

# LERM JOURNAL<sup>®</sup>

JANUARY 2025 | \$15 U.S.

## DEALER OF THE YEAR 2025

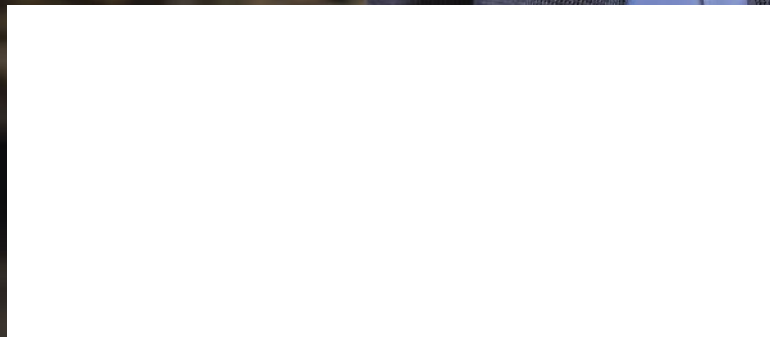
CATEGORY: \$100MM+

**WILSON LUMBER**

**UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL  
OF GENERATIVE AI**

**READERS SHARE THEIR  
OUTLOOK FOR 2025**

**EXPERTS PREDICT GROWTH  
IN THE BUILDING ENVELOPE  
SEGMENT**



ROBB WILSON, CEO OF WILSON LUMBER

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**DEALER  
OF THE YEAR  
2025**  
CATEGORY: \$100MM+

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

**YESTERDAY**, as if on cue, my town got a nice healthy helping of snow. As I write this, in just two days, our home will be filled with family members to celebrate Christmas, including a handful of little ones who just know that Santa is real. And why shouldn't they? After all, following games and a hearty meal, every year Santa makes a grand entrance to deliver presents and sing carols before moving on. During his brief annual visit, there's nothing more real in our home than Santa, and the magic that he represents. (My brother-in-law Don always seems to disappear right before Santa's arrival and reappear immediately after, but I have a hunch that he's right there with us the whole time.)



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Rick Schumacher'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

A few years ago, a friend shared that he and his entire division were told that their positions had been eliminated, effective immediately. For context, they'd done nothing wrong, and the company was profitable. He worked for a massive telecom corporation that we've all heard of, and the people who were suddenly out of work numbered in the thousands. The layoff was simply a tactic to drive up the company's stock price in time for quarterly earnings reports. As expected, Wall Street rewarded the company for laying off thousands of people with a healthy spike in the stock price. Weeks later, since the company actually needed all the people it just eliminated, it quietly re-engaged them as contractors at a significantly higher rate of pay.

While intelligent people can debate whether Santa exists, both stories above are true. As we start off a new year, I am thankful beyond words that my work involves serving the LBM community, which is dominated by people who do the important work of building homes. There's no question that residential construction supply is a for-profit industry, but it's one comprised of people who use their power for good, and who do things for the right reasons.

For example, on page 32 of this issue, Managing Editor Wendy Sturges shares the story of Wilson Lumber, LBM Journal's 2025 Dealer of the Year (Category: \$100 million plus). President Robb Wilson and the team exemplify the spirit of our industry, by giving back to its community and supporting its people. On the business side, the family-owned company's sustained growth is proof of its ability to serve area builders. On the human side, a benevolence fund for employees experiencing hardships, its work with local nonprofits as part of its Wilson Lumber Cares initiative, and its sponsorship of a village in Guatemala are all marks of a company that uses its profits for good.

If you're still not convinced, turn to page 40 and read about the "Mullins Miracle," a home custom designed and built for Cindy Mullins—a 41-year-old mom who lost her arms and legs to sepsis. Builders Supply in Stanford, KY contributed labor and materials to the project and worked with its suppliers to secure material donations. Cindy's story has a much happier ending than it would have, had Builders Supply and manufacturer members of the LBM Community not stepped up.

On behalf of the entire LBM Journal team, thank you for letting us do our part to help you run your businesses better and smarter, and for letting us share the magic and humanity that make the LBM community what it is.

— Rick Schumacher  
Executive Editor & Publisher

HAVE A QUESTION FOR RICK?  
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# Improving Rebate Management for Roofing and Siding Companies with Epicor ERP Solutions



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# Optimize your rebate management process

Rebate management may seem like a mundane financial process, but for roofing and siding businesses, it's a crucial one. How contractors navigate the administration of complex contractual agreements with customers and vendors can significantly sway profitability and cash flow.

Yet rebate mismanagement is all too common, needlessly leaving money on the table or even jeopardizing future business. Intricate calculations and complex contract terms frequently lead to manual inefficiencies, errors, and blind spots. These challenges are compounded by the dynamic nature of prices and other market forces.

Fortunately, there's a solution—*enterprise resource planning (ERP) software*. Modern ERP solutions can streamline your rebate management, optimize your financial processes, and ultimately unlock greater profitability and efficiency in your roofing and siding business.

## The Problem with Traditional Rebate Management:

Traditional rebate management *can be complicated*. Gathering, reviewing, cross-referencing, and organizing relevant data from various sources like invoices, purchase orders, and sales reports is time-consuming. Complex agreements with varying rates, tiers, and conditions make it easy for anyone using manual calculations to unknowingly make errors. And monitoring compliance with these agreements requires constant attention.

## Enhancing and Automating Rebate Management with ERP Software

*ERP software* helps provide the holistic visibility and seamless automation needed to overcome persistent rebate management challenges. It integrates and documents data across different systems using a centralized cloud-based platform.

Epicor ERP solutions help transform rebate management from a complex, error-prone process into a streamlined, efficient, and accurate operation:

### Automating Cumbersome Processes

*Epicor ERP solutions* automate tedious and error-prone rebate management processes like data entry, manual calculations, and payment processing. Automation standardizes rebate calculations according to agreed terms, accelerating processing and payouts to strengthen customer relationships.

## Gaining Real-Time Insights

Epicor ERP gives your business up-to-the-minute visibility into rebate management operations, enabling you to track rebate performance as transactions occur. This offers on-demand insights into profitability and cash flow, while *advanced analytics tools* help forecast future trends to optimize rebate programs. At Epicor, our approach is proactive. We equip roofing and siding companies with tools to manage rebates and address issues before they escalate.

## Bolstering Compliance and Audits

ERP systems facilitate better adherence to contracts and regulations by supplying a clear audit trail for all transactions. This transparency simplifies compliance verification while recording retrieval during audits, reducing non-compliance risk, and strengthening overall governance.

---

***Some 29% of businesses choose to adopt ERP solutions to support their compliance processes, including tracking contractual and regulatory rebate responsibilities. At Epicor, we prioritize supporting accuracy and compliance in rebate management, so roofing and siding companies can do business with confidence and precision.***

---

## Improving Rebate Management with Epicor BisTrack

Managing rebates, contracts, and payments in roofing and siding businesses is complex, time-consuming, and error-prone. But with BisTrack, it doesn't have to be. Epicor automates rebate calculations, payments, reporting, and compliance checks, eliminating inefficient, error-prone manual processes.

Because our BisTrack solution is curated for the building supply industry, Epicor prepares your business with predictable margins, data-driven decision-making, and error-free incentive payments.

Through close collaboration within the roofing and siding ecosystem, we build best practices directly into BisTrack—it becomes the brains behind rebate management so your teams can focus on nurturing customer relationships and pursuing new business.

***Why not reach out for a BisTrack demo from the number one building supply software provider? Contact Epicor today to learn how we can simplify and manage your rebate process and boost your revenue.***





THE DETERING COMPANY NAMED TOP WORKPLACE



SHERWOOD LUMBER MARKS 70<sup>TH</sup> YEAR



BELLETETES, INC. TO OPEN 10<sup>TH</sup> LOCATION

## BY THE YARD

**The Detering Company** announced that it has been named one of Houston's Top Places to Work for the third year in a row. This prestigious award, organized by the Houston Chronicle, recognizes outstanding workplaces in the Houston area based on anonymous employee surveys.

New York-based **Sherwood Lumber** is celebrating its 70th anniversary with a special fundraiser. The company launched a fundraising campaign to honor its founder, Bernard Goodman, and support the American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA).

New Hampshire-based **Belletetes, Inc.** announced the company has begun work on its 10th location in Brookline.

**Central Valley** has announced that the company is entering its 70th year of providing high-quality building materials and agricultural supplies to the local community.

**Croft Lumber** celebrated its grand reopening event with a ribbon cutting in Sayre, PA. The expansion added 10,000 square feet to the showrooms and mill.

**US LBM** marked its 15th anniversary on Oct. 30, 2024; the company was founded by President and CEO L.T. Gibson in 2009. The company now operates more than 460 locations.

Northeast-based **Messco Building Supply** is celebrating 15 years in business this year. Messco Building Supply has locations in Walden, NY and Danbury, CT.

## INDUSTRY UPDATES

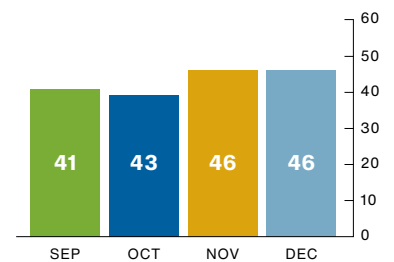
**Weyerhaeuser Company** announced its plan to invest approximately \$500 million to build a new, state-of-the-art TimberStrand facility near Monticello and Warren, AR, expanding the company's engineered wood products capacity. The facility will have an annual production capacity of approximately 10 million cubic feet. Construction is expected to begin in 2025, with the goal of starting operations in 2027.

**ProVia** has announced that the company's Cherry Ridge facility, located in Sugarcreek, OH, has been certified as a Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Star site by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The Voluntary Protection Program recognizes employers and workers in private industry and federal agencies who have implemented effective safety and health management systems.

## CO-OP & BUYER'S GROUPS

**Do it Best** announced the successful acquisition of True Value, a long-time competitor with a legacy brand that benefits both organizations. This transaction represents a transformative milestone for Do it Best, True Value, and the entire independent hardware industry. By acquiring these key resources, Do it Best is poised for substantial growth and increased capability to support independent retailers and bring operational stability to current True Value retailers, along with investment in the iconic brand.

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## Builder Confidence Steady with Signs of Future Optimism in 2025

Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes was 46 in December, the same reading as last month, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI).

While builders are expressing concerns that high interest rates, elevated construction costs and a lack of buildable lots continue to act as headwinds, they are also anticipating future regulatory relief in the aftermath of the election. This is reflected in the fact that future sales expectations have increased to a nearly three-year high.

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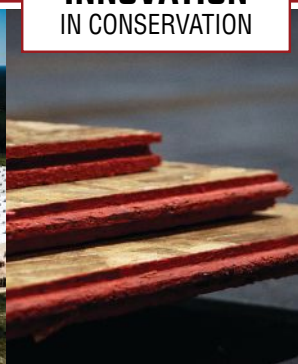
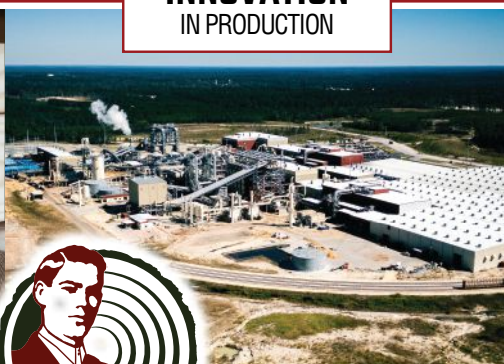
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## PEOPLE IN LBM

**Do it Best** has announced **Ken Widner** as vice president of information technology and chief information officer, **Ty Sordelet** as its new vice president of logistics, and **Curtis Smith** as the new executive director of the Do it Best Foundation.



WIDNER



SORDELET



SMITH



**Pella Corporation** has appointed **Emily Videtto** as president and chief operating officer, reporting to Tim Yaggi, Pella's chief executive officer.



**Georgia-Pacific** has announced **Hudson Pope**, currently senior vice president for manufacturing at Georgia-Pacific, will assume the senior vice president of operations position.



**QXO, Inc.** announced that **Ashwin Rao** has been appointed chief artificial intelligence officer. He will serve as the company's AI architect.

**The Lester Group** announced **Dana Cowart**, formerly with TAL Building Centers, will become the newest company president.

**ECI Software Solutions** announced **Sarah Hagan**, president and chief operating officer at ECI, has been named a 2024 Gold Globee winner in the "Woman Executive of the Year—Technology Products and Services" category of the 17th Annual Globee Awards for Achievement (Women in Business).

**Ace Retail Holdings**—the parent company of Westlake Ace Hardware, Great Lakes Ace Hardware, and other retail hardware brands—recently promoted **Tony Houk** to vice president of store operations. In his new role, Houk will oversee all store operations across Ace Retail Holdings' 250+ locations.

**Cameron Ashley Building Products** has announced that **Scott Dionne** has joined the company as vice president of building systems and canopy solutions. In his new role, Scott will drive the strategic development and growth of Canopy product line, focusing on innovative solutions that meet the unique needs of customers.

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## DISTRIBUTION NEWS

**Trex Company** announced expanded distribution relationships with **International Wood Products, LLC (IWP)**, **Weyerhaeuser**, and **Boise Cascade**. IWP will exclusively stock Trex composite decking and railing products at all five of its distribution facilities in the Western U.S. For Weyerhaeuser, this exclusive agreement expands Trex's presence across the Southwest (California, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico). Similarly, Trex will be the only brand of composite decking and railings sold at Boise locations nationwide that carry Trex.

**Sherwood Lumber** has announced its new partnership with **Modern Mill** to distribute ACRE trim and siding products. The company will also partner with **Barrette Outdoor Living** to distribute RDI Railing.

**MoistureShield**, a signature brand of Oldcastle APG, announced a new distributor partnership with **Building Materials Distributors, Inc.** This will expand the distribution of the manufacturer's composite decking portfolio to the entire state of California, the southern part of Oregon, Reno, NV, and Las Vegas, NV.

**Accsys** has welcomed **Alan McIlvain Company** and **Hardwood Industries, Inc.** as new distributors for Accoya wood.

**PrimeSource Building Products, Inc.** announced the expansion of its **Wolf Home Products** line into the southeastern U.S. This expansion spans Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

## TOUGH CALL SOLUTIONS

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

### SOCIAL MEDIA MESS

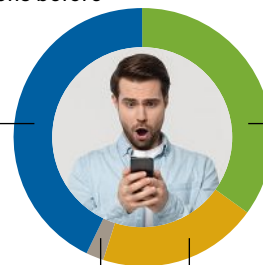
Your company's reputation is under attack online because of a misleading video clip of a team member wearing a logoed work shirt in a bad situation. Here's how readers responded to this Tough Call.

**Pause and reassess.** You're in uncharted territory, and a rash reaction could make the situation worse. Research and evaluate your options before moving forward.

43%

**Ask for help.** Engage with a social media consultant and put together a response plan.

35%



2%

**Delete!** Have your social media pages taken down immediately, then figure out how to begin repairing your reputation.

20%

**Fight back.** Post the truth on your sites, and explain that it looks bad, but your team member is innocent.



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## MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

**McCoy's Building Supply** recently acquired **Rio Truss**. Founded in 2004 and headquartered in McAllen, TX, Rio Truss manufactures structural components for both commercial and residential builders throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

**Builders FirstSource** announced the company has acquired NY-based **Kleet Lumber Co.**, which serves the metro New York area and Long Island.

**Hartville Hardware & Lumber** has acquired **Coshocton Lumber Company**, according to reporting from The Coshocton Beacon. Coshocton Lumber will continue to operate under its current name.

**Nation's Best** has acquired **Burns Do it Center** in Clovis, NM, bringing its total location count to 64, and its second in the state.

**Zuern Building Products & Design Center** has acquired **Wood Specialties** out of Menomonee Falls, WI.

**Carter Lumber** announced the acquisition of **Townsend Building Supply**, a building materials dealer with six locations in Southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. This acquisition continues Carter Lumber's plans for growth in the South and positions the company for further expansion in these two states.

**Kodiak Building Partners** announced the acquisition of Colorado-based **Liberty Doors and Windows**, a premier provider of high-quality doors, windows and millwork. This strategic partnership strengthens Kodiak's position in the fast growing Colorado market while preserving Liberty's long-standing legacy of serving southern Colorado and the Mountain Region.

Patrick Goebel, CEO & President of **Star Lumber**, announced the company's acquisition through an asset purchase of **Apex Lumber Company** in Oklahoma. Randy "Chip" Chippeaux, Sr. Vice-President of the Building Materials Division, a 49-year veteran of the industry, will oversee the transition and management of the new locations.

Arkansas-based **Gazaway Lumber** announced the company has acquired **City Lumber Co.**, which has been in operation since 1926. Gazaway Lumber is an Ace Hardware member that has been in Arkansas since 1963.

**R.P. Lumber Co., Inc.** plans to acquire **Guyot Lumber**, an independently owned retailer of hardware, lumber, and building materials in Perryville, MO. This acquisition will become R.P. Lumber's 88th location.



## VERTICALLY SPEAKING

**CT Darnell and LBM Advantage member, A.D. Moyer Lumber**, teamed up to maximize inventory efficiency with smart vertical storage solutions. By prioritizing ease of access, they made products simpler to find and faster to load.

**The result?** A transformed yard that went from 11 acres to just 4, while increasing SKU capacity. With the addition of 2 new T-sheds, 2 new L-sheds, and 2 Power Bins, the yard now offers more storage and improved loading efficiency—without losing a single SKU.

Read about all of our projects at [sunbelt-rack.com/stories/](http://sunbelt-rack.com/stories/) or scan this code.



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- **Eco-Friendly Design:**  
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- **Aesthetic Versatility:**  
With a sleek vertical design and a range of colors and textures, it suits diverse architectural styles, from rustic to contemporary.
- **Effortless Installation:**  
The tongue-and-groove system ensures quick, seamless assembly, saving time and reducing costs.
- **Low Maintenance:**  
Unlike traditional wood, this cladding requires no staining, sealing, or sanding.
- **Color Options:**  
A palette of modern neutral tones and natural wood finishes allows for tailored designs.



#### A Solution That Delivers Results

For contractors, Board & Batten Cladding minimizes callbacks and enhances client satisfaction.

Distributors benefit from its eco-conscious appeal and comprehensive warranty, making it an easy sell to today's market.

Stay ahead in exterior design innovation. Choose Board & Batten Cladding for a blend of form, function, and sustainability.

Learn more at [NewTechWood.com](https://www.NewTechWood.com)



## MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

**Boise Cascade** announced the company has acquired **Parksite's** door shop in Lakeland, FL. The new Boise Cascade Millwork facility brings the company to 15 millwork locations nationwide.

**PrimeSource Brands** has acquired **Harney Hardware**, a provider of branded door and bathroom hardware.

**Evermark** has acquired **Oak Pointe, LLC.**, known across the millwork industry for innovation and custom stair parts and other millwork products.

**Wausau Supply Co.** has acquired **ChamClad**, a provider of sustainable architectural cladding solutions.

**Johnson Paint | A Ring's End Brand**, has acquired **A & M Paint & Wallpaper**, another family-operated business with a 65-year history in Portsmouth, NH.

## INDUSTRY EVENTS

### 2025

**JAN 14**  
WISCONSIN CONNECTION  
CONFERENCE 2025  
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## CELEBRATING YOUNG LEADERS

The LBM Journal 40 Under 40 is a yearly list of 40 pros who have achieved success in the lumber/building material industry before turning 40. This program recognizes and celebrates the growing class of strong, young leaders in the LBM community, and provides them with a space to share ideas, build relationships, and grow in their professional roles.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Employees or owners of a lumberyard, specialty dealer/distributor, wholesale distributor, manufacturer, or service provider who are over 20 years old and under 40 years of age during the 2025 calendar year.

## THROW YOUR HAT IN THE RING

If this sounds like you, nominate yourself. We encourage self-nominations, and would love the opportunity to recognize you.

## NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE

If you know of someone—be it a fellow teammate, a manager, or owner—deserving of this recognition, nominate them, and we'll take it from there. The process only takes a couple of minutes.

## THERE IS NO COST TO ENTER!

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# A Celebration OF STYLE AND INNOVATION

## Elevate Outdoor Spaces with Westbury® Aluminum Railing

At Digger Specialties, Inc. (DSI), we believe in more than just creating outdoor living products, we transform outdoor spaces into personal sanctuaries. With Westbury® Aluminum Railing, we empower homeowners, builders, and contractors to craft outdoor spaces that embody beauty, safety, and timeless design. Our commitment to excellence was beautifully showcased during the 2024 Transforming the Outdoor Living Experience® Photo Contest, where the creativity and craftsmanship of our customers brought these spaces to life.



### Westbury® Aluminum Railing: The Cornerstone of Modern Outdoor Living

Westbury® Aluminum Railing is renowned for its durability, low-maintenance features, and elegant designs. With a variety of railing systems like Tuscany, VertiCable, Veranda Glass, Sorrento Mesh, and the new Bella Cavo Horizontal Cable Railing, we cater to a broad spectrum of styles and functional needs.

Our railings are powder-coated with an advanced system that ensures exceptional resistance to weathering, chipping, and fading. This provides customers with long-lasting beauty while minimizing upkeep. From residential decks to large-scale commercial projects, Westbury® Aluminum Railing stands as a trusted choice, offering flexibility in design and reliability in performance.

### Customer-Centric Design and Innovation

Westbury® Aluminum Railing continues to innovate, addressing evolving market demands with solutions like the newly launched Bella Cavo Horizontal Cable Railing. This system combines minimalist aesthetics with unparalleled durability, ideal for modern outdoor designs. Paired with our timeless offerings like Tuscany and VertiCable, Bella Cavo ensures that our customers have options that complement any architectural style.

### Join the Transformation

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all contest participants for showcasing the transformative power of Westbury® products. The creativity in these projects inspires us to continue innovating and delivering products that shape beautiful outdoor living experiences.

For those inspired to embark on their own outdoor transformation, explore the possibilities with Westbury® Aluminum Railing. Whether it is the clean, uninterrupted lines of cable railing or the classic elegance of traditional railings, we offer solutions that elevate any outdoor setting.

### Ready to Be Inspired?

Scan the QR code on the adjacent page to view the full gallery of this year's winning entries. Let these exceptional projects fuel your creativity as you design the perfect outdoor space with Westbury® Aluminum Railing.

With every product we craft, and every outdoor space transformed, DSI remains committed to Transforming the Outdoor Living Experience®. Discover how Westbury® Aluminum Railing can redefine your outdoor space today.

## Celebrating Outdoor Creativity: 2024 Photo Contest Highlights

This year's Transforming the Outdoor Living Experience® Photo Contest celebrated the vision and talent of our customers—homeowners, contractors, and dealers—who incorporated Westbury® products into their outdoor projects. The submissions showcased diverse installations, each emphasizing the seamless integration of form and function.

### The Winning Entries

#### Mike Chekanoff, The Exterior Living Company

Highlighted the timeless appeal of Westbury® VertiCable Railing and Tuscany Railing, framing scenic outdoor vistas while offering safety and style. This winning photo features Westbury® Tuscany and VertiCable railings on a cozy multi-level deck, seamlessly interwoven with its surrounding environment. Congratulations to The Exterior Living Company, Northwest Building Resources, and Palmer Donavin.

#### Josh Beach, Lensing Building Specialties

Demonstrated the versatility of Westbury® ScreenRail, creating an inviting yet protected outdoor space perfect for entertaining. Congratulations Josh and Lensing Building Specialties!

#### Trevor Wegner, TW Craftsmen

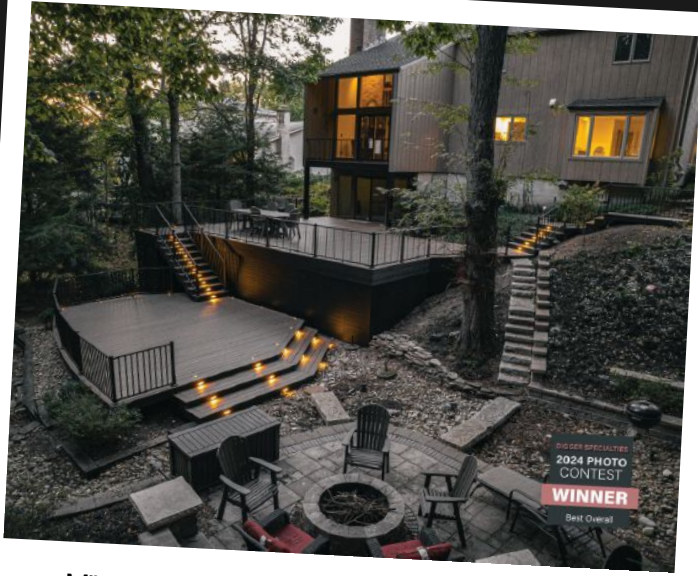
Featured the sleek sophistication of Westbury® Square Smooth Column Wraps paired with Tuscany Railing, elevating a classic deck design to new heights. Congratulations to TW Craftsmen, Scott's Lumber, and US Lumber.

These winning installations represent not just products but the essence of Westbury®—helping homeowners transform their visions into reality.

Transforming the Outdoor Living Experience®

# 2024 Photo Contest

## Congratulations TO ALL THE WINNERS



Mike Chekanoff of The Exterior Living Company  
Westbury® VertiCable Railing and Tuscany Railing



Josh Beach of Lensing Building Specialties  
Westbury® ScreenRail



Trevor Wegner of TW Craftsmen  
Westbury® Square Smooth Columns  
Wraps and Tuscany Railing

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who took the time to share their incredible photos with us during our 2024 Transforming the Outdoor Living Experience Photo Contest. Your submissions captured the essence of outdoor living and the unique ways our products help create beautiful spaces. These are just a few of the winning photos.



**Scan the QR Code**  
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Transforming the Outdoor Living Experience®

BY RICK DAVIS

**IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR** when we start attending conventions and regional meetings to promote our brands, gather new sales leads, and shake hands with old friends. Regional and local trade associations will host events, and the International Builder Show (IBS) will take place next month. At these events, I'm always reminded that the people I am shaking hands with are the ones I first met 30 years ago.

To start the new year, I'm going to suggest that you launch your 2025 sales campaign with the idea that the prospecting conversations you open today will, if successful, last for decades. Here are some tips that will help you launch conversations that endure.

## THE 30-YEAR DIALOGUE

**1. Pick up the darn phone!** At the airport, the security message is, "See something? Say something." At the sales office, a similar mantra should apply. If you've seen evidence of a new lead, or gained a referral, or had a request for information, make a call ... without hesitation.

It's easy for salespeople to procrastinate this simple task because they are seeking the perfect words. Instead of hesitating, pick up the phone with the right mindset and the words will follow. The goal is to open a dialogue with sincere interest about understanding a prospect's business.

**2. Always be opening.** Instead of the classic mantra that says you should always be closing, try opening doors. It's well known that a sale which comes too easily is a warning sign of bad credit, a pricing mistake, or that a quick and easy sale might be an indicator of disloyalty. Therefore, your goal shouldn't be to close, but instead open a dialogue.

As counterintuitive as this may seem, my experience has been that not presuming you are the best vendor for a customer is a powerful mindset at the opening of a relationship. Countless times in my career, prospects have asked, "Why should I buy from you?" I confess, "I have no idea, but we should find out." This disarming and deliberate approach ironically accelerates relationship building and, therefore, the sales process.

**3. Be the first runner-up.** I've never been a big fan of the simile that a salesperson should be a hunter. Hunting kills and leaves a trail of blood. Instead, I prefer farming and the idea of planting seeds. Operate on the premise that most builders and remodelers choose a new supplier when something goes wrong with the existing one. Position yourself as the first runner-up, the ideal choice when things go wrong with the existing supplier.

If you agree that it takes numerous interactions to get the first sale from a prospect, then you should act deliberately to build a series of interactions designed to make the sales not a one-time event, but the first of many in a relationship.

**4. Be interested as the means to be interesting.** The irony is that a "push" to get a sale while convincing a buyer that your offer is interesting creates resistance in the buyer. A "pull" of information that illustrates your interest in a buyer causes them to lean in. Sales listening instead of talking will reveal you are the better choice even before something goes wrong with the existing supplier.

The conversations that you launch today establish the nature of your conversation for years to come. You don't realize it in the moment until you start attending trade shows, customer events, and other casual business functions. One day you look up and see an old industry friend and realize that the first encounter you had was the launch of a 30-year dialogue. Start prospecting conversations today as the means to generate dialogues that will endure tomorrow and throughout your career.



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](http://buildingleaders.com).

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BY BILL LEE

**THERE ARE TWO WAYS** most owners and managers find leadership for their business: they develop it or they hire it. Or they do some of both. In this article we are going to explore what to look for when hiring leadership. This undertaking is crucial for developing growth and ensuring smooth internal operations. Leaders set the tone for the company culture, drive innovation, and maintain customer satisfaction. Below is a guide on what to look for.

### Industry knowledge

It is almost impossible to achieve industry knowledge from reading books; experience is almost always necessary. Understanding market trends, customer needs, and the competitive landscape go a long way toward building a strong player in the market. This expertise not only enables leaders to make informed decisions, but also helps them develop their people. Finding candidates who have a proven track record in the industry will pay handsome dividends.

### Vision and strategy

Leadership is not just about managing day-to-day operations, it's about setting a vision about the future. An effective leader should be able to articulate a clear and compelling vision for the business. The best leaders also possess strategic thinking skills, allowing them to develop a blueprint to achieve long-term company goals. In interviews and in reference checking, ask questions about their vision for our industry and how they plan to adapt to changes. The answers you get will give insight into their strategic mindset.

# FINDING LEADERSHIP FOR YOUR COMPANY



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

### Communication skills

There is little more that is as important to effective leadership than strong communication skills. An old saying that makes this point is, "Don't throw the same pitch to every batter." Leaders must avoid making the mistake of using the same verbal skills with both subordinates and colleagues. In one instance, questioning skills may yield the best results, while in another sharing words of wisdom may be the better choice. Look for candidates who demonstrate strong verbal and written communication skills. Why? The two biggest mistakes communicators make is failing to listen and failing to ask good questions.

### Problem-solving abilities

During interviews, present hypothetical scenarios related to the LBM industry and evaluate how candidates approach these problems. Their responses will help you gauge their analytical skills and creativity in overcoming obstacles.

### Team-building skills

A successful candidate should possess skills to build, motivate, and retain the workforce. Design questions about their approach to conflict resolution and how they go about achieving collaboration among coworkers. A leader who prioritizes team-building will create a positive work environment that drives productivity. A talented, happy, and motivated sales force is hard to beat.

### Customer-centric mindset

A strong leader should prioritize the needs and feedback of customers. They should understand the importance of building relationships and creating a strong customer base. Look for candidates who have a track record of enhancing customer experiences and implementing customer-focused strategies. In our businesses, the customer is king; all company leaders must have a commitment to customer satisfaction. Their commitment will directly influence the success and reputation of your business.

### Cultural fit

Finally, consider the cultural fit of potential leaders within your organization. Your business has a unique culture, and it's essential for leaders to align with that culture to ensure cohesion and morale. During interviews, discuss your company values and observe how the candidates respond. Their alignment with your culture can lead to a more harmonious workplace and greater overall success.

### Integrity

Honesty is a virtue that is expected of everyone, but especially leaders. In the absence of integrity, all of a leader's other attributes are not enough to bail them out.

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BY THEA DUDLEY

Hey Thea,  
 How do you respond to a past-due customer who gets upset with you for contacting their customer? Before placing a mechanics lien on a past-due account, we have to do a Notice of Intent in our state, so it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. The customer told me "It is MY bill, so don't contact my customer again. I will get you paid." These aren't my rules to secure our lien rights, it's what's required by state statute. Am I wrong here?

— Liening Tower of Lumber

## CONFLICTS WITH CONTACTING CUSTOMERS

Dear Liening,

That you are asking, "Am I wrong here?" tells me this blow-hard got in your head. Is he paying rent? NO, that's the problem, he's not paying you for anything. Kick him out! The mere mention that you are at the point of filing a lien against the property is an indication that the bloom is off the rose with said "customer."

Filing a lien is not a credit manager's first "go-to" move. Ironically, it creates more work for us and is a giant pain. The fight is not just with the customer, but with sales, the property owner, and anyone else who suddenly decides they need to throw their hat in the ring and be a part of this battle. Everyone sings the phrase, "We have lien rights," but goes into analysis paralysis mode when it comes to actually filing it.

The road that leads to the infamous "Filing of The Lien" is paved with phone calls, texts, emails, and a barrage of discussions filled with words and phrases that are creative,

varied, and often obscene. To quote a colleague, "Everyone wants to go to the parade, but no one wants to clean up after the elephant."

Responding to your customer's comment is a tongue-biting event. The comment conveys a lack of education on their part. Most contractors, people in the construction or building materials industry, and some credit managers simply don't understand the process or the legalities of securing your lien rights.

A concise response is always best: "We appreciate that and we look forward to receiving your payment; In the meantime, it is our policy to not lose lien rights. We will need to have payment in full by XX date or we will have to file a lien." Then take a breath. They may already be talking over you or summarize their thoughts and hang up. They may continue to push their POV, but stick to your script. There is no easy way to have this conversation, but I can guarantee that avoidance is just prolonged suffering disguised as temporary relief and hope.

It is difficult and uncomfortable to deliver news no one wants, both with the property owner and the contractor. But if you think having uncomfortable conversations is hard, wait until you see the results of not having them—a missed opportunity to avoid bad debt. Remember what your role in the company is: To protect and collect your company's money.

Your customer will often call their salesperson and express their displeasure. Then said salesperson will call you. This is your chance to educate. This won't be the first or last time you have this discussion. You will explain the lien process, the requirements, and that it is statute driven until the day you retire to everyone ... customers, property owners, your leadership, and salespeople.

You didn't create the customer's inability to pay or lack of knowledge about their chosen industry, but you can dispense some wisdom. Just think, if cauliflower can somehow become pizza crust, you can stand your ground on liens.



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](mailto:theadudley@charter.net).



# CEMENT YOUR NAME IN HISTORY



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BY JOHN D. WAGNER

**YOU'D HAVE TO BE FROM** the planet Venus to have missed the run of big companies—public and private—acquiring hundreds of family-owned LBM retailers. The appetite for acquiring these businesses is fueled, in part, by the age of the LBM company's owner. Many of the LBM retailers being acquired today are run by the adult children of the company founders. In many cases, the company owners today are often the children of World War II veterans (or other American entrepreneurs in that age group; people born in the 1920s and 1930s).

From the “buy-side,” acquirers like Kodiak, Nation's Best, Builders FirstSource, BIP, US LBM, ABC Supply, and regional players like TAL Holdings or Spahn & Rose, have snapped up LBM companies, and then relied on scale, cross-selling, and “buying margin,” (e.g. owning their own means of production or verticalizing their portfolios), to drive up the companies' values, post-acquisition. You may sell your business for 5X EBITDA, but *in aggregate*, hundreds of these businesses can be worth *twice* 5X or more when sold together by a private equity group.

## WILL THE LBM ROLL-UP CONTINUE?

These LBMers started building material retail locations and truss shops after the war, and they thrived as the U.S. housing market built homes for returning veterans, Baby Boomers (people born from 1946 to 1964) and subsequent generations. Years ago, these founders often bought land for their companies in sleepy downtowns that grew around them over the years, making their real estate very valuable decades later. (Who wouldn't want six acres in downtown Austin, TX today, if it were purchased in 1945?). The adult children of these business founders—today's owners—are now often in their 70s, and they do not always have younger family members who want to run LBM businesses, since the younger crowd has opted for white collar jobs. So, the “sell-side”—independent lumberyards with owners eyeing retirement—is really primed to accept meaningful offers for their businesses as they exit.

Independent owners may ask, “When will the roll-up slow down, or completely run out of gas?” From our point of view, the roll-up still has legs and room to run, as long as there are quality companies yet to be acquired. And there still are many out there. Plus, buyers have plenty of cash for acquisitions. But we think the current roll-up will be measured in years, not decades. And note: many large or multi-location LBM retailers/component plants have already been acquired ... or have said they're not interested in talking just yet. Accordingly, when we are contacted by acquirers seeking LBM operations, so-called “big game,” we say there are fewer of them around now.

The question I'd ask LBM owners on the bubble about whether to pursue acquisition is simple, “Do you want to be on the front end or the back end of a roll-up cycle, especially a roll-up that is unlikely to repeat any time soon once it loses steam?” Our answer: Who today wouldn't have wanted *rolled shares* (e.g. taking some of the purchase price as stock) in the first round of acquisitions by Kodiak or US LBM years ago? Secondly, who today wants to own a company seeing an acquisition *too late* in the roll-up cycle, only to get a weak offer because acquirers already own something else nearby you, or the acquirer considers your company a “nice to have,” and not “need to have?”

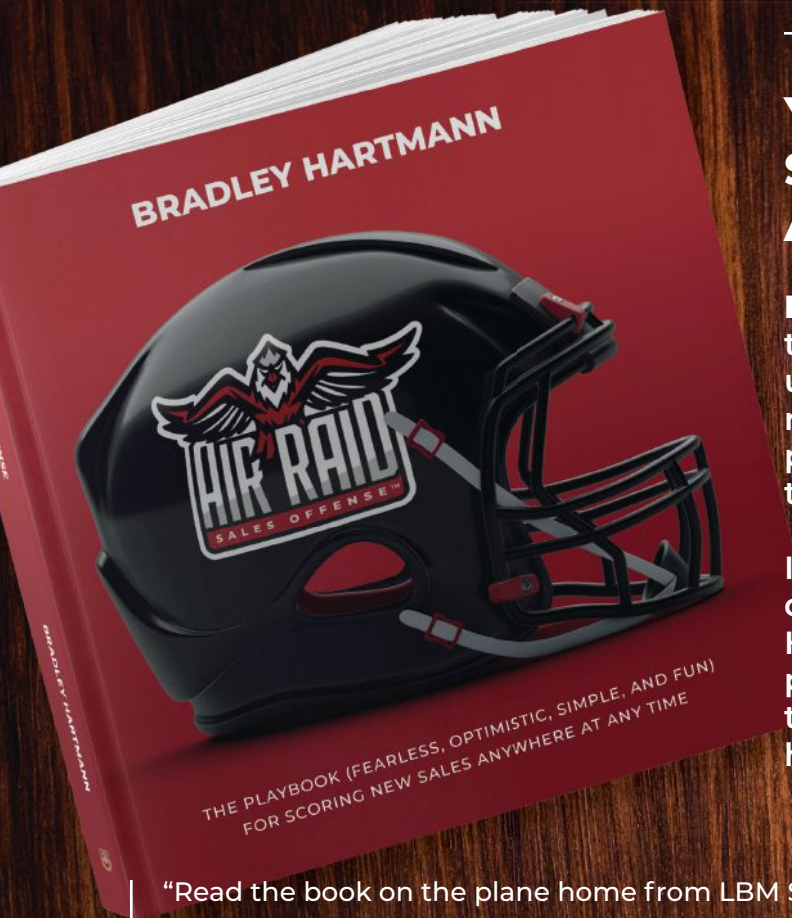
In today's market, with acquirers' unfettered access to cash (the majority of offers we see are all-cash, *non-financing-contingent*) and with the prospect of lower interest rates on the horizon, the M&A environment is still very positive for LBM owners to sell their businesses, especially if they are over \$2mm Adjusted EBITDA. I'll end with an Asian saying about potentially missed opportunities, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.” Is now the time to plant that tree and test the market?



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

# THE AIR RAID SALES OFFENSE

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BY RUSS KATHREIN

## WHEN A PARTNERSHIP ISN'T

**PARTNERSHIP IS A WORD** that gets thrown around quite a bit in business. Whether it is creating a strategic partnership with a customer, having a vendor partner, or sharing ownership with someone, partnership means that you are taking the relationship to the next level. It is rooted in being aligned in your shared vision and a commitment to trust each other. People “invest” time, money, and emotion in good partnerships because they see the ability to achieve things they could not accomplish by themselves. So when a partnership is established, it is with good intentions and high hopes.

One definition of a successful relationship is where each party gives 60% and only takes 40%. As long as both parties abide by this, all is good. What happens when one partner gives 60% but the other partner only gives 40%, or worse yet, does not give and only takes? Sometimes a relationship can deteriorate to this level, yet at other times one party goes into a partnership with the great expectations of a successful end result, while the other side goes into the partnership viewing it as a means to an end. Joe Hardy, the founder of 84 Lumber, had the opinion that he wanted our relationships with our vendors to be win/win, but he wanted our Win to have a capital letter. This showed his intent that he did not view the partnership as being equal, but at least he was honest with himself and with those he was dealing with.

Other people are not quite as honest. They will enter into an agreement with lots of promises and want a lot of concessions or advantages in return. They may espouse their company values as a way to establish trust, or they may point out that they bring a large amount of business that is good for your company. When they fail to deliver on their promises, they may turn it around and blame it on some lack of perfor-

mance on your part, or they may say it was temporary and dangle a new carrot to get you to buy into the partnership more. At some point, they may even consciously violate the partnership agreement and respond with, “It’s just business.” You do not have a partnership with these people. You have a transactional relationship.

There is nothing wrong with having a transactional relationship with a company or a person. The majority of business relationships are transactional. The trap is when we so want to take a relationship to the next level, but the other party hasn’t bought into the idea or merely sees it as a way to advance their agenda. We start investing heavily into the partnership with our time and money, but the other party does not or feels that by merely giving us the order or their attention, they are fulfilling their obligation to the partnership. The way to avoid these traps is to realistically evaluate all of your relationships and truly define which ones are partnerships that you want to continue to invest in, and which ones are purely transactional, which can continue on a day by day, normal business effort basis.

These same principles apply outside of customer and vendor relationships. Whether it is working with your peers or in your personal relationships, ask yourself whether the other party is committed to giving more than they are taking, or if you feel like you are the one investing all the extra effort. Long-term relationships involve long-term investment and trust. If your partner’s attitude is, “What have you done for me lately?” your partnership is in trouble and you probably need to reevaluate. A peer relationship can revert easily to a transactional one. Personal relationships are probably a different story unless you feel comfortable having the same response back to them.



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



## LBM CENTURY CLUB HONORS 100-YEAR-OLD BUSINESSES

The LBM Century Club was founded on the simple belief that companies that have been around for 100 years deserve to be recognized. Launched in 2016, the LBM Century Club has grown to over 215 members, with more coming in each month. In all, the companies have provided 27,136 years of combined service to their communities.

By no means does the LBM Journal's Century Club list include every 100-year-old company...at least not yet. That's where you come in. Do you work for, or know of a lumberyard or building materials retailer that is 100 or more years old? Send them our way, so that we can give them the recognition they deserve. Century Club members receive a certificate for their store, window decals for their front doors, free admission to the LBM Strategies Conference where they are guests of honor at a Century Club induction ceremony, as well as recognition in their local media, all free of charge.

### THE MOST RECENT INDUCTEES INTO THIS EXCLUSIVE CLUB INCLUDE:

BADGER LUMBER COMPANY Parkersburg, WV	est. 1922	HAMILTON BUILDING SUPPLY Hamilton, NJ	est. 1924
BERONIO LUMBER San Francisco, CA	est. 1911	KEEP & MARTINSON LUMBER, INC. Tekonsha, MI	est. 1875
DAVIS-HAWN Dallas, TX	est. 1923	A.H. ANGERSTEIN, INC. Wilmington, DE	est. 1924
SMITH LUMBER COMPANY Valley City, ND	est. 1923	CHRISTENSEN LUMBER CO. Fremont, NE	est. 1923
PAGE LUMBER, MILLWORK, & BUILDING SUPPLIES Poughkeepsie, NY	est. 1924	CAROLINA LUMBER & SUPPLY COMPANY Atlanta, GA	est. 1900

### NOMINATE A COMPANY FOR THE LBM CENTURY CLUB

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# UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL: USING GENERATIVE AI FOR NON-AUTOMATED TASKS



**LOVE IT OR HATE IT**, artificial intelligence is more than just a passing fad. As the technology continues to become more mainstream, more and more LBM dealers are working to integrate it into their operations. However, many business owners may be unsure on where to start or how to use AI without seeming “robotic.”

To that end, John Marshall, co-founder of AI Growth Partners LLC, has written—with the help of AI generative tools—some ideas on how to try out AI at your company, while still keeping a human touch.

BY JOHN MARSHALL (USING AI)

When we think about artificial intelligence (AI), automation often comes to mind—robots handling routine jobs or software answering customer queries. But Generative AI, like OpenAI’s ChatGPT, is more than an automation tool. It’s designed to assist with non-automated tasks, helping businesses with creative, strategic, and thoughtful components that demand human oversight. So, how can LBM dealers begin using AI while keeping full control of their business operations?

Generative AI acts as an assistant for brainstorming, problem-solving, and content creation. It doesn’t replace human decision-making but provides suggestions and insights to improve productivity. Here’s how your business can start leveraging AI for non-automated tasks:

### 1. Content creation and marketing materials

LBM dealers depend on local, personalized marketing. AI can help by drafting content for social media posts, newsletters, blogs, and promotional materials. Think of AI as a creative partner that gives you ideas and inspiration. It won’t automate the entire marketing process but provides a helpful starting point, saving time while allowing you to shape the final content.

### 2. Data-driven decision making

Generative AI tools can analyze your business’s historical data, market trends, and customer behaviors to offer strategic insights. AI can help with pricing decisions, product launches, or inventory management by analyzing patterns, but you remain in control of the final decisions.

For instance, if you’re considering introducing a new product line, AI can suggest approaches based on past sales and customer preferences. The analysis AI provides enhances decision-making without taking over.

### 3. Customer interaction and support

While automated chatbots handle basic inquiries, generative AI is ideal for personalized customer support. It can assist you in crafting customized responses to inquiries or complaints, helping improve your customer service quality. This balance between efficiency and personalization allows you to provide prompt, thoughtful responses without relying on generic, pre-written scripts.

### 4. Collaborative strategy development

Strategic decisions need collaboration, multiple viewpoints, and creativity. AI tools can assist by offering fresh angles and potential strategies, acting as a thought partner. For long-term planning, AI can spark innovative ideas that you and your team might not have considered.

For example, when building a new sales strategy, AI can offer suggestions on target customer segments or emerging market opportunities, helping expand your strategy discussions.

### 5. Product descriptions and sales pitches

Writing product descriptions and sales emails can be time-consuming. AI can help you draft descriptions or pitches tailored to your audience, highlighting key features and benefits. Whether you’re promoting a new type of lumber or a tool, AI helps ensure your message resonates with your customers while saving you time.

## AI AS A CREATIVE ASSISTANT, NOT AN AUTOMATOR

The key to starting with Generative AI is to use it for tasks that require creativity and strategic thinking, rather than automating processes. AI won’t make decisions for you—it empowers you with insights, suggestions, and ideas that enhance your creativity and efficiency. You remain in control of the final output.

In today’s competitive LBM industry, staying ahead requires innovative thinking. Generative AI allows you to harness cutting-edge technology while maintaining your business’s unique character. By embracing AI for non-automated tasks, you’ll find new opportunities to boost creativity, improve decision-making, and elevate customer experiences.

ILLUSTRATION: ©ISTOCK.COM/SANKAI

John Marshall is the co-founder of AI Growth Partners LLC, a firm that works with businesses to help them implement advanced AI solutions, customized training, and development tools to help leverage technology more effectively. Learn more at [www.aigrowthpartners.net](http://www.aigrowthpartners.net) or reach out to John at [www.aigrowthpartners.net/contact](http://www.aigrowthpartners.net/contact).





# COMPANY VALUES TAKE THE LEAD AT WILSON LUMBER

The leadership team of Wilson Lumber. From left: Mark Johnson, Culture and Engagement Leader; Nichole Mitchell, VP of People and Culture; Gordon Staley, VP of Sales and Marketing; Robb Wilson, CEO; Lee Smith, VP of Operations; Josh Hendrickson, President; Dan Magee, CFO.

PHOTO BY PUBLIC-RESOURCE.COM

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

BY WENDY STURGES

**N**ow in its 75th year, Wilson Lumber has built its foundation on the idea of doing the right thing for its people and its customers, creating a culture of longtime employees and business relationships. Remaining family-owned and operated has been a priority for the Wilsons. CEO Robb Wilson and his cousin Mark Wilson are third generation owners, and Robb's son Haden, a fourth generation Wilson, recently came on board in the company's purchasing department.

"We are a family-owned business. But the obligation of the family that owns the business is to make everyone feel like family," Robb Wilson said about the importance of family owner/operators.

Founded in 1949 in Huntsville by Robb's grandfather, Clyde Wilson, the company started out as a back-up plan to farming. After a swarm of boll weevils attacked his crops, Clyde

began working with his brother-in-law to cut down trees and sell the lumber. From there, the operation grew to a store that sold other building materials and over the years evolved to the retail location the community knows today.

Wilson said the company owes much of its growth over the years to holding strong to its mission statement—"to build a successful company that upholds Christlike principles and inspires people to grow"—and core values of accountability and treating people well.

"It's in our mission statement. Part of it says, 'inspiring people to grow,'" Wilson said. "And one of our core values is challenging yourself to grow. So, we definitely believe within our leadership team, senior management, and middle management that our responsibility is to grow and develop our team and our customers. We want to inspire them to be the best in any way we can." ▶



### Navigating growth

Over time the company has grown to add two truss manufacturing plants and two millwork plants, Wilson said, which gives it the capability to build and brand some of its own products in-house, including Generations, Wilson's own line of vinyl windows.

Although some of the plants have been around for several years, Wilson said that piece of the business proved invaluable during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many builders and customers experienced long lead times and other supply chain issues.

"Manufacturing plays such a huge role in making sure that we control our own destiny," Wilson said. "We really have come to realize that [it] is a strong suit for us, and so that's why we have the two truss manufacturing plants, the millwork manufacturing plants, and our retail location."

Today, Wilson said the majority of the company's customers are home builders working to keep up with Huntsville's growing population. The metro area has nearly quadrupled during Wilson Lumber's history, growing to over half a million people in recent years.

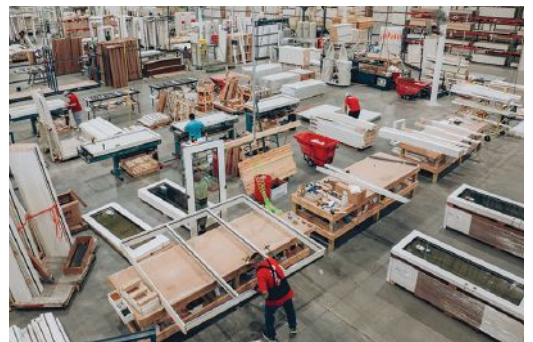
In 2010, the company expanded into the multifamily market, which now accounts for roughly 40% of its business across 13 states, according to President Josh Hendrickson. The other 60% comes from single-family homes primarily in North Alabama and Southern Tennessee.

The company itself has also seen personnel growth, reaching more than 360 employees as of 2024. Hendrickson said that as the company has grown larger, communication and teamwork have become even more important.

"The proactive communication piece of what we do is really important, whether the news is good or bad," he said. "We're going to make sure that we go out of our way to tell them as soon as possible so they can make an informed decision. That's not just to our customers, that's internal to all our employees—we must do that to be successful."

Our company's growth plan will always prioritize our mission, values and culture," Wilson said. "The reason we want to grow is not just for growth's sake, and definitely not for profit's sake," he said. "We believe we have a very healthy culture and an inspiring mission. Our

**When it comes to the importance of family owner/operators, Robb Wilson says, Wilson Lumber is a family-owned business. But the obligation of the family that owns the business is to make everyone feel like family.**



goal is to inspire growth in our employees, customers, suppliers, community, and anyone else we come in contact with.”

### People matter

Wilson and Hendrickson said the biggest asset for the company is its people, several of which have been with Wilson Lumber for decades. To that end, Hendrickson said the company prioritizes the well-being of its employees through its leadership development program, Wilson Lumber Grows, helping them build careers within Wilson Lumber.

“I personally believe that customers genuinely want to do business with people that they like, but more so with people that have the same mission,” Hendrickson said. “So we’re going to keep doing our thing. We’re going to keep going down that path, we’re going to focus on our employees—because they are most important. Then, we’re going to give back to the community and work really hard to be the best at what we do, which is taking care of our customers.”

With many LBM dealers in the U.S. experiencing recruiting and retention issues, Hendrickson said an important aspect of hiring is following up with new hires.

“Everybody talks about their culture, and I’ve been fortunate to visit companies that are really intentional about their culture; and you can see it, you can feel it,” Hendrickson said. “I believe that our employees feel that intentionality when they start working here. I ask new employees, ‘are we the company that we promised you?’ Because during the interview process, we describe our culture and core values. You can talk about them; but, we want to know that we are doing what we said we were going to do.”

Wilson said the company has also developed a culture of giving back, starting from within the company and expanding to the community and beyond.

The company established a benevolence fund to help support employees who may be experiencing hardships, and locally, Wilson Lumber works with several nonprofit organizations as part of its Wilson Lumber Cares initiative. Some recent community partners include the Downtown Rescue Mission, Romans 8:28, and Next Step Farms, which provides day programs and continuing education opportunities for adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities.



In addition to working with local nonprofits, Wilson Lumber also sponsors a village in El Potrerillo, Guatemala to help provide education and healthcare.

Additionally, the company also partnered with Awakening Hope to adopt a village in El Potrerillo, Guatemala and help supply clean water, food, clothing, education and more. Company employees routinely visit the village to help with construction projects and medical clinics. To date, Wilson Lumber has sponsored nearly 40 students.

Wilson said the employee, local, and global approaches to giving back have become one of the core parts of the business. He said the most important part of his job as CEO is to model those values for employees and the next generations to come.

“When an employee can go into any division of the business and see that we truly live those core values, then you can put a mission statement in front of them—then you start to get buy-in. They want to be a part of something larger than themselves if it’s a worthy mission,” Wilson said. ■



### GET TO KNOW WILSON LUMBER

Founded:	1949
Ownership:	Family
Locations:	1 retail, 2 truss plants and 2 millwork plants
Employees:	365
ERP Software:	Epicor BisTrack
Business breakdown:	60% single family construction 40% multifamily construction

# CONCERNS HEADING INTO 2025

January has long been a popular time to reflect and ask ourselves what we would like to improve in the next year. While many resolutions tend to fizzle out by the end of the month, taking the time to think critically about challenges and opportunities in the industry is one you can easily keep.

As we welcome 2025 and all the potential of a new year, many LBM dealers and companies are looking ahead to what the year will bring and whether it will be an improvement over last year.

BY LBM JOURNAL READERS

Nearly 130 readers responded to our Real Issues survey email (let us know at [operations@lbmjournal.com](mailto:operations@lbmjournal.com) if you'd like to be on the list). **THE QUESTION:**

## **Q** What is your No. 1 business challenge for 2025 ... and why?

**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:**

"We worked hard in 2024 with providing the best environment in our workplace. We strengthened our team through leadership training and culture awareness. This should improve our profit structure leading to better benefits and compensation for our performers."

"One of our biggest challenges is finding qualified help for positions that require it. Also, people that are willing to start in entry level positions to work their way up."

"Interest rates."

"That we and the industry have the infrastructure to keep up with a big uptick in demand and not create massive lead times."

"Supply. Mills are curtailing production to save costs and drive up revenue which leads to decreased supply."

"Product availability, proper staffing."

"Maintaining good employees and finding good replacements when needed."

"Hiring CDL drivers."

"Skilled labor shortages, tradesmen, and experienced drivers."

"The challenge continues to be finding enough staff; we live in a sparsely populated area, with a heavy government employee base."

"With the optimistic forecast of 2025 being a better year, will probably need to do some recruiting."

"Rising costs of operations, and shortage of labor."

"Logistics."

"Interest rates. Our market is 80% residential. 2024 was a big drop in sales because housing was not affordable."

"The lack of a strong labor pool. The skills needed to support the trades are at an all-time low. Something must change and motivate the next generation of construction professionals. As seasoned veterans, we must work to make our industry sexy again!"

"Managing growth."

"Winning construction projects with our products is the key to our business longevity."

"Tower cranes in the city, it's a huge part of our business."

"Finding qualified candidates to hire, housing prices and mortgage rates are too high."

"As an independent building material supplier, we are faced with trying to stay relevant in our service areas as the larger companies continue to acquire more locations. This gives them more purchasing advantages direct from the mills and distribution partners and with the cost of a home, consumers are looking for any savings they can get their hands on. We have to define the value that our company brings to the builders and distribution partners for us to continue growth as an independent."

"Continued inflationary pressures on business expenses."

"Figuring out how to trim costs. With rising insurance rates and taxes we need to find areas to trim. Raising prices would be challenging with the competition around these days."

"Finding good people and outside sales people in particular for new business."

"Hiring. So many ups and downs. We're always looking for the right fit for the team when a position opens up, but it is a drain to train and retrain when that fit isn't right."

"Tariffs could create an increase in commodity prices coming from Canada and hurting the consumer and slowing things down."

"Labor shortage."

"Shrinking marketplace—as more and more dealers, suppliers and manufacturers buy each other there is less and less competition and choice."

"We continue to face a very competitive environment for dealers in our local market. We have the capabilities and the capacity, but frequently can't get past the larger, national chains operating locally, taking projects at significant discounts to the independent dealers."

"Finding additional installers."

"Social media marketing as a lumberyard—how to I build the brand through this? How can I get it going? Keep it going?"

"Finding qualified and/or quality workers."

"Increase sales and margin without raising cost of doing business."

"Debt and high cost of doing business."

"A government agency known as the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), and some difficult to fill out paperwork."

"Government interference changing codes, inspection charges going up."

"Volume."

"Identifying and improving where we can improve processes as opposed to focusing on outcomes. Easier said than done."

"Interest rates negatively affect housing starts, which in turn negatively affects our sale of building materials to our customers."

"Lumber prices and availability would be my biggest concern. I think lumber will be available but the higher quality material I am used to buying is going to be hard to come by next year. I think you are going to see a change in buying behavior and your buys are not just going to cover the next two months of business but rather maybe six months to make sure you protect margin and make sure you have product available when you need it."

"Cash flow. Bring overhead down and margins up."

"Tax burden on the middle class."

"Anticipated decline in sales coupled with low commodity pricing."

"Employee housing—new hires cannot find housing, and current employees cannot move up and improve themselves, more room needed, having kids, etc."

"Affordable sourcing. Keeping expenses down."

"The economy concerns me. We have to get inflation under control so Americans can pay their bills and hopefully start saving some money."

"Interest rate stability or decline."

"The softwood lumber dispute and duties are constraining our ability to buy Canadian wood products."

### Responses from wholesale distributors, manufacturers, and service providers:

"Staffing—hard to find and keep help."

"If there is much of an uptick in demand, will there be the supply to meet it? Mill and plant closures seem to have outpaced new production capacity."

"Employees and inflation."

"New government administration with putting tariffs on imported aluminum products (Railing, balusters, etc.)."

"Knowing how much inventory to keep on hand, borrowing costs, changing regulations."

"Customer experience."

"Expanding into a new market. Figuring out the learning curve quickly in order to better serve our customers."

"Finding employees!"

"Getting in front of the individuals that use my service in a way that they are comfortable and have the time to communicate with me."

"Labor costs and health insurance as part of labor costs."

"Closing more deals; overcoming the transactional/commodity mentality of our customer base and latching onto those that will be partners for the long term. Getting new customers is essential to our growth plan, especially as organic growth will be steady but far from booming."

"Cost of goods is out of reach of the consumer."

"Industry consolidation."

"Workplace development as our industry and the trades we supply are having issues."

"Will the economy go up or down? Only time will tell."

"Lack of capital for my customers. If they had access to more funds they would buy more lumber. Interest rates are too high to borrow funds."

"Political shifts and potential gridlock."

"Scaling our B2B ecommerce platform."

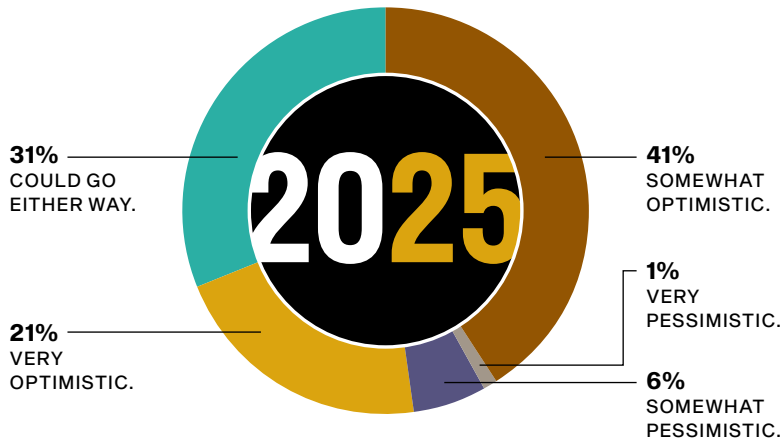
"Whether manufacturing, distribution, or dealer, constant consolidation requires keeping your head on a swivel and having multiple procurement options and always be prospecting. A main supplier or customer may be there one day and gone the next."

"Interest rates going up and loans going down."

"Material prices."



## How optimistic are you that 2025 will be better for your business than 2024?



### Comments from dealers:

“Why do I feel more optimistic? Interest rate drops, election done, ideally more stability overall.”

“Interest rates should improve.”

“With political stability comes more confidence. I anticipate interest rates dropping a little bit. The variable will be supply.”

“Consumer confidence growing along with custom project outlook.”

“Unsure of the changes in the U.S. and what that will do for our prices of materials.”

“Pessimism just isn’t in my nature.”

“Most builders/contractors in our area are saying they expect their business to be the same or better next year and we have positioned our business well.”

“This year will be up from 2023, so likely next year will continue that trend.”

“Waiting to assess the impact of tariffs on the cost of building materials and immigration policies’ effect on construction labor.”

“I think with the interest rates trending down and commodities holding flat or decreasing some, next year looks promising.”

“Anticipating lower interest rates and slowed inflation.”

“Highly dependent on interest rates, particularly for the step up homebuilder and multi-family segment.”

“Too many issues on the economy, politics, interest rates, and inflation are not over and settled.”

“Demand still seems to be there, however, there are more layoffs and plant closings going on so people are concerned about their jobs.”

“The quantity of construction projects seems to be dwindling lately and I’m not sure that they will rebound in 2025.”

“Every time we feel like we’re going to catch up, there’s another price increase, minimum order increase, etc. This inflation is never-ending, along with supply chain issues. Supply chain has improved a bit but I don’t feel optimistic it will stay that way.”

“There are already projects scheduled for next year that were shuttered this year, a good sign that there will be more activity.”

“Pent-up demand for new housing and still limited existing housing on the market. Very attractive for single-family home construction as well as multi-family condo construction.”

### Comments from vendors:

“I am concerned that tariffs will impact affordability.”

“Expecting good volume (not great) increase plus price appreciation (not deflation).”

“We are carefully monitoring the slowdown in consumer spending. If consumers pull back then businesses will lower their own demand forecasts and investments as well.”

“We view interest rates as very important in the future 2025.”

“Starts forecasts are painting a nice picture for the future along with our ability to deliver when our competition has not been able to is boosting confidence that we will be able to take over some share, along with steady organic growth. The current strong price of lumber and forecasted increases there are also helpful.”

“Much depends upon the direction of the country, as it pertains to the economy and confidence.”

“The global economy was awful in 2024 and it’s showing signs of improvement for 2025, particularly the back half. Lower interest rates will help too.”

“I work in collections—the worse things get the busier I get.”

“Fall has been slow and we believe winter will be just as slow due to the still high mortgage rates, hopefully the spring thaw will bring down the cost of money!”

“Our market seems to have a lot of growth still coming.” ■

#### HAVE A REAL ISSUE?

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



## BUILDERS SUPPLY HELPS TO BUILD ACCESSIBLE HOME, RAISE SEPSIS AWARENESS

BY WENDY STURGES

**CINDY MULLINS** was a healthy 41-year-old mom of two when she went into the hospital on Dec. 1, 2023 for an elective procedure to remove kidney stones. Doctors left a stent in to prevent temporary blockage and Cindy was sent home to recover. Shortly thereafter, DJ, Cindy's husband, found her unconscious on the bathroom floor. He immediately took her to the hospital in Stanford, KY, where they found her kidney was surrounded by infection and she had gone into septic shock. Sepsis, which is an extreme reaction to an infection, affects more than 1.7 million adults in the U.S. annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention. For every hour treatment is delayed, the risk of dying from sepsis increases by as much as 8%.

Doctors realized that her arms and legs had lost blood flow and that Cindy would have to have her limbs amputated. As Cindy's story made its way through the community and beyond, James Crocker, CEO of Hog Technologies, began to organize with local companies and volunteers to help build a new home that would be more accommodating for Cindy. James and his wife, Sandee Jo, and their team travelled from Florida to organize the build.

More than 60 contractors and suppliers, along with over 350 individuals and volunteers, helped to build a 7,000-sq.-ft. accessible home for the family in the fall of 2024. Among those organizers was Stanford, KY-based Builders Supply. Builders Supply and their team provided building supplies as well as worked hands on with the Mullins Family and Douglas Rose, the project facilitator, to make certain the build could be completed in just 10 days.

"It was a privilege to be a part of a project that meant so much to our community and to me on a personal level. It is truly one of the greatest experiences that we have had since we have been in business," said Lee Saufley Swain,



whose father started Builders Supply in 1963. “We are a 61-year-old business, and from a community that’s the second-oldest settlement in Kentucky—people really pull together and are there for one another. All of our suppliers stepped up and were very gracious, and all the builders that were involved worked together. That was just as heartwarming as anything, because they usually are competitors. To see them all work together, inspired by a common cause, was just a beautiful thing.”

### A community effort

Organizers worked with the Mullins family to design the home to their unique specifications, then quickly got to work. Aptly named the “Mullins Miracle,” the new home includes dozens of features meant to help Cindy live more independently. Wider hallways, doorways, and sidewalks for wheelchair access, lowered kitchen appliances, and the installation of voice-activated bathroom and light fixtures were some of the features that Liz Betek Design Studio and architect Garland Vanhook were instrumental in designing. In addition, a GoFundMe has raised over \$345,000 to date ([gofundme.com/f/Miraclesformullins](https://gofundme.com/f/Miraclesformullins)).

Builders Supply, a Do it Best member since 1971, and a number of local companies contributed to the project. Pella Windows, one of their suppliers, donated the black Impervia windows used on the project. Porter Paints discounted paint, Crouch and Stringer Concrete assisted with foundation and sidewalk pours, and Mees Distributors donated the Wedi shower system. Other suppliers included Do it Best, KY Wholesale, Kwik-Set, Affordable Truss, Culpeper, Georgia Pacific, Klumb Forest Products, and Tri-State Forest Products.

While DJ was often on-site throughout the build, much of the home was a surprise for Cindy. Before the drywall went up, Cindy had the chance to inscribe, “Love and God built this house,” on one of the wall studs using a Sharpie and her new prosthetic hands. While the build was a challenge, Lee said everyone who worked on the project were determined to make it happen.

### Raising awareness, community pride

In addition to helping the Mullins family, Lee said one of the most important aspects of the project was the opportunity to raise awareness about sepsis, which caused her own mother’s death years ago.



“I want to promote sepsis so that other people recognize the signs in a timely manner,” she said. “I lost my mom to sepsis. Cindy lost all her limbs to sepsis. If we can promote awareness, then this build will not have only helped Cindy, it will help others around the world.”

Builders Supply’s commitment to giving back comes from Founder H.R. “Short” Saufley, Lee’s Father. At 89, Short is very active with the company. “He comes in every day, and is amazing. He is very instrumental in daily operations. Dad buys all of our lumber. It was a tall order to make certain that all the materials we needed for a 7,000-sq.-ft. home were in our small yard, in advance.”

Short, Lee, Contractor Sales Manager Kirby Brannock, and the team at Builders Supply were at the site throughout the build. Yard Manager Sam Bishop and delivery drivers took 5-10 deliveries per day, and even Account Manager Gail Isaacs made deliveries, Saufley Swain said.

She said her father’s commitment to the community has been key to Builders Supply’s longevity in the area. “We try to stay involved in the community. It is important to us to have relationships, because that is the cornerstone of what makes or breaks any business. We are all so proud to be from Lincoln County and our surrounding counties and want to take care of the people that take care of us.” ■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
PAIGE FRANKLIN PHOTOGRAPHY  
AND LEE SAUFLEY SWAIN

# THE BUILDING ENVELOPE

## Experts predict growth despite soft market concerns

BY MIKE BERGER

**NOT FAR FROM MEXICO CITY** are the ruins of the mysterious ancient city complex known by its Aztec name: Teotihuacan, or “The Place of the Gods.” In the last few years, archaeologists working at the site stumbled upon underground rooms with unusual ceilings that are insulated by a layer of mica inserted between two layers of stone. Similarly, excavations of a series of interconnected subterranean chambers revealed that some of the floors were covered with layers of thick mica sheets.

While archaeologists are unsure as to what the chambers were used for, one thing that is obvious is that the ancient Aztecs went to great length to insulate the rooms, as mica has special properties that make it resistant to water and electrical currents. It is highly elastic, heat-resistant up to 1470° F, and resistant to both sudden temperature changes and organic acids. Because of these properties, mica has been used in modern times as an insulator in various chemical processes and electrical and electronic applications, and in nuclear and space technologies.

Thankfully, LBM dealers have an array of insulation and building envelope products more advanced and easier to install (and easier to come by) than mica—a good thing considering the size of the market. Just the U.S. insulation market alone is expected to grow to be worth between \$15.22 billion and \$19.96 billion by 2028 or 2033, depending on the source. Similarly, the housewrap market is projected by some sources to reach \$7.7 billion by 2030. The trick for LBM dealers, say industry experts, is to effectively tap into that market through smart positioning of products during somewhat questionable economic conditions.

### Soft market, cautious growth

Despite economic uncertainties and a housing market that remains unstable, there’s reason to believe the market for building envelope products may experience positive growth throughout the coming 12 months. “We anticipate sheathing and barriers continuing to grow within the building envelope,” says Casey Smyth, senior corporate brand manager for LP Building Solutions. “Homeowners want durable, long-lasting products on their homes that can withstand environmental elements, and builders want products that are easy to install.”

Xuaco Pascual, director of construction and building science for Tamlyn, also sees the growth of the building envelope segment to outpace the soft housing market well into 2025. “Many of our new clients are looking to work with agile companies versus having to deal with the red tape and challenges they face when dealing with larger corporations,” he explains. “At Tamlyn, we continue to see market headwinds that are largely offset by gaining new customers. Moisture issues are a focal point for builders and designers because they remain the largest cost associated with callbacks and the leading cause for building deterioration. The building envelope is a consultative segment and more builders and contractors

are switching to companies that are easy to deal with, are able to provide that consultation service and offer a good balance of performance versus cost.”

Some of the factors, industry expert say, that are contributing to this growth is the continued demand for better energy efficiency, a demand that is causing the development of new codes. Says Terry Secrest, executive vice president of manufacturing and product sales for RoyOMartin, “We see the building envelope continuing to evolve with the changing energy and building codes. We believe those codes will require a combination of existing products and new ones.”

Todd Gluski, director of marketing for OX Engineered Products, also sees energy efficiency as a driving growth factor. “From what we have seen, we expect the building envelope segment to see moderate growth by 2025, with a projected increase in market size

driven by factors such as a rising focus on energy efficiency, sustainable construction practices, and growing demand for improved building comfort,” he predicts with some caution. “However, the pace of growth might slow down due to potential economic challenges and a softening construction market.” ▶

In April 2024, Atlas Roofing introduced EnergyShield XR Continuous Insulation for both residential and commercial projects. According to Atlas, EnergyShield XR is the only polyiso continuous insulation board designed for both above- and below-grade applications, allowing for a more simplified and continuous insulation strategy while providing more versatility with a strong sustainability profile, and a higher R-value per inch.



Huber's ZIP System Rainscreen is engineered to help meet new code-required 3/16" air gap requirements in stucco and adhered stone assemblies. It consists of a rigid drainage mat covered by a heavy-duty fabric that can be used as a secondary water-resistive layer required for "absorptive" or "reservoir" cladding assemblies.



"Factors that will lead to growth in 2025 include stricter energy codes and increased awareness of energy costs, which will drive demand for high-performance building envelopes," Gluski points out. "Growing emphasis on green building practices will encourage the adoption of sustainable building envelope materials. As these trends continue, we will experience growth in the coming year. In addition, a substantial lack of housing inventory has left a large segment waiting on the sidelines fueling an unmet demand that could contribute to growth even more in the coming years."

Even with that caution, however, optimism seems to prevail. "Overall, we see the industry remaining strong throughout 2025, especially in commercial construction as the housing market continues to wait for interest rates to drop," says Tom Robertson, business unit manager, wall insulation for Atlas Roofing. "Specifically in our category of insulation, we see the codes continuing to strengthen in our direction, adding momentum to our progress and wind to our sails."

MFM SubSeal is a 25-, 40-, or 60-mil-thick self-adhering sheet-type waterproofing membrane composed of a multi-layer high-strength polymer film that is coated with a layer of specially formulated rubberized asphalt adhesive. According to MFM, SubSeal is suitable for use under siding, exterior plaster, as a through wall flashing, or in sub-grade applications where the membrane is protected from long-term ultraviolet exposure.



## Growing product trends

When it comes to this anticipated growth, product experts point to specific trends that are driving the upswing. For example, LP Building Solutions' Smyth points to innovative and sustainable building products, especially those with increased performance, as being on the rise. "These are also two pillars that LP uses to guide our product development, so we can ensure we are providing sustainable products without sacrificing durability and high-performance," Smyth says.

For self-adhered flashing products, building envelope experts are seeing a move away from asphalt formulations to butyl and acrylic options. "Much of this is driven by better performance for butyl and acrylic adhesives over a broad range of application conditions," explains Tamlyn's Pascual. Contractors are realizing that it is more cost effective to do it once than have to repair and replace material constantly in challenging conditions. And for water resistant barriers (WRBs), the trend towards using drainable WRBs as a standard continues to expand. The use of self-adhered membrane options are growing with new product introductions. Self-adhered WRBs remain a small but growing segment of the industry with regional preferences for use."

High performing water mitigation products are at the forefront of trends, and awareness of rain screen systems is growing, Pascual points out. "This is evident in specifications that call for them and the growing use of them in expanded regions of the country. Designers are looking for ways to minimize moisture intrusion risks. Rain-screen systems offer a means for better water management behind the cladding, better drying and pressure equalization that dramatically reduces driving forces for moisture intrusion. Contractors are finding that the installation of products in roll form is easy and more cost effective vs. metal or wood furring."

This isn't to say that water is the only thing on the minds of building envelope product manufacturers says OX Engineered Products' Gluski. "Several emerging building product trends include an increased use of sustainable and recycled materials, 3D printed construction materials, advanced engineered timber, transparent solar panels, smart materials integrating technology, and prefabricated modular building components; all with a focus on environmental sustainability, energy efficiency, and innovative design capabilities." ▶

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According to LP Building Solutions, its WeatherLogic water-resistant sheathing installs like regular sheathing, delivering potential labor savings while keeping jobsites cleaner and more professional. It can be used for both roof and wall applications, is available in 4-foot nominal widths and 8-, 9-, or 10-foot lengths, and comes with a 30-year limited warranty.

### Challenges to overcome

While these trends drive product growth, challenges exist for LBM dealers that can dampen growth potential. For example, the lingering impact of labor shortages are a challenge contractors continue to face, and LBM dealers need to be able to provide potential labor saving solutions. “With the skilled labor shortage continuing, anything focused on labor savings and/or accomplishing multiple functions within a single product or material is going to be a winner,” Atlas Roofing’s Robertson points out. “It’s all about multipurpose, multi-function products that focus on saving labor hours. Right now, we’re seeing not enough labor in the field, so adding time savings to the process is the goal.”

Tamlyn’s Pascual agrees. “Poorly trained labor remains a challenge for our industry. We find that labor is now available but turnover and lack of training is problematic which leads to quality issues on-site. Companies like Tamlyn offer jobsite visits to review installations and train crews as necessary. This is an essential component for executing properly in the field.”

An additional challenge is the constantly changing face of codes, especially in light of newly developed products, that can leave LBM dealers scratching their heads as to what products to stock. “With code changes, there are many new products that are being offered, we always recommend fully vetting the products before accepting their promises at face value,” RoyOMartin’s Secret states.

These code changes can be confusing to the contractor, and code departments are often not up to date on the building envelope impacts, Tamlyn’s Pascual explains. “One such change is the requirements for Water Resistant Barriers (WRBs) behind stucco and stone cladding systems which now require a combination of 60 min rated barriers, drainable rated barriers or the use of a 3/16” rain-screen system for most of the country,” he says. “Tamlyn can help contractors address these changes before a project is flagged. We have gained several new projects where the code official stopped a project for non-compliance and reached out to Tamlyn for an alternative fix.”

Code changes and updates can be challenging to implement at the local levels. It often comes down to a balancing act of performance versus costs, Pascual says. “High interest rates have made projects less attractive to build or challenging to sell. This has driven an interesting contrast between builders who want to differentiate on quality and performance to justify price versus a first-cost mindset for others who sacrifice quality over price. At Tamlyn, we work hard to justify the value of our products and focus on designers and contractors who look to differentiate on quality and performance. When



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these challenges subside, historically they will be better positioned for differentiation, growth and capture of market share.

Still, costs can be a domino effect for any LBM dealer's customers, Atlas Roofing's Robertson explains. "When the stringency of the building code in the area of insulation is increased, you are potentially increasing the cost of the entire assembly. It's more important than ever to choose your insulation technology wisely, to work to gain efficiencies throughout the entire assembly. When the R-value requirement goes up, the insulation gets thicker. When the insulation gets thicker, it no longer fits into the cavity, the cavity size must be increased, the framing size must be increased, etc.

The solution to this challenge: adjust the insulation technology. The same R-value needed, thinner continuous insulation product."

**To sell more, know more**

In the midst of these opportunities and challenges, the burning question for LBM dealers is how to take advantage of the market conditions to sell more building envelope products. According to industry experts, one of the soundest strategies is to offer an integrated package of products that are part of a full system.

"Dealers would do themselves a great service by carrying and promoting full systems of branded products," says Tamlyn's Pascual. "Too many dealers carry a mix and match list of

products that may or may not be compatible with each other. Just because a product meets code requirements, does not mean they are compatible between manufacturers. Quality manufacturers offer system warranties because they ensure products are compatible with each other. Dealers can insulate themselves from these issues by selling and promoting a system approach to solutions."

As an example, in the case of LP Building Solutions, it emphasizes sustainability throughout its product lineup and has eight Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) representing all of its Structural Solutions products along with its entire LP SmartSide trim and siding portfolio. "We continue to see greater climate threats, the need ►



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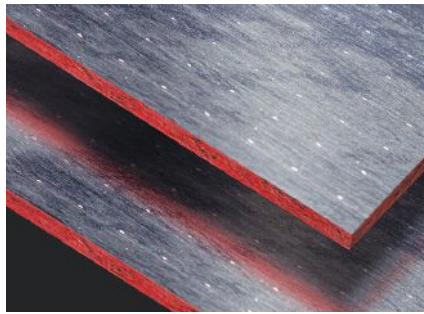
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ABOVE: This year, Tamlyn launched TamlynWrap Elite, a new WRB specifically targeted at the residential market. According to the manufacturer, the product offers a cost effective alternative for the residential market.

RIGHT: According to RoyOMartin, its Eclipse OSB Radiant Barrier Panels are a cost-effective and energy-efficient roof sheathing solution, reducing attic temperatures in the summer by as much as 30°F. All RoyOMartin products are available Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified.



for resilient materials that can help the structure stand up to the proverbial (and literal) storm is important for homeowners,” says LP Building Solutions’ Smyth. “Structural Solutions products have a lasting nature which helps with the homeowner’s priorities of strength and resiliency.”

It’s become more important than ever for LBM dealers to fully understand the products they carry and how they can work together, says OX Engineered Products’ Gluski. “Citing some of the previously mentioned building trends around energy efficiency, it’s important that your dealer network has access to products that will help

customers meet these goals. It’s important that you are set up as a one-stop store for obtaining the products needed to achieve changing building practices. It is also extremely important to understand how these products work and have the ability to serve as a knowledgeable source for your customers. Offering customer training on how to meet changing codes and regulations is an excellent way to engage with customers and teach them what products can help them meet today’s standards.”

Atlas Roofing’s Robertson agrees with the need for product knowledge. “It’s important for the LBM dealers to

have a deeper understanding of the products they sell and how they can be used and installed. This falls on us as manufacturers: how can we best get LBM dealer staff in front of our sales reps for quick learning sessions? How can we work with them to provide a higher level of information, so we become consultants to them, in a way?”

Being more consultative is key when it comes to an LBM dealer differentiating itself from the competition, experts point out. “At Atlas, we’re working with our LBM dealers closely, asking them to lean on us and take advantage of our ability to train and consult on the products we offer,” adds Robertson. “Another benefit to this level of learning: once LBM dealer sales staff members learn more about products, they can learn the industry pairings, what products work well together, what products can be sold together, etc.”

Says Tamlyn’s Pascual, “Small and medium-sized dealers can differentiate themselves by offering solutions to their customers. Our most successful dealers are less transactional and more consultative when it comes to the building envelope. In the absence of knowledge for value, the default position is almost always a tradeoff for price and volume.”

**WITH RISING** energy costs and a residential home market that shows signs of a potential rebound, LBM dealers need to be ready to meet the building envelope product demand of their customers. But unlike the fragility of mica, the building envelope market should stay strong for LBM dealers provided they avail themselves of available resources to buoy up their potential success. As Tamlyn’s Pascual puts it, “I would encourage dealers to leverage their manufacturing partners to set up regional training sessions for their staff. This would help their sales staff position their product lines more effectively at the local level.” ■

OX-IS from OX Engineered Products is a structural insulated sheathing panel with built-in air and water barriers. Engineered to meet or exceed ever more stringent residential building and energy code requirements, the manufacturer claims OX-IS is the industry’s tightest air barrier for lower air infiltration, with air exchange per hour performance that’s a reported 15-20% better than standard OSB with housewrap.



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**VERTISTACK AVANTE RESIDENTIAL GARAGE DOOR**

Clopay Corporation has introduced the VertiStack Avante garage door, a modern aluminum and glass residential garage door with sections that stack vertically above the opening to provide a clear, open ceiling space. Along with a variety of glass options, the door's design hides key mechanisms. It has no visible hinges, cable, or overhead track for a crisp, clean look. And Clopay says that because the stacked sections project minimally off of the wall, the door doesn't interfere with ceiling fans, lighting and overhead storage. The sections can even be recessed into a ceiling soffit so that it disappears when open. [clopaydoor.com](http://clopaydoor.com)



**STARRETT WOODPECKER XPW BLADES**

To significantly increase cutting performance in a range of wood sawing applications, the L.S. Starrett Co. has introduced XPW (Extreme Performance for Wood) technology to its Woodpecker Premium and Woodpecker PRO Band Saw Blade Lines. The New XPW tooth design in the Woodpecker Premium and PRO blades, available in 1.3 and 1.1 tooth pitches in blades 1" and larger, feature a deeper gullet than previous Woodpecker blades. This new design enables higher fatigue resistance, longer lifespan and improved cutting performance, quality and finish. [starrett.com](http://starrett.com)

**MASS TIMBER CONNECTORS**

Simpson Strong-Tie has introduced three new connections for mass timber glulam columns, each offering a concealed connection for architectural aesthetics and fire protection:

The MCT Mass Timber Column Tie is for column-to-column installations, connecting two columns together while allowing the vertical download to be transferred by column-to-column bearing.

The MCB and MCBS Mass Timber Column Bases provide standardized connections between glulam columns and concrete foundations or supports. The MCB is the more economical option of the two, for use in conditions where a standoff between the column and the concrete is not required.

The MCBS provides the highest download capacity for a given column size and can be used where a standoff is required.

Each option offers a concealed connection for architectural aesthetics and fire protection. [strongtie.com](http://strongtie.com)



**DSI WESTBURY BELLA CAVO CABLE RAILING**

Digger Specialties Inc.'s (DSI) new Westbury Bella Cavo aluminum and stainless-steel cable railing incorporates thin cables between aluminum posts, comes in a choice of 4', 6', and 8' sections in either 36" or 42" heights, and is available with matching adjustable 36" and 48" wide gates. According to DSI, Bella Cavo incorporates unique labor-saving installation features resulting in lower installation costs when compared to other horizontal cable railing systems including an easy-to-use built-in leveling feature on all railing posts, pre-built tension posts that are ready to use, quick and easy tensioning for cables, and a template designed to ensure accurate and easy mount placement on posts. Westbury Bella Cavo railing is available in 12 colors with the option of textured or non-textured surfaces. DSI incorporates a 10-step proprietary AAMA 2604 powder coating process in every Westbury aluminum railing system produced, and the finish is backed by a Lifetime Limited Warranty. [diggerspecialties.com](http://diggerspecialties.com)



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— Rick Davis, The Guy who Wrote the Books

**IG SWITCH FRAMELESS GLASS RAILING**

IG Railing recently unveiled its new IG Switch, which it says is the first-ever brand of privacy frameless glass railing. IG Switch leverages Polymer Dispersed Liquid Crystal (PDLC) technology to create a seamless blend of privacy and transparency at the flick of a switch. Not just a privacy feature, IG Switch can double as a high-quality white screen, transforming your deck into an outdoor entertainment hub. From hosting movie nights to projecting the big game, its compatibility with backlit projectors ensures vibrant, sharp visuals. According to the manufacturer, IG Switch integrates seamlessly with IG Lighting and all existing IG Railing components, whether used as a single feature panel or across an entire deck. [igrailling.com](http://igrailling.com)



**DEWALT POWERSHIFT CORDLESS ELECTRIC CONSTRUCTION TOOLS**

DEWALT has announced availability across North America of its DEWALT POWERSHIFT, a cordless equipment system that is reported to optimize the workflow of concrete and construction jobsites through electrification. According to the manufacturer, the electric equipment system meets the critical needs of concrete professionals—power, runtime, and ergonomics—allowing users to transition away from gas-powered equipment, without compromising efficiency and performance. The line, which includes a vibrator, backpack vibrator, concrete power screed, rammer, plate compactor, core drill and stand, 554WH battery, and 550W charger, is designed to accelerate adoption of electric solutions. [dewalt.com](http://dewalt.com)



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# THE SINKING FLAGSHIP



As an outsider brought in to troubleshoot, you've discovered that the family-owned company's flagship yard is suffering from clueless management by a family member. What would you do?

**YOU RECENTLY** celebrated 20 years in the LBM industry. You've worked at several different companies during that time, and your current situation has presented a challenge that you have yet to face, and you're wrestling with the best way to handle it.

In your new position as the VP of Operations for a six-location, family-owned LBM dealer, your job is to work with the general managers of each location and implement best practices to help the company grow and prosper. You decided to start by visiting the top- and bottom-performing yards—which just happened to be operated by brothers.

Surprisingly, the lowest performing yard was the company's flagship location. Despite being the biggest and newest store in a prime location, its sales were lagging and it struggled to attract and retain employees (despite paying above market wages). A survey revealed the employees were disengaged and frustrated. Although it's positioned in an area dominated by new construction, yard traffic was light. Craig, the brother running this location, made clear that he was the victim of, well, everything. "No one wants to work anymore! I pay more than any of our other yards, but people quit shortly after they're hired. I guess it works out, because our sales are down, we wouldn't have the staff to do the kind of volume our other yards are doing anyway."

Meanwhile, just 10 miles away, the top performing yard is humming with activity. There's a healthy mix of young employees and seasoned pros, and the positive energy is palpable. Despite being a mid-sized yard with less room for inventory, its sales and margins consistently lead the company. The employee survey showed people as engaged, fulfilled, and enjoying their jobs—despite earning slightly lower wages than at the shiny new location. Ben, the brother running this location, has a very different outlook. "I'm fortunate to have a rock-solid team of pros

who've been here for decades who are more than happy to mentor and train our young team members. We recognize good work and celebrate our people, and have no trouble filling open positions."

Now that you've gained some insights into the operations, you're scheduled to report your findings to the board of directors, which is primarily non-active family members. Unfortunately, both brothers sit on the board, and you're hesitant to share what's happening under Craig's leadership on the company's sinking flagship. What would you do?

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**Present the facts.** Stick to the numbers and objective observations, and let the members of the board draw their own conclusions.

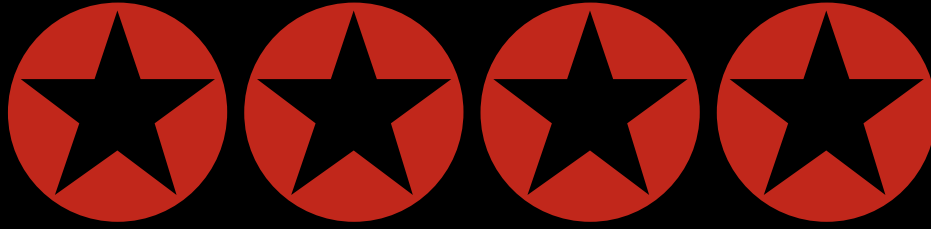
**Identify challenges and opportunities.** As an outsider in a family business, you're in a delicate position. Be sure to point out pros and cons about each operation, and ways for each to improve.

**Be blunt.** They didn't hire you to sugarcoat the truth. Report what you saw and learned, the good, the bad and the ugly. Then hope that they don't shoot the messenger.

**Take a field trip.** Instead of reporting what you learned, arrange for board members to tour each location, so they can see for themselves what's going right, and what's going wrong.

PHOTO: ©ISTOCK.COM/FPM

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



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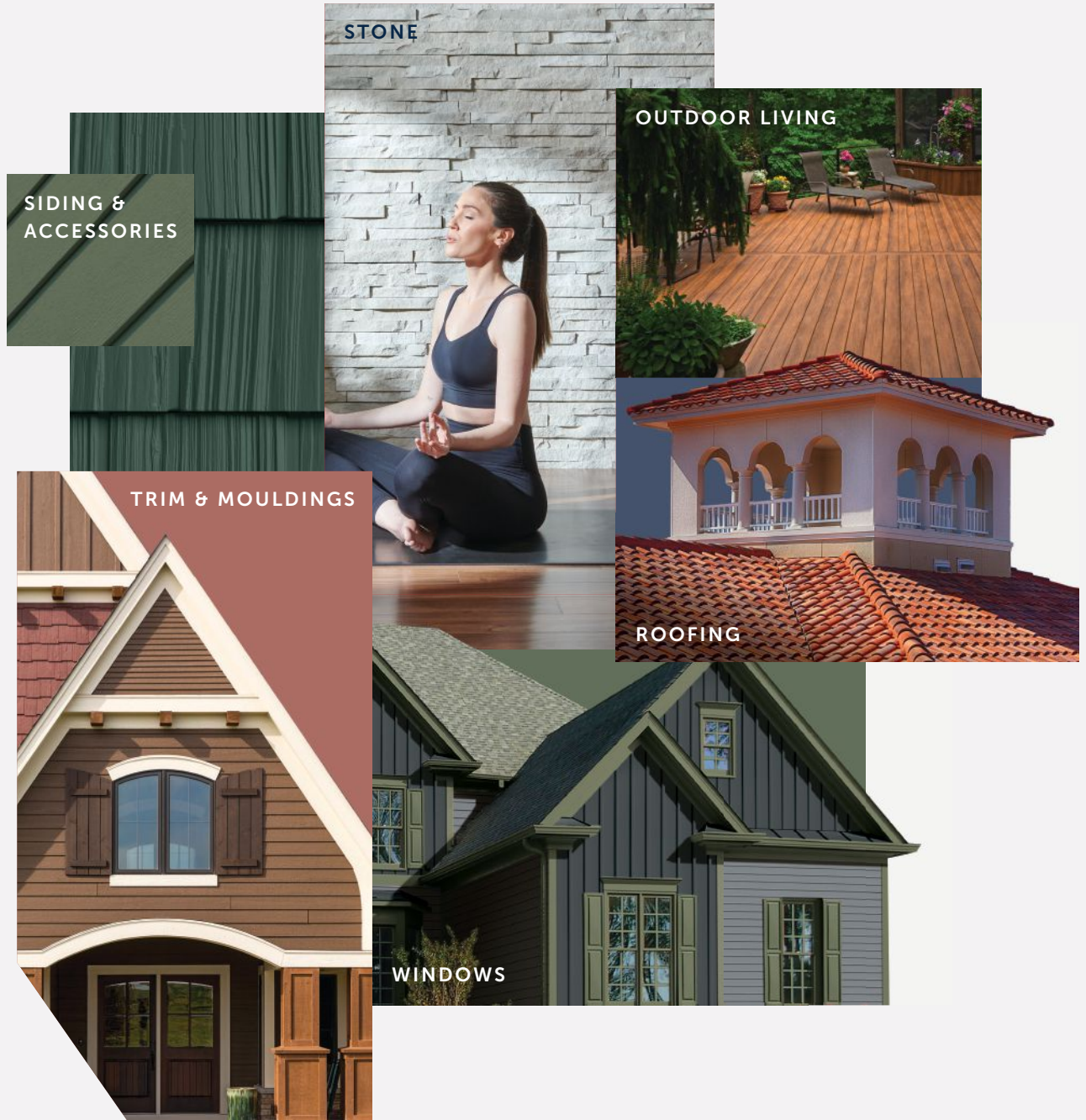
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