's Minichiello. "Our challenges are similar to what LBM dealers are experiencing for their own businesses: labor shortages in the trades and for manufacturing, cyber security and technology improvements such as artificial intelligence, climate change and the regulatory effect on business conditions," she explains. "With so many competing challenges from outside the business, I think LBM dealers are well served to focus on one or two key customer segments and work really well to service those. Getting clear about who you are as a dealer and who your focus is in the wide customer base can help to better define everything from service postures to margin requirements."

RIGHT: OnCenter BLI-65 I-Joists from BlueLinX Engineered Products features a 3.5" flange. As well, the manufacturer has added trimmable trusses in many markets to capture demand stemming from increased use in basements to avoid dropped ceilings and code requirements in certain markets for increased insulation.



FAR RIGHT: An area of focus for Canfor (as it is for many in the supply chain) is in exploring ways to make wall construction more efficient, as shown here with its short span header.



So how can an LBM dealer be successful at meeting these needs with EWP? First and foremost, EWP manufacturers stress the importance of offering products that are of the highest quality (which should come as no surprise). “Dealers need to ensure the product they are offering is of high quality, readily available, and has a distribution partner that provides the breadth of services to support the product for technical and business requirements while making it easy for the dealer to conduct business and support their customers,” says BlueLinx’s Schulte. “We are seeing a lot of import product enter the market, exposing customers to inconsistent performance and product outages due to more complex supply chains and a lack of service support.”

PWT’s Smith agrees. “Choosing a brand that is reliable is important. Also a brand that continues to innovate and push the envelope adds opportunities for businesses to capitalize on.”

“Offer your customers the best product for the application even if it’s a product that you don’t currently stock but can source as a cost-effective solution for the application. This will create a value-add for the LBM dealer and their downstream customers,” advises Canfor’s Webb.

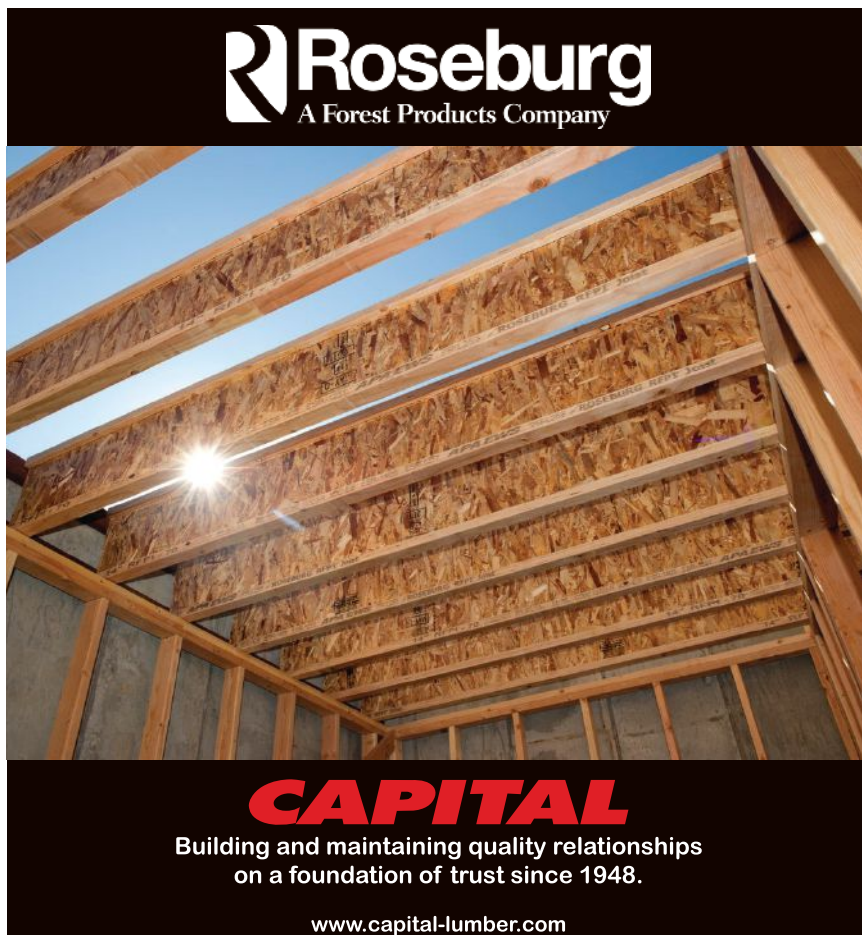
Of course, to avoid situations such as these, manufacturers recommend LBM dealers be positioned to offer a variety of solutions—both with product and with knowledge—for their customers’ needs, no matter the application. Says BlueLinx’s Schulte, “If they have the space, stocking a wider variety not only improves service, but allows for more competitive pricing. If space-constrained, ensure their distribution partner has the scale to get them what they need when they need it. Lastly, equip their sales staff with product knowledge so they can be an educational resource and provide more value to their customers.”

Part of being able to offer solutions involves dealers taking a hard look at their contractual commitments for 2024, says RoyOMartin’s Pfingsten.

“The traditional ‘buy cycles’ that many industry veterans have known for years are no longer present,” he explains. “It may be time for some dealers to consider a different approach with their OSB panel inventory plans. The past 12 months have shown us just how quickly the single family home builders in this country can impact the demand for structural panels in the U.S., more specifically, how quickly projections can change and cause volatility.”

AS WITH ALL SEGMENTS IN the LBM industry, there’s no guarantee on how the future will pan out for engineered wood products over the next twelve months. Factors such as a fluctuating housing market, high interest rates, continued inflation, and the uncertainty of the upcoming presidential election all will play into EWP’s future. But the successful LBM dealer will be ready to provide high-performing products and cutting edge solutions no matter what the winds of fate blow in, and EWP manufacturers stand ready to help LBM dealers succeed. As RoyOMartin’s Pfingsten puts it, “The last 12 months haven’t been without market and pricing challenges, but our facilities have remained at production capacity despite the market dip. We expect demand to continue to rise in the coming months as there are still buyers looking to move with limited existing homes on the market. The demand must be met with new construction.” ■

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TREX SIGNATURE X-SERIES RAILING

Trex Company has expanded its Trex Signature Railing line with the introduction of X-Series Cable Rail and X-Series Frameless Glass Rail (shown here). Now available through Trex channel partners, these two new offerings blend modern profiles with what Trex says is a simplified installation. Differentiating the new X-Series Railing in the marketplace is the X-Series Post that anchors the system and accommodates cable and frameless glass along with a variety of infills and attachments for future additions to the X-Series line. Furthermore, with its modular design, the X-Series Post can be used as an end, line, and corner post, laying the foundation for a SKU-efficient approach to railing. In addition, all Trex Signature Railings feature powder-coated aluminum, while cable hardware is made from premium-grade stainless steel for corrosion resistance, even in marine and coastal environments. trex.com

SIGNET ENTRY DOOR

According to ProVia, its Signet fiberglass entry door is a highly energy-efficient fiberglass front door that looks like authentic woodgrain. Shown here in a cherry finish with a Natural Leather Glaze along with Waterfall privacy glass sidelites, the door comes with Energy Star certification for maximum performance in energy efficiency and durability. Signet prehung exterior fiberglass doors offer the most customization options of any of ProVia’s entry door brands, including offering many door panel styles, glass options, and woodgrain or smooth finishes in a variety of stain, glaze, or paint colors. provia.com



ULTRASHIELD COMPOSITE SIDING

From NewTechWood, its UltraShield European style composite siding is reported to combine the toughness and longevity of a capped wood plastic composite with an engineered design. It features a co-extruded cap that the manufacturer says protects all sides of the board from staining, fading, scratching, cupping, swelling, mold and mildew. As well, a composite core made by mixing high-quality recycled materials with dense hardwood and softwood fibers provides strength and durability while being 100% recyclable. AW08 clip system holds the boards in place, and because it not only connects the boards but also raises them up from the joists, it allows for air circulation between the cladding and the joists, keeping the inside dry and isolating water from outside. newtechwood.com



CORTEX HIDDEN FASTENERS

FastenMaster is expanding its Cortex hidden fastening options for Trex decking to include new stainless-steel fasteners for coastal applications and driller screws for metal deck framing. The new 316 marine grade fasteners are ideal for various coastal and high-moisture applications, and they’re available in 2-1/2" lengths and feature the TORX ttap Drive System. FastenMaster’s driller screws for metal framing are made of 410 coated stainless steel and designed for use in steel or aluminum deck framing applications. The fasteners are 1-5/8" long and also feature the TORX ttap Drive System for a wobble-free installation. In addition, collated Cortex Plugs are now available separately from the screws. Plugs are available in all Trex board lines including Signature, Transcend, Transcend Lineage, Select and Enhance. fastenmaster.com

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SOL AND LUNA PVC DECKING AND TRIM

BLUDEK+TRIM has launched a new line of cellular PVC decking and trim. According to the manufacturer, it's made with superior PVC materials, with no wood fibers, and is resistant to mold, insects, rot, and won't splinter, crack, or warp. Like wood, it's easy to cut with standard tools but delivers better performance without the maintenance of sanding, staining, or painting. The Sol Collection of decking is a grooved deck board available in six colors. It is UV resistant for lasting color and is highly slip-resistant. The Luna Collection of exterior trim comes in various profiles. Available in ten colors, the trim is maintenance-free and is reported to provide long-lasting durability, and the moisture/insect resistance of cellular PVC. bludekandtrim.com



GRK AUGERBOLT THROUGH BOLT FASTENING SYSTEM

The new GRK Fasteners' new AugerBolt Through Bolt Fastening System, you can now drill the installation hole and install code-approved through bolts in one simple step. It simplifies installation by combining the drilling of a hole with an auger bit and the installation of a through bolt all in one easy step for greater productivity. The patented recessed tip revolutionizes through bolted installation, simplifying the notched 6 x 6 connection for pro deck builders. The Integrated washer means fewer loose components for you to manage on the job, and the included 9/16" x 7" auger bit provides a fast, best-in-class drilling experience. The bit and bolts are available in one grab-n-go package for a quicker shopping experience and eliminates loose components on the job site. grkfasteners.com





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CORDLESS DETAIL SANDER

New from Milwaukee Tool, its M12 FUEL 3" Random Orbital Detail Sander is reported to be able to sand the toughest materials on site while its compact pad size allows for delicate, controlled sanding during the installation of trim, railings, or other refinishing applications. According to the manufacturer, the sander delivers precise removal for spot sanding, more control and maneuverability, and over 80% dust collection. Ergonomically engineered the sander has greater access to hard-to-reach areas and active dust extraction for minimal dust build-up with the versatility to utilize the included bag or universal hose adapter. The sander features a random orbital sanding motion with a 3/32" orbit diameter to deliver a clean, consistent stain-grade surface finish, plus a variable speed trigger with a lock-on button. milwaukeetool.com



DEWALT BRUSHLESS CORDLESS BANDSAWS

The 20V MAX XR Brushless Cordless Mid-Size Bandsaw and the 20V MAX XR Brushless Cordless Dual-Trigger Bandsaw from DEWALT each features a brushless motor that delivers up to 535 MWO at 570 SFPM. According to DEWALT, both saws are designed for quick and efficient performance, deliver up to 120 cuts per charge through 12 gauge strut, and cut 12 gauge strut in as fast as 5.1 seconds. The tools are each equipped with a 3-3/8" cut capacity. The bandsaws each feature an integrated blade guard, an LED light, and a Tool Connect Chip pocket (Chip sold separately). The 20V MAX XR Brushless Cordless Dual-Trigger Bandsaw is designed with a PERFORM & PROTECT auxiliary handle that houses a secondary trigger for added control on the foregrip. dewalt.com



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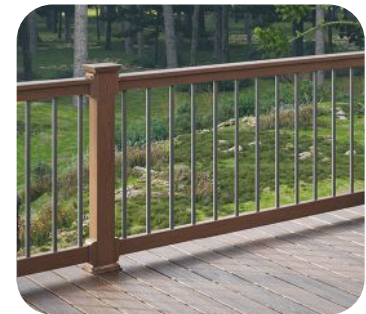
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ENVISION V310 WOOD-LOOK RAILING

Envision Outdoor Living Products has launched the V310 railing, which it says is the industry's only wood-look vinyl deck railing. V310 railings feature a variegated color finish that mimics two wood grain species: Native Chestnut, a rich, earthy brown, and Silver Birch, a warm gray that is meant to mimic the silvery patina of aged timber. According to the manufacturer, the V310 is lightweight, easy to work with, affordable, and it features a top rail with an aluminum core for added strength and stability. Railings come in convenient kit packaging for fast installation, and a hidden bracket system provides a seamless look. V310 railings are available in 6' and 8' kits, in 36" and 42" heights, and with round black aluminum baluster infill. envisionoutdoorliving.com

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**COMBILIFT COMBI-AGT
AUTONOMOUS LOADER**

Materials handling manufacturer Combilift has launched its first autonomous materials handling vehicle. The Combi-AGT is a 4-wheel electric stand-on model, which the manufacturer says is the world's first autonomous dual operational sideloader for long loads. Combi-AGT utilizes smart technology to meet customer demands for driverless sideloader capability for the purpose of eliminating the presence of personnel in aisles, consistency in handling procedures, and to maximize order fulfillment, while also having a backup manual mode in case of power outages or internet disruptions. The laser-based sensors, fitted at various positions on the chassis, constitute an anti-collision safety system, as required by the American National Standards Institute. If the machine senses an obstacle or pedestrian that has entered its path, it automatically slows down and will, if necessary, stop in cases of emergency. It will then continue to drive automatically when the obstacle has cleared its safety sensor area. combilift.com



MAGNETIC BOX BEAM LEVEL JAMB SET

Optimized for setting door frames, door openings, headers, and thresholds, the Magnetic Box Beam Level Set from Spec Ops tools features a patented Tourniquet Bungee System that attaches to beams, posts, pipes, or conduit for fast, hands-free leveling. According to Spec Ops, 33% larger high-contrast green vials with 2% slope lines for maximum low-light visibility and speed, combined with match grade epoxy-locked 360° solid acrylic block vials, deliver .0005"/inch guaranteed lifetime accuracy. High-strength precision-milled aluminum box beam with removable shock-absorbing armored end caps provide protection on the toughest job sites, while a chamfered spine delivers a stronger, twist-resistant frame that's more comfortable to hold and maneuver. High-powered, rare earth magnets provide for fast hands-free leveling of magnetic metals, pipes, and equipment, and the levels are compatible with SRS retention lanyards for added safety. Plus, the levels come with a limited lifetime warranty, and 3% of the sales are donated to veteran and 1st responder causes. specopstools.com

STRAP LATCHES FOR BIFOLD DOORS

Schweiss Doors has done away with all the cables, chains, sprockets and pulleys with its new strap latch assembly, and its bifold doors now have 90% fewer moving parts. As a new design from Schweiss Doors, straps do the lifting and now straps do the latching. Unlike other bifold door latch mechanisms, the new Schweiss design will reportedly hold the door against the building in all positions, securing the door when open/partially open, and will firmly lock the door when closed. It offers added protection from wind gusts while the door is in any position during operation. This innovative strap latch requires no extra motor, and it pulls the doorframe securely against your building making for a tight seal with each use. bifold.com



KEEN OVERTON WORK SNEAKER

New from KEEN Utility, the Overton is a modern work sneaker built with a wide toe and snug heel for a workday-enhancing fit. According to the manufacturer, the Overton boasts what Keen calls an athletic-level KEEN.ReGEN cushioning that provides up to 50% energy return with every step, lightweight carbon-fiber safety toes to provide protection, and a slip-resistant, EH-rated rubber outsole for dependable footing on hard surfaces. A versatile, throwback-inspired work shoe, the Overton is available for men and women in several collar heights and colors. keenfootwear.com



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* Denotes regional distribution.

Note: last-minute changes will affect the accuracy of this listing.

IBC=inside back cover, IFC=inside front cover, OBC=outside back cover, BB=belly band, INS=insert, PB=polybagged, WP=white paper.

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LBM STRATEGIES 
2024 CONFERENCE

RECRUITING WHILE RETAINING

After running lean due to fears of an impending recession, your team is burned out and your recruiting efforts are going nowhere. What would you do?

IT'S BEEN NEARLY 20 YEARS since you were named general manager of your company's newest location. While there have been ups and downs, you're proud of what you and your team have accomplished, for the most part. The one part you're not proud of was the mandated staff cuts when the Great Recession hit. You remember disagreeing with the corporate office, but the decision was made, so you did what you had to do. Letting good people go for no fault of their own is a memory that you never want to relive.

Ever since then, you've intentionally run lean. While this decision led to more overtime, it allowed you to remain fully staffed each time the economy slowed. Your team members weighed in and let you know they were 100% onboard. "If I have the choice of working extra hours for time-and-a-half, or having new people to train in, I'll take extra work and pay," they said.

For the past year or so, economic experts have been making headlines with dire predictions about an impending recession. The constant drumbeat that the sky is falling has made builders hold off on starting new projects and made you even more cautious about replacing a couple of key team members who retired. After all, the last thing you wanted to do was to hire some new people, then have to let them go once a recession reared its ugly head.

Fortunately, interest rates and inflation are beginning to drop, and the prophets of doom are less insistent of a looming recession, and business is picking back up. With things turning around, you finally decided to fill those vacant positions, but it looks like you may have waited too long. Despite offering a competitive pay and benefits package, you're getting very few applicants for your open positions.



As sales rise, you're seeing increasing levels of burnout in all areas of your business. The days of your team members being grateful for overtime are gone. Instead, you're seeing fatigue, frustration, and stress. Your assistant manager, who hasn't taken any time off for months, said, "I'm worried that we're going to start losing some of our best people if we don't give them a break and bring on some more help."

You see now that your determination to avoid letting people go has backfired, and it's critical that you onboard some capable pros quickly. But with few applicants for your open positions, time is running out. What would you do?

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Poach. Desperate times call for desperate measures. Do whatever's necessary to hire pros away from your competition. They know your business, and they can hit the ground running.

Adjust business hours. Until you're fully staffed again, adjust operating hours to fit the staff you currently have.

Call corporate. Reach out to the head office and see if they can transfer employees from other locations, even if only temporarily to give some relief.

Change your focus. Hire for attitude, train for aptitude. Maybe you can't find an experienced pro, but training someone with enthusiasm is better than an empty seat.

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

CALL FOR ENTRIES!

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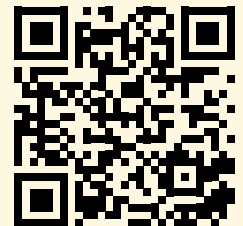
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