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OCTOBER 2025 | \$15 U.S. | LBMJOURNAL.COM

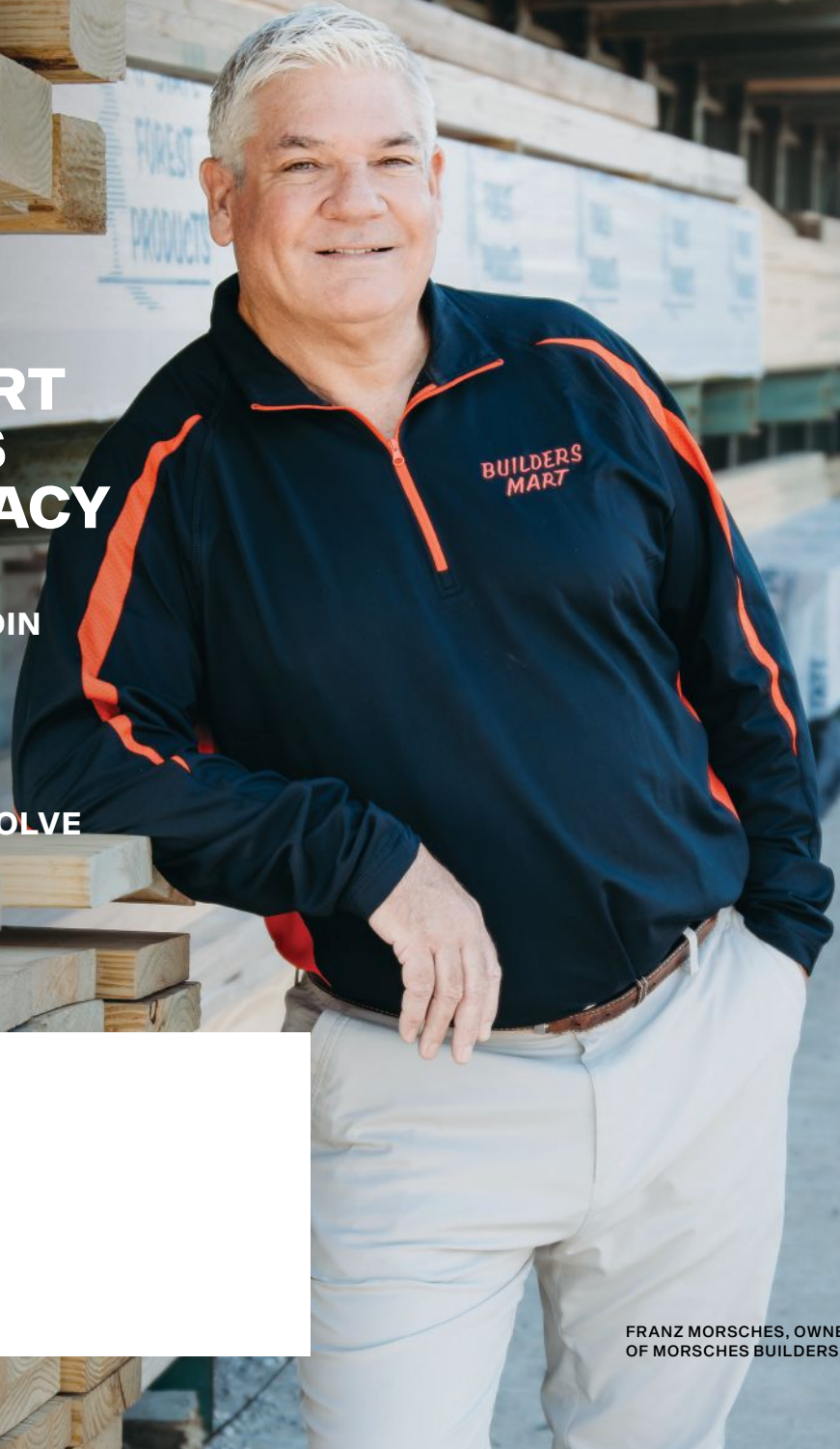
MORSCHES BUILDERS MART BUILDS ON ITS 154-YEAR LEGACY

MINNESOTA LBM PROS JOIN
FORCES FOR GOOD

J.C. SNAVELY & SONS:
THE POWER OF FAMILY

FASTENERS EVOLVE TO SOLVE
JOBSITE CHALLENGES

INDUSTRY LEADERS
HONOR BILL LEE



FRANZ MORSCHES, OWNER & CEO
OF MORSCHES BUILDERS MART

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with the BuildRight[®] Advantage

Maximize your fastener category's profitability with the BuildRight Advantage. Our great price point translates directly into better margins for your store. What's more, our program is meticulously organized and highly shoppable, ensuring a seamless experience that helps both contractors and DIYers quickly find exactly what they need. This intuitive setup, combined with the reliable and consistent performance of every BuildRight product, guarantees customer satisfaction and keeps them coming back, directly boosting your bottom line.





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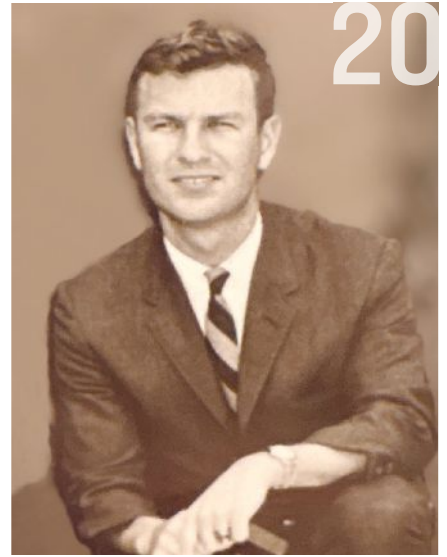


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LBMJOURNAL.COM

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 Leading
 Suppliers Council


OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF


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Minnesota LBM pros join forces for good.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

SOME OF YOU KNOW this unlikely origin story: in early 2003, after learning that our company had just filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, a very small team and I launched *LBM Journal*. Armed with limited resources, no office space, and the full financial might of my maxed-out personal credit cards, we began our journey.

The very first call I made was to the one person that I believed was critical to our success. This highly respected expert authored what had been, by far, the most popular column in *Building Material Dealer* magazine, our former employer. That very first call was to Bill Lee. When Bill replied with an enthusiastic, “Yes!”, I was ecstatic. With Bill Lee on board, I believed that our underfunded little startup may actually have a shot.

22 years and hundreds of issues later, *LBM Journal* is still around—and Bill Lee’s column has been a constant. During those years, Bill’s wisdom has helped guide countless thousands of LBM pros to do the best for their clients, their companies, and themselves. His contributions to the LBM community are truly unmatched, which is why we honored him with the first, and only, LBM Lifetime Achievement Award during LBM Strategies 2023 in Charlotte, NC.

I share all of this because this is the final issue with Bill Lee’s column. Bill is retiring and will focus his energies on La Familia-Casa Hogar, an orphanage in Mexico that he’s supported for 25 years.

Bill Lee is a true friend and a genuinely good human being. I believe I’m a better person for knowing him, and there’s no question that he has made *LBM Journal* a richer resource.

You can read his final column on page 18, his farewell to readers on page 19, and recollections from just a few of the thousands of LBM pros he’s inspired on pages 20-21.

— Rick Schumacher
Executive Editor & Publisher



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'R. Schumacher'.

HAVE A QUESTION FOR RICK?
RICK@LBMJOURNAL.COM

Pipeline LBM builds the estimates, so our sales team can build the business.

Kory Hobbs

Sales Manager, Griffin Lumber & Hardware Perry, Georgia

Griffin Lumber faced a challenge driven by its own success. The building materials supplier had expanded rapidly, but was still writing takeoffs and estimates by hand. Across seven lumberyards and two truss plants, it was difficult to find a process that worked well for everyone. That's why Griffin turned to Pipeline LBM™. This powerful estimating software creates a bill of materials for nearly real-time, automated takeoffs. In short order, Griffin centralized takeoffs to a single estimator, eliminated extra paperwork, and streamlined data processing and plan set delivery. Now they generate accurate estimates up to 14 times faster. Best of all, Griffin salespeople have time to do what they do best — serve customers and continue growing the business.

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Learn more about Pipeline LBM at
go.strongtie.com/lbm or call (800) 999-5099.



WHY TREX FASTENERS ARE A GAMECHANGER FOR DECKING CONTRACTORS

In the world of professional deck building, precision, durability, and efficiency are non-negotiable.

Every component of a deck, from the boards to the fasteners, plays a critical role in ensuring a seamless installation and a long-lasting, beautiful outdoor space. The right fasteners can not only make installation easier but enhance the overall aesthetics of a deck.

That's the idea behind the Trex Hideaway® Fastener Collection. Custom engineered by Trex, based on more than 30-years of experience as the industry leader in wood-alternative decking and residential railing, these components increase efficiency, streamline sourcing and boost customer satisfaction.



The Trex Hideaway® Fastener Collection

Boasting more than 120 SKUs, the Trex Hideaway® Fastener Collection includes solutions for every composite deck fastening need — from color-matched screws and plugs to specially engineered bits, depth setters and clips. Designed to make installation easier and more efficient, components are fully compatible with all Trex decking products and also have been proven to work with most competitive offerings.



The Benefits of Using Trex Fasteners

1. Cutting-Edge Innovation

The Trex Hideaway Fasteners Collection includes several first-to-market innovations, such as collated fascia plugs, that take the best aspects of competitive designs and improves on them to deliver enhanced efficiency and quality control.

2. A Trusted, One-Brand Solution

One of the most significant advantages of using Trex fasteners is brand consistency. Homeowners trust Trex for its high-performance decking, and they appreciate knowing that the same company manufactures the fasteners. This ensures the best possible color match, the most accurate graining on plugs, and a single point of contact for warranties and customer support.

3. Additional Profit on Every Job

For contractors, incorporating Trex fasteners isn't just about aesthetics — it's about status. Using Trex fasteners on every job can lead to additional benefits and higher status levels within the TrexPro program. Using a complete Trex system also simplifies the purchase process, reducing time spent sourcing different components.

By choosing Trex fasteners, contractors gain access to premium-quality materials, simplified sourcing, and a trusted brand that customers recognize and appreciate. Adding further appeal and peace of mind, Trex Hideaway fastener components are backed by the same limited residential warranties as the decking they secure. When paired with Trex Signature®, Trex Transcend® Lineage™ and Trex Transcend® decking, fasteners and accessories are backed by 50 years of assurance. With Trex Select® and Trex Enhance® decking, they are backed by 35 and 25 years, respectively.

With the Trex Hideaway Fasteners Collection, Trex is now a true and total one-stop supplier for decking, railing, and accessories. For more information, visit [Trex.com](https://www.trex.com). To find a Trex dealer in your area, go to [Trex.com/Find-Trex](https://www.trex.com/Find-Trex). Many components are also available for sale online at [Trex.com/Shop](https://www.trex.com/Shop).



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WILSON LUMBER



ENYART'S HARDWARE



84 LUMBER

BY THE YARD

Wilson Lumber has officially reopened its newly rebranded location in Fairview, TN, formerly known as Nashville Lumber Company, marking a milestone for the third-generation, family-owned business as it continues to expand across Middle Tennessee. This new storefront and full-service lumberyard will serve as a key resource hub for builders and contractors in the rapidly growing Fairview area.

Enyart's Hardware celebrated its 50th anniversary with a weekend of festivities that thanked the customers and neighbors who have supported the business since its founding in 1975 by Emerson and Barbara Enyart. Now owned and operated by their daughter, Janet Daake, Enyart's Hardware continues its commitment to hometown service, reliable expertise, and quality products as a proud member of the Do it Best cooperative.

84 Lumber hosted its 35th annual golf invitational at Nemaocolin resort in Farmington, PA. The two-day event featured a reception where 84 Lumber proudly presented a donation of \$164,884 to the Westmoreland-Fayette Council. The company also announced a donation of \$164,884 to Fisher House Foundation.

Gillman Do it Best Home Center has announced the grand opening of its newest location in North Vernon, IN. The celebration took place on Aug. 15-16 with a full schedule of community-centered activities, prize giveaways, and limited-time savings.

Lumberman's Wholesale, Inc. has announced the opening of its third location. This new branch in Northwest Arkansas marks a significant step in LWI's continued expansion, enabling broader service coverage across Southwest Missouri and deepening distribution reach throughout Northwest Arkansas and surrounding markets both east and west.

Hammond Lumber Company has been named one of the Best Places to Work in Maine for the fifth year in a row. Hammond has also been recognized as a Best Company to Work For in New Hampshire and has been ranked No. 12 in the state of New Hampshire.

S.W. Collins Co., a sixth-generation, family-owned and operated lumber and building supply business, has announced its recognition as one of the 2025 Best Places to Work in Maine by The Maine State Council of the Society for Human Resource Management, Best Companies Group and BridgeTower Media.



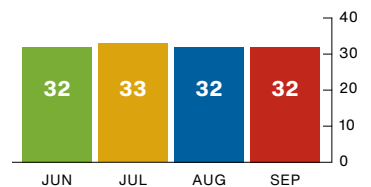
SEND NEWS AND UPDATES ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION TO WENDY@LBMJOURNAL.COM

CO-OP + BUYER'S GROUPS

Do it Best is now offering exclusive pricing for TOOLBX—a B2B solution designed to help contractors approve quotes, place orders, and pay their bills online. Professional contractors account for over 60% of sales at independent lumberyards, and Do it Best is making this strategic move to help dealers capture even more of that revenue. TOOLBX connects directly to each yard's ERP, giving on-account customers instant access to invoices, statements, credits, and order history.

Builder confidence holds steady

Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes was 32 in September, unchanged from the August reading, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI). While builder sentiment has hovered at a relatively low reading between 32 and 34 since May, builders expressed optimism that a more favorable interest rate climate could bring hesitant buyers off the sidelines in the final quarter of 2025.



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PEOPLE IN LBM

Maine-based **Hancock Lumber** announced it has named **Andy Carberry** as its newest general manager for its Salisbury, MA location. Following Hancock Lumber's June 2025 acquisition of Johnson Lumber and the former owners' transition to retirement, the Salisbury GM role became available.

After more than four decades of exceptional leadership and dedication, **Vern Dando**, vice president of panels, special woods & logistics will be retiring from **LMC**. Throughout his tenure, he has been a driving force behind the company's growth, leaving an indelible mark on the organization's success.

Do it Best Group has appointed **Morgan Lewis** as director of human resources operations and shared services. Lewis will lead human resources operations for both Do it Best and True Value creating a seamless experience as the two teams continue to integrate following the acquisition in November.

LBM Advantage has announced the promotion of **Dan Ohmer** to vice president of member development. Ohmer brings a track record of leadership, sales strategy, and business development to the lumber and building materials industry.

Orgill has hired **Julie Albrecht** as its new executive vice president and chief financial officer. Albrecht brings more than 35 years of leadership and finance experience across multiple industries, including building products, to Orgill's leadership team.



CHECK



Digger Specialties Inc. has added **Marshall Owens** to the DSI Building Products sales team. Owens will serve as the territory manager for the Rocky Mountain states of MT, WY, CO, and NM. Owens will have sales responsibilities for DSI's aluminum and vinyl railing systems and architectural columns.



Cameron Ashley Building Products has announced the appointment of **David Chaika** as chief financial officer. Chaika brings more than 28 years of progressive financial leadership experience, with a proven track record of driving strategic growth and operational excellence in large-scale, brand-focused organizations.



MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

Breezy and Andy Mitchell of **Mitchell Lumber Co.** in Belfair, WA announced that on Aug. 1 they finalized the acquisition of **Don Abel Building Supply** and **Valley Lumber Company** in Juneau, AK. Don Abel Building Supply has been serving Juneau since 1936, and Valley Lumber Company has been in business since 1965.



Westlake Ace Hardware announced it has agreed to acquire **Olson's Ace Hardware**, a family-owned hardware retailer with two locations in Kansas. Following the acquisition, the stores will be rebranded as Westlake Ace Hardware and remodeled later in 2026.



Builders FirstSource announced that it has acquired the assets of **St. George Truss Co.** in St. George, UT. Founded by Doug Nielson in 1985, St. George Truss has proudly served builders in southern Utah and southern Nevada for four decades. This acquisition provides BFS with its first location in St. George.

Johnson Paint | A Ring's End Brand announced the acquisition of **Home Décor Group's** Stratham, NH location. As part of this transition, Johnson Paint will move its Hampton operations to the King's Highway Plaza at 28 Portsmouth Avenue in Stratham. The new Stratham location gives Johnson Paint greater access to premium inland markets, reinforcing its role as a trusted leader in paint and coatings.



CHAPMAN

North American Specialty Laminations announced its expansion into Missouri through the acquisition of **kärvd's** Marceline campus. kärvd is a contract manufacturer of millwork and mouldings. NASL has also added finishing capacity at its Roanoke, VA campus where it recently installed UV finishing lines for sheet goods and mouldings, including drawer parts.

ITC Millwork's affiliate, **USAM Knox**, welcomed two new sales associates to support the growing custom home building segment with superior millwork solutions in Eastern Tennessee: **Jason Check** has joined outside sales, and **Cody Chapman** joined as an inside sales representative.

Decks & Docks Company announced that it has acquired **Service Wholesale, Inc.**, a Pennsylvania-based distributor of building and remodeling materials. SWI will operate under the Decks & Docks Company banner.

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WHAT'S TRENDING

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



Do it Best, True Value announce 2025 Vendors of the Year



Mitchell Lumber Co. acquires Don Abel Building Supply, Valley Lumber Company



Westlake Ace acquires Olson's Ace Hardware



Building material prices up with increase reaching 2-year high

DISTRIBUTION NEWS

NewTechWood and **Woodgrain** have formed a new distribution agreement bringing NewTechWood's innovative product line to Woodgrain's Phoenix distribution center, strengthening service capabilities throughout the Southwest. This collaboration brings together NewTechWood's advanced UltraShield composite technology with Woodgrain's robust logistics network and local market expertise.

TOUGH CALL SOLUTIONS

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

WHEN LOYALTY MASKS THEFT

After looking into increasing inventory shrinkage, you discovered that trusted, longtime customers are part of the problem. Here's how readers responded.

Tighten security. 48%

Make it clear that the yard is being watched by installing cameras, posting signs about theft prevention, and improving your check out process.

Quiet confrontation. 38%

Directly but respectfully, approach the known offenders one-on-one. Give them the benefit of the doubt, while making clear you know what's happening.

Reset expectations. 11%

At your next contractor appreciation event or lunch'n'learn, explain that the rising costs of shrinkage affect everyone's prices, and let the message spread.

Cut ties. 3%

End the relationship with the worst offenders, along with a letter explaining why. This is drastic, but it will send a strong message to your team and your customers.



READER RESPONSE:

"A while back a very loyal and steady customer took some material and was caught by the yard manager. He just left and we never saw him again. I'm talking 2-3 daily visits to nothing. I mulled it over and decided to send him an invoice for the material. He immediately paid it and began shopping at the store once again. He never took anything else, ever!

Once a customer is discovered to be dishonest, we flag his account with a note for them to be shadowed in the yard. This normally takes care of the problem. With the advent of cameras, everything has changed. I have backtracked when a cycle count shows the material to be off and watched how it was picked. If I see a customer taking more than what they paid, I send them an invoice with mention that the cameras show the proof. They invariably pay; I have yet to be asked to see the video.

And lastly, this one is about deliveries. A few years ago, an upgrade in our POS system allowed us to easily store proof of delivery pictures. Literally the first day we used the system, a customer had ordered six very expensive boards. He called a couple of days later and said he'd only gotten four. I went to the pictures and saw the order of six at the jobsite and texted the picture over to him. His response? Oh, well I still need two more. Apparently, it was something he'd gotten away with before. Order light and claim the delivery to be short. This put an end to that game."

— Tom Gillen, American Cedar & Millwork

WANT TO SEE MORE TOUGH CALLS? CHECK OUT PAGE 88 OF THIS ISSUE, OR FIND MORE AT: lbmjournals.com/category/tough-call

LISTEN NOW!

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LBM TALKS





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INDUSTRY UPDATES

GAF announced the creation of a new business unit, Specialty Products and Services—bringing together three essential parts of the roofing supply chain: granules, glass mat, and transportation. Specialty Products and Services will include SGI, Standard Logistics and Glass Mat operations, which will all continue to operate autonomously, while benefiting from vertical alignment.

MITER Brands announced a strategic realignment to its Florida operations, including: relocating production lines from its Medley and Hialeah, FL, facilities to other MITER Brands facilities in Florida; the closure of its Medley and Hialeah manufacturing facilities and opening a new, advanced glass manufacturing plant in Pembroke Pines, FL.

MFM Building Products recently achieved a Class A Fire Rating for use with Class A standard 3-tab and architectural asphalt shingles per ASTM E108/ICC-ES AC188. Ultra HT is a 45-mil, self-adhered roofing underlayment for use in steep-slope roofing and re-roofing installations.

RoyOMartin has unveiled a new line for its popular TuffStrand line of oriented strand board (OSB) sheathing products. TuffStrand Weather Resistant Barrier (TuffStrand-WRB) is a structural OSB panel with a factory-applied weather-resistant barrier, ideally suited for exterior walls.

Crane Composites, a manufacturer of fiberglass reinforced panels, has rebranded as **VALTO Engineered Materials** to mark the company's next chapter of growth.

ProTec Panel and Truss is expanding in Battle Creek, investing \$3 million and creating 50 new jobs. The company has chosen Michigan for the project because of the growth opportunities that the Michigan market presents and the access to the Battle Creek labor market.

BPWood, in partnership with SaferWood Thermex-FR, has announced its ThermoWood Ayous and ThermoWood Nordic Pine successfully passed independent third-party testing to achieve Class A ignition-resistant status, the first available in North America.

United Window & Door has announced a major expansion of its New Jersey production facilities, supported by a \$6.5 million investment slated for completion by the end of 2025. The expansion adds more than 40,000 square feet of new production space.

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INDUSTRY EVENTS

OCT 20-22

LBM ADVANTAGE FALL PLANNING CONFERENCE
Indianapolis, IN | lbmadvantage.com

OCT 22-24

DECK EXPO
Las Vegas, NV | deckexpo.com

OCT 26-29

2025 WMA CONVENTION & TRADESHOW
Cleveland, OH
worldmillworkalliance.com

OCT 28-30

WCLBMA ANNUAL CONVENTION
San Diego, CA | lumberassociation.org

NOV 3-5

LMC EXPO 2025
Philadelphia, PA | lmc.net

NOV 5-7

NAWLA TRADERS MARKET
Kansas City, MO | nawla.org

NOV 11-12

WBMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Seattle, WA | wbma.org

NOV 19-21

EPICOR INSIGHTS 2025 FOR BUILDING SUPPLY & RETAIL
National Harbor, MD | epicor.com

DEC 9

2025 MID-AMERICA CONNECTION CONFERENCE
Olathe, KS | bldconnection.org

DEC 11

2025 NEBRASKA CONNECTION CONFERENCE
La Vista, NE | bldconnection.org

2026

JAN 20-21

2026 BIZCON NORTH
St. Cloud, MN | bldconnection.org

FEB 3-4

2026 BIZCON SOUTH
Altoona, IA | bldconnection.org

FEB 11-12

2026 ANNUAL LEARNING EXCHANGE & LBM EXPO
Hickory, NC | mybmsa.org

FEB 17-19

2026 NAHB INTERNATIONAL BUILDERS' SHOW
Orlando, FL | buildersshow.com

MAR 7-9

DO IT BEST & TRUE VALUE SPRING MARKET
Denver, CO | doitbestonline.com

MAR 10-12

LMC ANNUAL 2026
Chicago, IL | lmc.net

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LBM STRATEGIES 
2025 CONFERENCE

OCT. 15-17 • EMBASSY SUITES DOWNTOWN • NASHVILLE

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ASK THE EXPERT WITH PLM

PLM'S BJ GARDNER ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT

CYBERSECURITY

HOW FREQUENT ARE CYBERATTACKS AND WHAT KIND OF DAMAGE CAN THEY DO TO LBM BUSINESSES?

Cyberattacks have become far too common and dangerous across all industries. The Identity Theft Resource Center's 2024 Annual Data Breach Report found more than 3,205 data breaches impacting more than 1.7 billion people, a 312% increase from 2023.

Lumber businesses are susceptible to these same cyber threats impacting individuals and businesses globally. For example, in 2023 a lumber business was forced to shut down for three weeks after a virus took hold of their computer system. Leadership had to pay \$250,000 to have the issue fixed and to add additional security measures.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON CYBERSECURITY THREATS LBM DEALERS FACE?

There are several forms of cyberattacks that LBM dealers should prepare to address, including:

Misdirected Payments: In this type of scheme, cybercriminals commandeer fake email addresses or contact information to deceive staff members into sending money or product to the criminal.

Business Email Compromise: We often see cybercriminals breach a company's data system to gain access to a company's invoicing system. This information can be used to steal payments and to create and send new invoices to vendors, duping them into making payments.

Double Extortion: In a double extortion case, cybercriminals hold stolen data and sell it to other criminals over the dark web.

Password Stuffing: Cybercriminals often use passwords stolen in a data breach to gain access to a company's entire suite of data. This is especially problematic when staff members utilize the same login credentials for all areas of their business.

HOW CAN LBM DEALERS MINIMIZE THE RISKS OF CYBERSECURITY?

LBM dealers can minimize cybersecurity risks by enforcing strict cyber best practices and tactics in the workplace. For example, multi-factor authentication (MFA) is essential in today's workplace. MFA can protect a business even if passwords are leaked because employees still must provide approval in this case to allow any access to company data.

LBM dealers should also have a clear payment process in place. At PLM, we advise our insureds to have their employees call each other or customers and vendors before finalizing any transaction to confirm the details. Significant payments should also require executive approval to ensure legitimacy.

On the technology side, we often see business owners neglect system updates. Business owners should regularly check their systems to ensure they are updated to the latest versions.

BJ Gardner is the Director, IT Development & Operations with Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company (PLM), the oldest and largest mutual insurance company dedicated to the wood products and materials industry. He can be reached at 267-825-9238 or by email at bgardner@plmins.com



Even the most careful businesses can still suffer a cyber loss. In this case, businesses should be prepared with an action plan. Business owners should outline how company staff should respond in the event of a data breach.

A comprehensive cyber policy can help LBM dealers recover their losses and return to operations as quickly as possible. Working with a specialty insurer can also help ensure you have the right coverage to protect against the risks impacting the lumber industry.

HOW CAN EMPLOYEES OF LBM DEALERS RECOGNIZE A CYBER THREAT?

Team members should be trained to recognize common phishing tactics. Educate employees to question any messages or emails that request personal information and to carefully examine the sender's email address for all emails. Employees should also be taught common warning signs of a phishing attempt, such as strange or unnatural language in the body of an email or any language demanding action immediately.

WHAT TYPES OF CYBERSECURITY TRAINING ARE AVAILABLE FOR LBM DEALERS?

At PLM, we conduct and recommend a range of cyber training to prepare for risks. Our business conducts phishing testing with our own employees. Our leadership simulates a phishing email to all staff members. Quarterly cyber training and education sessions are also critical. These sessions should provide an overview of the leading cyber threats impacting lumber businesses and provide employees with tactics to avoid these threats and report the issues to the proper channels.

A good insurer can offer LBM dealers with tools to create and implement cybersecurity training programs. PLM's Cyber Suite coverage not only provides you with multiple layers of insurance defense against data breaches and cyberattacks but also access to free cyber protection resources through a cyber risk management portal.

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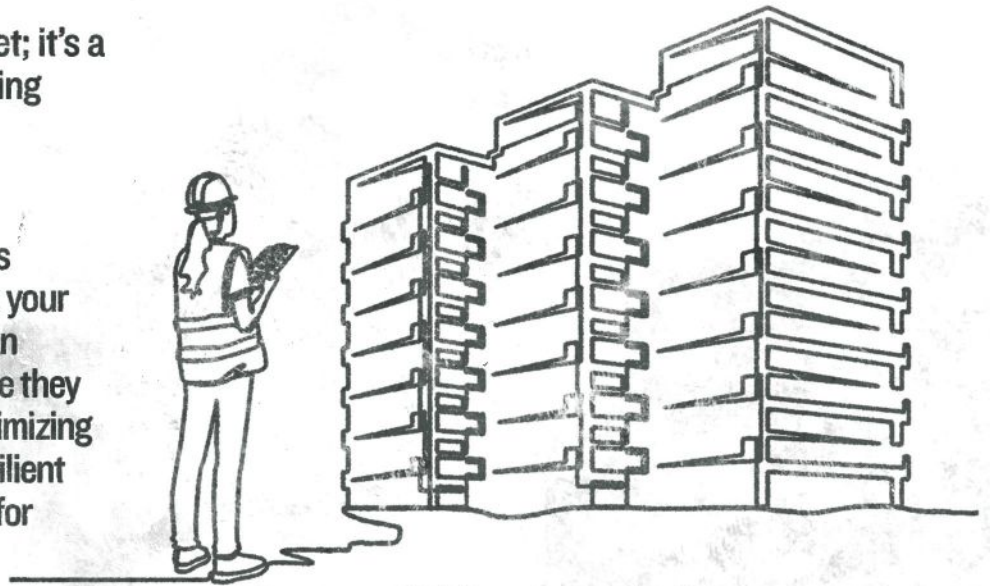
/in-shur-uhns/ (noun)

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BY BILL LEE

ALWAYS KEEP YOUR EYE OUT FOR AN UNEXPECTED STORM

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY to sit down with your financial team and discuss how it appears your numbers look like for the first half of this year, and brainstorm what opportunities are still available for you to optimize profitability for the full year. The last two years have surprised us with better profits than a lot of us expected. But based on my experience, it's easy to let yourself become complacent when you're already having a better year than you dreamed was possible just a couple of months or so ago when you were considering trimming expenses.

I've also found it's a good idea to put a day on your corporate calendar and—as a team—brainstorm any areas where you believe your organization could possibly be vulnerable. This may sound as if I am suggesting negative thinking at a time when business is thriving and profits are following. This is not the case at all, but it is a way to raise the odds that you and your team are not overlooking any surprises that could take your business off course.

Use your marketing plan to sell the capacity of the business.

Virtually all businesses have unused capacity. What I mean by that statement is that your business could most likely generate more volume than it is currently doing without hiring any more employees or buying any additional equipment. I encourage you to consider this possibility. You might even ask several of your key managers how much more volume they believe they could process without hiring any additional personnel.

If, as an example, you and your people agree that your company could process an additional \$1 million in sales without hiring any more people, what percentage of the gross profit from that additional \$1 million dollars in sales do you believe would drop directly to the bottom line? My experience suggests around 80%.

- Do you have a new business plan in place?
- Does your marketing program include training for your salespeople?
- Do you know what product categories you are NOT selling to each existing customer?
- Brainstorm what you might do from a marketing perspective to sell the full capacity of your business.

Optimize gross margin.

In my 40 years as a consultant in the building supply industry, I have seen huge increases in gross margins. When I first began working in our industry, I very rarely ran across a business that earned as much as 25% in gross margin. Gross margins in the neighborhood of 18% to 22% were more typical.

Today, 25% is commonplace. I believe there were several reasons it took so long for building supply dealers to begin earning larger gross margins:

1. While there have always been opportunities for the key dealers in our industry to enjoy each other's company, these get-togethers were mostly social in nature and less business-related. Back in those days there were fewer well-attended dealer groups that included education in their meetings.
2. Then a few years later was the birth of the large hardware wholesalers that began to become a factor from a buying and an educational perspective. Among these "buying" groups were Lumbermens Merchandising Corp. (LMC), ACE Hardware, and HWI (now Do it Best).
3. About this time virtually all lumberyards were scrambling to affiliate with a buying group that did not stock any materials but rather had their supplier "drop ship" the products they sold, allowing the lumberyard to avoid having to add the burden of adding shipping charges to their customers.

One of these distributors was Builder Marts of America (BMA), a company headquartered in Greenville, SC that hired me and allowed me to get in on the ground floor of this segment. To illustrate, this concept of combining buying building materials at a discount price with numerous educational programs designed for the dealer allowed BMA to grow from scratch in 1966 to a nationwide \$648 million company by 1987.

In my opinion it was—in large part—the buying groups' educational programs that opened the eyes of all levels of dealer management to better understand what was possible in measurable terms—how to make improvements on their financial statements and ultimately optimize gross margin.



To LBM Journal readers

After almost 25 years, this is my last column for *LBM Journal*, but I'm not quitting. I support an orphanage in a rural region of Mexico with 30 children, and I want to spend more time with that ministry.

In the last nine years I have lost my son to appendix cancer and my youngest grandson to glioblastoma brain cancer. These kinds of things so close to home will cause a man my age to rethink his priorities.

LBM Journal gives its writers a huge amount of freedom to express themselves and I will miss that.

I appreciate so very much the quality of the writers I am able to share opinions with each issue. I know them all but am personal friends with several with whom I have also shared the stage in my 25 years in the speaking business. Each of these men and women are at the top of their respective professions.

My thanks especially go out to Rick Schumacher who hired me in 2003 and put together the group of professionals who have made *LBM Journal* the publication it is today.

And without my readers, I certainly would not be on the staff at *LBM Journal*. I will be forever thankful to them, some of whom I have known my entire 62-year career in the lumber and building supply industry.

May God bless you all.

If you'd like to support Bill Lee's important work with La Familia - Casa Hogar, through the Embrace the Dream Foundation, please scan the QR code.



Bill Lee's first column was in Volume 1, Issue 1. He has been a contributor to *LBM Journal* since its creation in 2003.

On the following pages, industry leaders share how Bill influenced their lives and their careers. ▶

Industry leaders honor Bill Lee

I first met Bill Lee about 40 years ago at Builder Marts in Greenville, SC and what I remember most about that trip had nothing to do about lumber or building materials. It stemmed from the fact that I was then and still am a coastal SoCal weather sissy and Greenville in August has a “balanced climate” of 99 degrees and 99% relative humidity. From that first meeting I read everything he wrote about our industry. The one I cut out and kept in a file for many years (that I can’t find today) was about the metrics of running a good lumberyard. He was brave enough to put these metrics in writing for the whole industry to read (and then argue about). He knew and understood our industry from the inside. He was a lumberman.

— *Peter Ganahl, Ganahl Lumber*

I first started reading Bill Lee’s column as a young salesperson over 30 years ago. We became close friends years later when we did a series of classes throughout the country. It was then that I really came to admire Bill and was deeply impacted by his grace, charity, class, and intellect. He’s one of my greatest mentors and certainly an industry legend I feel privileged to know personally.

— *Rick Davis, Building Leaders, Inc.*

Bill has the distinction of being a multi-generational mentor in our household, serving as a trusted advisor to both me and my father. He has a gift for only seeing the best in people and is the living embodiment of the tagline: You are owed nothing. Deliver value first.

— *Bradley Hartmann, Hartmann & Co.*

Bill is a literal industry legend. I’ve seen him speak several times and am better because of it. Bill’s book, the industry bible simply titled “Gross Margin” made such an impact to me, it was the sole basis of our internal company-wide “Margin Bootcamp trainings” which helped us elevate our thinking and, of course, our margin management. His monthly columns are timeless and something to look forward to with many of them saved in my files for educating new team members and motivating myself.

— *Grant Leavitt, Marcus Lumber*

When I think about Bill Lee, I think about two of his quotes: 1. “Don’t apologize for the price you’re quoting.” 2. “Even with all today’s technology, salesmen are still required.” Bill is such a legend, I planned a one-day trip to Boston to see Bill speak back in 2019 at an event hosted by LBM Journal.

— *Clay Leavitt, Marcus Lumber*



Bill is the epitome of a lifelong learner. When he recruited me to join Builder Marts of America, I was blown away by his personal “lending library” of books, tapes, and videos on self-improvement. I listened to or watched almost everything in his library and learned so much from his collection.

Bill’s leadership style in three words: Lead by example. Bill would never ask you to do anything he wouldn’t do.

One piece of advice from Bill that stuck: *There is no finish line in life.* Keep on learning, no matter your position or age.

— *Jim Sobeck, New South Real Estate Partners*

As a young manager in our industry, I was always looking for help in how to sell and grow my business. Bill Lee’s column was always the first thing I flipped to when the magazine arrived in the mail. Many years later when I was asked if I wanted to start writing a column for *LBM Journal*, I sat down and asked myself who would be my audience, how would I connect to them, and what would be my definition of success? I realized I wanted to be like Bill Lee and talk to the young person starting out in management who was scared to admit they needed help, but would soak up any advice that they could read about anonymously. I would write in a conversational tone and I would be willing to share my mistakes so others didn’t have to repeat them. Last, I would know that I was getting through to people if they told me that my column was the first thing they flipped to, or scrolled to in our digital age, when the magazine was delivered. I am proud to say that I have received that compliment at least a couple times. So, thank you, Bill, for the years of advice and for being a role model to our industry and me.

— *Russ Kathrein, Do it Best Corp.*

I appreciate Bill's special mix of unbounded enthusiasm, love for people, and business wisdom always on display.

— *Brian McCoy, McCoy's Building Supply*

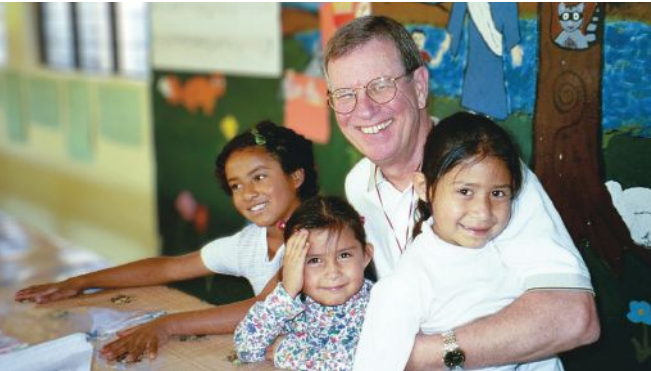
I read Bill Lee's "Gross Margin" book almost 20 years ago. I was given pricing responsibility for some products in our store, and I was fumbling. Mr. Lee's wisdom gave me confidence, and two things especially stuck with me—don't get sucked into a gross margin rut and don't apologize for selling to your friends. If your friends aren't willing to reward your hustle, who would be?!

— *Meagan McCoy Jones, McCoy's Building Supply*

Here's how I'd describe Bill: Keeping old school cool, one LBM dealer at a time.

Bill told me the story of how an LBM dealer increased revenue 15% in a flat market when they took just one piece of advice from him. "Call the builder within 24 hours of every quote and ask, 'Did you see the quote, and do you have any questions?'" I've used this with my clients, and they always see a lift with just that one tweak to their process."

— *Tim Rethlake, Hearth & Home Technologies*



This tribute is for one of the greatest influences on my adult life. Bill is like a second father to me, and he *is* my youngest daughter's godfather. I am honored to call him my friend.

Bill Lee has had an immeasurable influence on me and on countless others in our industry. I couldn't begin to count the lives he has touched. He is an extraordinary gentleman, friend, and role model. His influence on the building materials industry as a teacher, leader, and author is legendary. He has been a true friend to our industry and to me personally.

When Bill discovered the need to help orphans in Mexico, he poured the same passion into serving those children as he had poured into helping others in our industry. He dedicated himself to helping them find safe homes, food, clothing, love, and attention. Bill made countless trips to Mexico, learned the language, and—instead of trying to Americanize the people—worked to fit in and serve in their own world.

I experienced this passion firsthand on two trips to the heart of Mexico with Bill. We flew into Mexico City, endured long bus rides to reach a small town, and immediately went to work—playing with the children, talking with the adults to understand what was most needed, and offering whatever resources we could.

Bill gave his time, money, business skills, and anything else he had to support not just the orphans, but also the people who dedicated their lives to caring for them. We helped build things, we fixed meals and cleaned up, we played games and we would work when we were not playing. It was incredibly rewarding.

Bill's love for those children was contagious. It was an honor to be part of this extraordinary chapter of Bill's life. It was as if he spent the first half of his life serving business owners and families, and the second half serving orphans and their caregivers—using all his wit and wisdom to build a community around the orphanage. Bill never sought recognition or gratitude. He simply did it because he loved helping those in need.

In closing, I would describe Bill's leadership style as:

Accountable: He believes in no-excuses accountability and takes a results-oriented approach to both business and life.

Teacher & student of business and life: Bill is the best teacher I have ever met in business. He is constantly learning and always finding ways to share new ideas and wisdom with others. He still reaches out (including to me) to ask for book recommendations and fresh ideas.

Persuasive (highly): Bill has the rare ability to inspire people to accomplish things they didn't even know they were capable of achieving.

Master communicator: Both in speaking and in writing, Bill communicates with clarity, impact, and purpose.

Another favorite lesson: When I would ask Bill for approval on something and he said "yes," if I kept talking, he would quickly say, "Don't buy it back, Jim." That was my cue—I had my answer. Move on before saying too much.

— *Jim Hershey, Atlantic Wholesale Doors & Millwork*

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BY RICK DAVIS

THE DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT

PERHAPS YOU'VE READ about the Dunning-Kruger effect, a study conducted by David Dunning and Justin Kruger, which proved most people believe they are more competent at a task than they actually are.

My company conducted a poll shortly after Dunning and Kruger published their paper in 1999. We asked salespeople to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is excellent; 4 is above average; 3 is average; 2 is below; and 1 is poor. The results verified the Dunning-Kruger study on competence that had just been published.

Of more than 400 respondents, nearly 75% rated themselves as above average (4) or excellent (5). Only 5% rated themselves as below average (2) or poor (1). Not surprisingly, the few salespeople who rated themselves as a 2 or 1 were almost all very new to the role of outside sales. In other words, virtually no experienced salespeople believed they were the ones bringing down the curve. Of course, these ratings do not mirror reality.

The law of averages is in fact a law, meaning that exactly 49.9% of all salespeople are above average and the same number are below. This proves that the vast majority of salespeople who are bringing down the curve are unaware of their performance deficiencies, which leads to the phenomenon I call “the last man standing.”

We work in an industry in which sales are going to occur in spite of bad performance. After all, builders and remodelers need to buy from *someone*. Thus, LBM dealers frequently reassign large-volume accounts after a salesperson retires or moves on. As a consequence, the industry is abundant with salespeople who have been gifted accounts and grown their book of business merely because they were beneficiaries of their tenure—i.e., the last man standing.



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.

This produces the illusion of skill. Sales volume continues to escalate as more accounts are assigned, further supporting the illusion until the Dunning-Kruger effect is not only the perception of the individual performing the task but also becomes, lacking any alternative criteria other than results, the illusory perception of the manager.

Eventually, accounts are no longer assigned, and sales volume starts to dwindle. The salesperson is expected to replace lost business but can't. Managers are left wondering when the salesperson “became complacent.”

It's an invisible problem when the market is strong and sales come as easily as they have for the past decade. Problems reveal themselves at the worst possible time—i.e., when the market starts to shrink, the exact time when sales must be generated on purpose. Unfortunately, the salesperson who has never had to build a book of business intentionally is faced with a daunting task when the pressure is on.

The only true measure of sales competence is the ability to “sell from scratch.” Selling from scratch means taking a stranger with whom the salesperson has no history or pre-arranged transactions and building a relationship that evolves from an introductory (cold) call to eventually becoming the ongoing supplier of choice for that prospect. It is the true litmus test of competence; results alone are not proof. Moreover, selling from scratch is the only true path to career security, which is very different than job security.

Job security is power controlled by the employer. The salesperson relies on the benevolence of that employer and optimum market conditions while ignoring the necessity for personal skills development. It's the security sought by the salesperson who hopes that their current sales job will be their last. The desire for job security can be manifested psychologically as a form of entitlement ... or fear.

Career security is the result of long-term skills development and the conscious ability to sell from scratch. It is one thing for a salesperson to profess competence at a task while enjoying the results that may or may not have been generated from their performance abilities. It is another thing entirely to have the confidence of knowing you can start with zero and build a successful sales career from scratch.

Lao Tzu, the wise Taoist philosopher said, “It's better to know and think you don't than not know and think you do.” Perhaps the best salespeople are those who always have a little shred of doubt about their competence and therefore something to prove to themselves ... namely, that they can sell from scratch.

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BY BRADLEY HARTMANN

QUESTION: I'm a regional LBM sales manager and we pride ourselves on maintaining a positive culture within our sales team. For that reason, we haven't historically published sales figures. Should we?

Answer: Yes, and here's why. Years ago, our division president at PulteGroup drilled this truth into our heads: Sales drive the business—and salespeople are accountable. Every Sunday night, company-wide emails listed each “new home consultant,” force-ranked by sales performance. No filters. No sugarcoating. When sales were awesome—which they were from August of 2000 until early 2008—no one commented much on the weekly sales scoreboard. Then the Great Recession hit. Suddenly, sales volume wasn't just a bit of corporate trivia—it dictated whether people kept their jobs.

Sales do drive the business. And salespeople should be accountable because cash flow is so critical.

NO JUMBOTRON, NO GAME: TURNING ON YOUR SALES SCOREBOARD

If you're concerned that sharing sales numbers publicly might damage your culture, that's completely valid. But consider the alternative: sales quietly slipping until it's too late to course-correct. The good news? Transparency doesn't have to erode trust. When paired with regular context—like celebrating wins, framing losses as learning moments, and emphasizing that metrics reflect your team's progress, not personal failure—public numbers can strengthen your culture.



Bradley Hartmann was raised in a lumberyard, worked in area purchasing at PulteGroup, and is passionate about helping LBM sales teams make it easy for builders to buy. You can email him at bradley@bradleyhartmannandco.com.

Transparency fuels accountability—and creates urgency. Publishing a sales scoreboard does just that. It gives reps an early-warning system and guards against the deadliest sales affliction: comfortable underperformance.

On a recent coaching call with a sales manager and an underperforming sales rep, the rep's candor caught his manager and me off guard. “I know I'm down 15% this year, but I'll still make six figures. My plan is to ride this year out and see if rates come down and home starts go up.”

The sales manager pointed out that if every sales rep on the team behaved in the same manner, the company would be forced to lay some of his colleagues off. He shrugged.

While this rep didn't feel uncomfortable at the bottom of the leader board, some other reps will—and that's the point.

Initiative, drive, resolve, and that *I-gotta-make-five-more-prospecting-calls-before-I-leave-tonight* doesn't come from leadership, it comes from deep within.

Who should see the numbers?

The entire sales team should regularly see each other's performance. My preference is to also share high-level metrics:

- Are you on pace to hit this year's goal?
- How do your sales compare year-over-year?
- Have you landed or lost any high-volume builders?
- What's your best estimate of market share movement?

This visibility reinforces that performance matters.

Anticipate objection and hurt feelings.

Sales is all about navigating around objections. If your first thought is, “Oh boy, Terry's gonna be ticked off when these numbers come out,” that's a red flag. Shielding Terry from reality isn't compassion. It's complacency. Even worse, it's fear. Publishing sales figures is all about stating your standards.

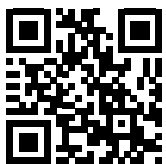
Yes, sales cycles vary. Yes, one invoice can swing things dramatically. Yes, publishing sales numbers without context can mislead. Accept all these things as the leadership opportunities they are. Add whatever context is necessary by sharing “sales versus goal” rankings too. Track net new revenue (new logos + targeted product category expansion within key accounts) in addition to gross profit dollars.

Embrace the nuance. That's your job as a leader. Use your communication skills to unite the company around the idea of incremental and accretive sales growth.

Imagine watching a basketball game with no score. Just some guys running around, jumping occasionally, taking an extra two bounces on a Eurostep. The ball falls through the net and the camera swings to the jumbotron—it's off. That's what it's like to work in sales without visible metrics. Sales is a sport. Turn the scoreboard on.



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BY THEA DUDLEY

Hey Thea,

This is a weird one, but here goes: We have a long-time customer who pays his bill on time, every time, and is the nicest person to deal with. His son started his own business a few years ago and we opened him up with a small account. Unlike his dad, he has been habitually late and is constantly going on credit hold. The challenge I have is the loophole he's found. When his account is maxed out or goes on hold for past due charges, he simply charges the materials on his dad's account. Since his dad doesn't care if his son uses the account, the son has found a larger credit line.

If the dad was writing the check for the full amount due, I wouldn't care but the dad has made it clear that those charges are his son's jobs. The son is charging serious money on the account. I am worried, what can I do?

— Not like father

WHEN THE APPLE FALLS FAR FROM THE TREE

Dear Unlike Father,

The irritation and mental stress aside, you have to admire the lad's creative problem-solving abilities. Past due, over limit, or both? No problem. The boy has a solution.

This is a straightforward solve, albeit uncomfortable to carry out. It'll take finesse, strategy, and clear communication. You don't want to damage the relationship with the dad, but you need to address the son's "creativity."

The dad may not care about his prodigy using his account and has blessed Junior charging to it. Great. Since Daddy

allowed the charges, he's on the hook for those charges. The wrinkle is Dad has made it clear to you that he is not responsible for those charges and cool with it going past due. Junior's debt, Junior's issue. He's just a dad helping his kid. Not a business owner thinking about consequences.

This is where your opportunity lies. Have a candid convo with Dad. Say, "We appreciate your business and love how you handle your account, with one challenge. You allow your son to charge to your account, which is cool, but you've made it clear to me that those are his bills, and you are not responsible, which puts us in a tough spot."

Point out that you granted credit to HIS company and any charges on it are his responsibility. If you report your AR to the credit bureaus, Sonny is impacting Dad. Be ready to explain that you cannot separate an account for reporting. Then stop talking. You will know from his reaction where his head is at.

If he understands, great. Problem solved. Little Boy No-pay is cut off from Daddy's coattails. If he stands with the, "I'm cool with him using my account" mantra, spell out the ugly parts no one wants to talk about.

If Baby Boy doesn't pay and things get ugly, as in, we have to lien or sue, or both, the charges are on Dad's account. How does this carve out work? Legally, it becomes a hot potato game of "Not It." Dad says, "Not my charges." Son can deny, legally. Who do you sue? Sue the dad and he can go after his darling? Are you prepared to put Dad's account on hold if past due, no matter who's ugly baby it is? It's messy. It's uncomfortable and it's unnecessary.

Dad has two choices at this point. Accept that the son's charges fall under his responsibility or tell his son it's time to grow up. Depending on Dad, you may have a business decision to make. Allow it to continue and hope for the best or put your foot down and clear up this mess.

"He's not paying but I'm letting it slide—because apparently, fatherhood comes with lifetime financing." A little Dad humor to end this pain.



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

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At Germantown Hardware, innovation is more than a buzzword—it's built into the business. As CNRG's living lab, the store recently tested over 24,000 Electronic Shelf Labels (ESLs) to explore how real-time pricing and operational efficiency can transform retail. What we learned here informs what we bring to retailers everywhere: smarter systems, sharper execution, and a commitment to testing what works—before we recommend it.

To find out about how Orgill is a different kind of partner, visit [Orgill.com/opportunity](https://orgill.com/opportunity).

Uncover the data-driven lessons, practical challenges, and long-term insights that came from testing ESLs at scale. This case study goes deeper into what makes a retail "living lab" work—and what you can take from it.

See how they did it.



GERMANTOWN
←
HARDWARE

Chris Clark
General Manager of
Germantown Hardware
Memphis, Tennessee

BY JOHN D. WAGNER

FIVE KEY PERFORMANCE indicators (KPIs) on your financial statements are crucial to determining the health of your business and ensuring the accuracy of your forecasts. They are **1. COGS: cost of goods sold; 2. Gross Profit Dollars; 3. OPEX: operating expenses; 4. OI: operating income, and 5. EBITDA.** Note that every one of these metrics can be expressed “as a percent of sale,” e.g. COGS%, GPM%, OPEX%, OI%, and EBITDA%. In our M&A practice, the EBITDA% is the most closely examined KPI, followed by GPM%.

A WATERFALL OF KPIs

Let’s look at these KPIs through a “waterfall,” which is a term that describes a cascading calculation that takes us from “top line” sales, inventory, and COGS all the way down to Adjusted EBITDA. This “waterfall” style analysis is an exercise we often run for a variety of reasons. For instance, we can show what happens to a dollar in sales as it turns into Adj. EBITDA. We also commonly create waterfalls to show our clients the net proceeds of an M&A deal, starting with the purchase price, and then adding credits like cash on the balance sheet, or subtracting debits, like closing costs.

Let’s start our waterfall with inventory and COGS. To simplify our example, let’s say you sell just one product, OSB. You start the month with \$1 million worth of inventory. That same month, at your buying group show, you spot a smashing deal on multiple rail cars, and you buy another \$500,000 to add to inventory. Your available OSB inventory costs you \$1.5 million.

In this same month, you sell OSB that cost you \$400,000, at a 20% markup. This leaves available inventory in your warehouse that cost you \$1.1 million.



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

COGS for that month are the cost of the sold inventory, or \$400,000. With your sales, you have turned the \$400,000 from an inventory asset on your balance sheet into an expense on your income statement. But you have sold it for \$480,000, given your 20% markup. What does that mean for Gross Profit Dollars?

You determine Gross Profit Dollars by subtracting COGS from the sales revenue. So, in our example, your Gross Profit Dollars equals the total sales amount (\$480,000) minus COGS (\$400,000) equals \$80,000. The resulting GPM% is determined by dividing COGS by the total sales: \$80,000/\$480,000, equaling a GPM of 16.7%. Not bad for a sheet-good product!

However, we still have not deducted OPEX from the \$80,000 in Gross Profit Dollars. The Gross Profit Dollars account just for the direct costs of the inventory ... before deducting OPEX, like salaries, rent, and admin. The result of the OPEX deductions from Gross Profit Dollars will give you the Operating Income.

For our example, say that OPEX is 10% of the sale, or \$48,000. Our Operating Income would be \$80,000 in Gross Profit Dollars, minus \$48,000 in OPEX. Our Operating Income is \$32,000 or 6.6%. It’s amazing how fast money is siphoned off in our “waterfall” analysis!

Now, we have finally worked our way down to determining EBITDA. My readers know that EBITDA (actually Adjusted EBITDA) is the dollar figure to which an acquirer’s multiple determines a business’ acquisition value. An acquirer will offer, say, 6X the Adjusted EBITDA. If the Adjusted EBITDA is \$5 million, the acquisition value is \$30 million.

Why don’t acquirers use Operating Income instead of Adjusted EBITDA to determine an acquisition value? Let’s look at the difference between Operating Income and EBITDA to understand.

EBITDA is earnings before interest, taxes, and non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization. Operating Income is your profit after subtracting COGS and OPEX from sales revenue, while including depreciation and amortization expenses ... but not interest or taxes.

Acquirers use Adjusted EBITDA due to a concept called Capital Structure Neutrality. Since EBITDA removes the effects of financing (interest), and because taxes can vary by region, city, and state, it makes EBITDA the appropriate KPI to examine when comparing values of companies with different capital structures, or that are located in different tax jurisdictions. In the end, EBITDA is viewed as a more accurate “proxy” for operational cash flow.

Why not run a waterfall of your own? It would be instructive to see how you may be able to improve your EBITDA.

HOME EXTERIOR SOLUTIONS

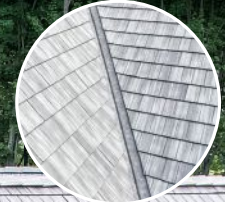
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BY RUSS KATHREIN

ONE QUESTION I'VE MADE A habit of asking at the beginning of nearly every vendor meeting is this: "What is the value you see by having me as a customer?" It's not a throwaway line. It communicates that I'm here to build a partnership, not just buy a product. And most importantly, it invites the other party to hold me accountable for the value I said I would bring to the table.

This is not a question that is just reserved for vendors. It applies to every relationship we hold as leaders. If we're not bringing value to our employees, our customers, our vendors, or our peers, why should those relationships continue?

Leadership is not a static title; it's an active responsibility. At the core of that responsibility is value creation. So let's take a moment to look at what it really means to provide value in the relationships that define our leadership.

Employees don't follow titles; they follow people who help them grow.

The value we bring to our employees isn't measured in how many meetings we run or decisions we make. It's in how we make them better. Are we giving honest feedback, offering stretch opportunities, and making space for them to succeed?

When leaders fail to communicate, or avoid accountability, employees lose more than productivity. They lose trust. I've always believed that clarity is kindness, and consistency is leadership. Ask yourself: Do my people leave meetings with me more confident and more committed than when they walked in? If not, what needs to change? Leadership doesn't stop with those you manage. It also extends to those you serve.

WHAT'S YOUR VALUE?

HOW A LEADER EARNS EVERY RELATIONSHIP



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

Customers stay loyal to those who help them win.

We often assume that because we've had a customer for a long time, the relationship is secure. That kind of thinking is dangerous. In reality, every interaction is a test: Are we still solving their problems? Are we helping them mitigate their risk? Are we making their lives easier?

Leadership here goes beyond pricing and product. It means owning the customer experience and setting the tone for how your team engages. Do you make it easy to do business with you? Are you proactive? Do you anticipate needs or simply react to complaints? The question I pose to myself is, "If I were my own customer, would I keep doing business with me?" If the answer isn't a quick "yes," then it's time for a hard look in the mirror.

Partnerships, like relationships, thrive and grow when both sides give 60% and only take 40%.

Vendors want clarity, respect, and timely communication. They want a partner who pays attention, honors commitments, and sees them as more than a transaction. The best vendor relationships I've had were never based on the lowest price. They were built on the highest levels of trust. Vendors who know you value their success will go the extra mile for yours. When was the last time you asked a vendor how you could be a better customer? That question alone can transform the dynamic and your results.

Among peers, value is measured in credibility, collaboration, and trust.

Leadership isn't just about leading those below you on an org chart. It's about how you show up to those who work with you. In any leadership team, your peers are constantly assessing your value. Do you contribute meaningfully? Do you listen well? Do you elevate the group, or drain its energy? When your peers see you as someone who solves problems, offers help, and speaks the truth with tact, you become someone they want at the table. You don't need authority to lead among peers. You need consistency, competence, and a commitment to the team's success beyond your own.

Leadership is something we must earn. If we're not bringing tangible value, then we're simply occupying a seat. So ask yourself, "In each of your key relationships—employees, customers, vendors, peers—what would they say if you asked them what value you bring?" If you don't know, ask. If you do know, keep earning it.

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Should I Sell My Business Now?

What most owners miss about timing, taxes, and better ways to exit.

If you've been thinking about selling your business, you're not alone. In today's uncertain M&A market, many owners are wondering whether now is the right time or if they've missed their window. The truth is, now might be the perfect time to explore your options, especially if you're willing to look beyond the traditional sale to a private equity rollup or large strategic buyer.

Many owners think there's only one way to sell

When most people think about selling, they picture a private equity backed rollup or a large strategic buyer writing a big check and taking over quickly. But that version of a sale can be fast, impersonal, often disruptive and tax inefficient. However, an M&A sale isn't the only path. In fact, in a slower market where big buyers are more selective, it may not even be the best one.

There are other ways to exit your business that still deliver fair market value while giving you more control, better tax outcomes, and a chance to protect the legacy you've worked hard to build.



Alternative sale strategies that put you in control

Options like selling to key employees, transitioning to family members, selling to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), selling to a Cooperative or selling to a Perpetual Purpose Trust can offer major advantages, including:

- Receiving Fair Market Value for your company—not a potentially reduced price from a third-party buyer who may be looking for their own exit in 3-5 years.
- Having more control over the process and transition timeline.
- Implementing tax and risk mitigation strategies that can increase your net proceeds.
- Preserving your legacy by retaining employees, supporting your community, and keeping your values alive.

These options aren't just possible. Believe it or not, they're often more profitable and personally fulfilling. But they do require planning, which is where a strategic partner like Stratus becomes a vital team member. Our goals-based process aligns your wishes with the best transition options.

How Stratus Business Advisors helps you navigate it all

Stratus specializes in business transition planning from start to finish, and even beyond the sale.

Here's what makes us different:

- Independent business valuation so you know what your business is truly worth.
- Strategic planning to grow value and reduce risk before a sale.
- Tax and risk management strategies to protect your net worth.
- Stakeholder education to help internal buyers feel confident.
- Project management from the first conversation through implementation.
- Post-sale support for the new owners so your business keeps thriving.

Know your options before making your next move

Selling your business doesn't have to mean giving up control or compromising your goals. If you're starting to think about your next chapter, Stratus can help you explore all the options and build a plan that reflects both your financial goals and your personal legacy.

Let's talk about what's possible.



Contact us for more information:
StratusBusinessAdvisors.com

or schedule a complimentary consultation:
go.oncehub.com/SamBrownell



NARI HONORS 2025 REMODELERS

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE REMODELING INDUSTRY (NARI) announced the winners of the 2025 National NARI Remodeler of the Year™ Awards, honoring the nation’s top professionals for their outstanding craftsmanship, innovation, design, and build.

Formerly known as the Contractor of the Year (CotY) Awards, the newly renamed Remodeler of the Year Awards reflect the dynamic, collaborative nature of today’s remodeling industry. From visionary design to flawless execution, these award-winning projects set the standard for excellence across the country.

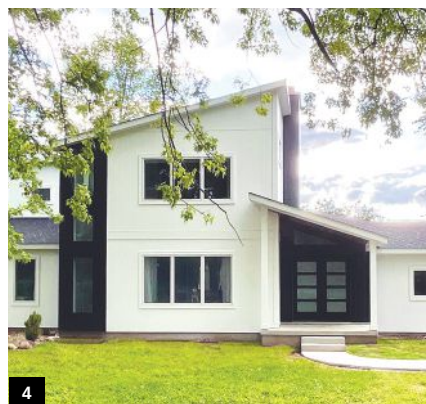
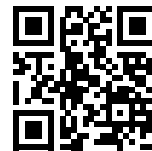
“The Remodeler of the Year Awards not only honor exceptional projects, but also the collaboration and craftsmanship that define modern remodeling,” said NARI President Aaron Enfinger, CR.

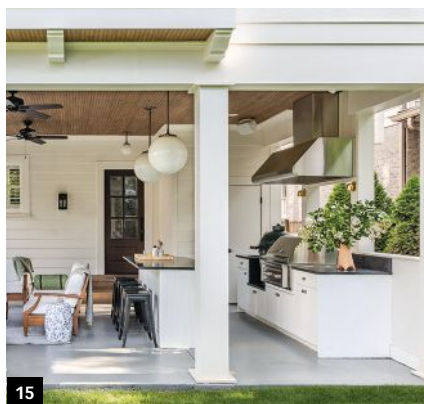
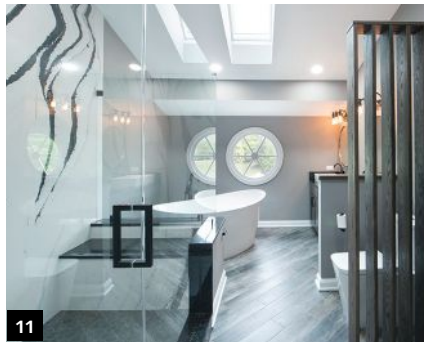
This year, 40 national winners were selected from 160 regional winners, representing a collective \$190 million in projects and categories spanning from residential kitchens, baths, and additions to historical renovations, commercial interiors, landscape design, and more.

The NARI Remodeler of the Year Awards continue a decades-long tradition of recognizing excellence and leadership in the remodeling industry. Congratulations to this year’s winners for raising the bar and redefining what’s possible in remodeling.

- 1 **ENTIRE HOUSE**
Over \$1,000,000
Hamish Murray Construction Inc.
Portland, OR
- 2 **ENTIRE HOUSE**
\$250,000 - \$500,000
North Dallas Renovations
Dallas, TX
- 3 **ENTIRE HOUSE**
Under \$250,000
Val Collective
Hickory, NC
- 4 **RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN**
Over 500 sq-ft
Rochman Design Build
Ann Arbor, MI
- 5 **RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN**
Under 500 sq-ft
Distinctive Design Studio
Sheboygan Falls, WI

Scan the QR Code to view the full list of winners and their projects, or visit: nari.org/nationalrotv





6 RESIDENTIAL HISTORICAL RENOVATION/RESTORATION
\$250,000 +
Golden-Eye Construction
Glen Head, NY

7 RESIDENTIAL KITCHEN
Over \$200,000
Architectural Building Arts, Inc.
Madison, WI
Team Members:
Benjamin Plumbing / Brunsell Lumber & Millwork / Capital Stone / Molony Tile / R & D Drywall / TNT Insulation

8 RESIDENTIAL KITCHEN
\$150,000 - \$200,000
Q Construction Solutions
Austin, TX
Team Members:
Urbane Design / Cabinet Couture

9 RESIDENTIAL KITCHEN
\$100,000 - \$150,000
Laurel Builders Inc.
Shakopee, MN

10 RESIDENTIAL BATH
\$100,000 - \$150,000
Dorene Gomez Interiors
Clayton, CA

11 RESIDENTIAL BATH
\$70,000 - \$100,000
Pat Scales Remodeling
Worthington, OH

12 RESIDENTIAL EXTERIOR
Over \$200,000
Mom's Design Build
Shakopee, MN

13 RESIDENTIAL DETACHED STRUCTURE
Kasper Custom Remodeling
Dallas, TX

14 RESIDENTIAL ADDITION
\$250,000 - \$500,000
Benchmark Home Construction, Inc
Danville, CA

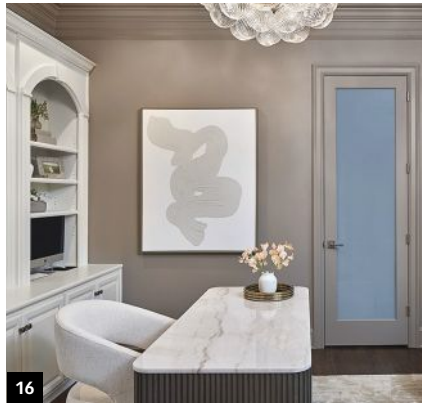
15 RESIDENTIAL ADDITION
Under \$250,000
Alair Homes Decatur
Decatur, GA

16 RESIDENTIAL INTERIOR

\$250,000 - \$500,000

DiFabion Remodeling, Inc.
Indian Trail, NC

Team Members:
Ferguson / Harkey Tile and Stone /
Queen City Stone



16



17

17 COMMERCIAL INTERIOR

Edgework Design Build
Minneapolis, MN



18



19

18 RESIDENTIAL INTERIOR FEATURE

\$50,000 +

MN Fine Homes & Remodeling
Elk River, MN

19 RESIDENTIAL INTERIOR FEATURE

Under \$50,000

Edit Design Build Studio, LLC
Minneapolis, MN

**20 RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE DESIGN/
OUTDOOR LIVING**

Over \$250,000

Livit Site + Structure
Inver Grove Heights, MN



20



21

**21 RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE DESIGN/
OUTDOOR LIVING**

\$100,000 - \$250,000

Realty Restoration, LLC
Austin, TX

Team Member:
Austin Deck Company

22 BASEMENT

Over \$250,000

Stephenson Construction, LLC
Buford, GA



22



23

23 BASEMENT

\$100,000 - \$250,000

Buckeye Basements
Delaware, OH

Team Member:
Columbus Custom Cabinets



The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) is committed to advancing professionalism and fostering consumer confidence in the remodeling industry. By equipping remodelers nationwide with resources, education, and networking opportunities, NARI helps its members thrive and build trust with homeowners.

For more information, visit nari.org or call 847-298-9200.

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ACRE DELIVERS FOR MID-CAPE HOME CENTERS

Expectations are changing across the building industry. Customers want materials that perform, meet their specific needs, and do good. After a positive experience, they often return, leading product loyalty to become a powerful driver for LBM dealers.

Mid-Cape Home Centers, a full-service lumberyard with six locations across Southeastern Massachusetts, recognized this trend early. In 2022, they began stocking ACRE™ by Modern Mill—a next-generation wood alternative that checked all the boxes for their customer base.

A Fan Favorite and Top Performer

Made from upcycled rice hulls, ACRE offers the beauty and workability of wood with the low-maintenance benefits of composites. It won't rot or splinter, produces no harmful dust, and is the only composite that can be painted or stained without primer.

Every customer has a unique problem that ACRE helps solve, and that versatility has made it a key for repeat business. At Mid-Cape Home Centers, ACRE quickly became a top performer across their locations, bringing back repeat customers who loved using it on the jobsite and drawing in new buyers eager to try it for themselves.

"When we first saw ACRE, we knew it would resonate with our customers. It's got the look they love, the strength to handle Cape Cod weather, and the flexibility to replace traditional cedar without the maintenance. The response has been as impressive as the product, customers finish one project and are already planning the next with ACRE."

— Dale Simmons, Vice President of Sales
Mid-Cape Home Centers



ACRE Shiplap Siding and Trim finished with Superdeck IR by Sherwin Williams in Cedar Bark Semi Solid.



ACRE Board and Batten Siding stained with custom PPG color match with 897 IR reflective technology and manufacturer approved white painted ACRE Trim.



ACRE Shiplap Siding stained in ACRE Black from Modern Mill's Signature Stain Collection.

To build on that momentum, Mid-Cape refreshed its South Dennis, MA showroom in 2024 and made ACRE a focal point. The product is featured across multiple applications, including siding and trim, finished in a range of painted and stained colors to highlight its natural look and design flexibility.

"Showcasing ACRE in multiple real-world applications has been a game changer in our South Dennis showroom. Customers can see its versatility, in a variety of finishes, and they're often surprised it's not wood. Being able to touch it, see the quality, and understand how it handles paint and stain really helps them picture it in their own projects."

— Joe Solecki, Millwork and Kitchen Design Manager
Mid-Cape Home Centers

Why Customers Keep Coming Back

ACRE solves common jobsite frustrations without sacrificing aesthetics or performance. It cuts like wood but is available in up to 20-foot lengths. ACRE has quickly become an industry go-to material for pros looking for the beauty of wood without the performance or environmental drawbacks.

Dealers like Mid-Cape are seeing the results: more return visits, stronger word of mouth, and more customers asking for ACRE by name. As expectations continue to evolve, ACRE is helping LBM dealers stay ahead and stay top of mind.

Learn more at modern-mill.com and midcape.com.

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SAN ANTONIO LUMBER CO.

ESTABLISHED: 1923

A CENTURY OF SERVICE

We talked to Sarah Schrader Cameron, fifth-generation owner and president of San Antonio Lumber Co. in San Antonio, FL.

What was the company's early history like?

San Antonio Lumber Company was founded in 1923 by Herman Schrader and J.P. Lynch in San Antonio, FL, a small town with deep agricultural roots. While many businesses from that era have long since disappeared, San Antonio Lumber has stood the test of time. In 1929, Herman Schrader became sole owner and ran the business until passing it on to his son, Arthur Schrader, in 1937. The business stayed in the family, growing with each generation. In 1957, Arthur Schrader Jr. took over and expanded the store, further strengthening its regional presence by leading agriculture pilot programs and forging a long-standing alliance with Purina Chow Company. After his passing in 1994, his son and my dad, Thomas A. Schrader, continued the family legacy—focusing on steady growth, strong community ties, and adapting the business to modern demands.

In 2012, I joined the business, spending time working in every department, learning the business from the ground up. Today, I serve as the company's president, continuing the tradition of family leadership into a fifth generation.

What keeps the company going after so many years?

Longevity in business doesn't happen by accident. For San Antonio Lumber, it's been a mix of tradition, adaptation, and deep community roots. The Schrader family has passed down not only the ownership of the business, but also a strong set of values, conservative financial management, a commitment to customer service, and a clear vision for long-term success.

Under the leadership of Thomas A. Schrader, the company evolved with the times, embracing change while staying grounded in its core principles. This foundation has allowed the company to maintain an experienced, service-oriented team and offer a wide range of products tailored to both contractors and homeowners throughout Central Florida. That commitment to service, quality, and adaptability is what keeps San Antonio Lumber going strong after more than 100 years.

What do you see in the future for the company?

Looking ahead, San Antonio Lumber remains focused on thoughtful growth, modernization, and continued investment in people—both employees and customers. As the industry evolves, so does the business, whether through expanding product offerings, improving logistics, or leveraging technology to enhance customer experience. But at its core, the mission remains the same: to serve the community with integrity, knowledge, and reliability. The future looks bright as the next generation of leadership builds on the company's strong foundation, positioning San Antonio Lumber for continued success for years to come. ■



From left: Sarah Schrader Cameron, Thomas A. Schrader, Theresa Schrader, Anna Hickel.



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 223 members, with more coming in each month. In all, the companies have provided 28,203 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:

A. H. ANGERSTEIN, INC. Wilmington, DE	est. 1924	ORGAIN BUILDING SUPPLY Clarksville, TN	est. 1921
CHRISTENSEN LUMBER CO. Fremont, NE	est. 1923	ISSAQUAH LUMBER Issaquah, WA	est. 1889
CAROLINA LUMBER & SUPPLY COMPANY Atlanta, GA	est. 1900	SCHOLL LUMBER Houston, TX	est. 1845
LEARNED LUMBER Hermosa Beach, CA	est. 1924	DELAWARE COUNTY SUPPLY COMPANY, INC. Boothwyn, PA	est. 1924
CLARKS LUMBER Herington, KS	est. 1925	GEORGE M HALL LUMBER West Homestead, PA	est. 1893

Nominate a company for the LBM Century Club

lbmjournals.com/nominate

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

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LEAVING
MONEY ON
THE
TABLE?**





**Are you confident you're
buying at the right time
in the market cycle?**

*Quick Tip: Put your trust in
someone with buying power who
is in the market each day. Let us
guide your purchasing by
developing a personalized buying
strategy that outlines when,
what, and how much to buy.*



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JAKE CALHOUN

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING | PROVIA

Jake Calhoun serves as vice president of marketing at ProVia. In this role he leads the Product Management and Creative & Design teams along with product marketing, content development, social media, advertising, public relations, and oversight of the ProVia brand and positioning in the marketplace.



When it comes to home exteriors, what trends are ProVia seeing?

While whites and blacks are still very popular, we are seeing the emergence of more subdued tones like off-whites/creams, lighter browns, and grays. As an example, we recently refreshed the paint and stain lineup for ProVia doors and windows and shifted away from bolder colors. One new color that has been very popular is Deep Waters and, when compared to a similar color that we discontinued in the transition—Deep Blue—you can see how the subtleness of Deep Waters plays into the tones homeowners are looking for today.

This year we reimagined our woodgrain laminate lineup for Endure windows and patio doors by introducing four new color options. With a total of seven laminate choices now available—from white woodgrain to light and dark colors, gray hues, and warmer tones—we've made it easy for homeowners to find the color that fits their style.

Now more than ever it is critical that home exterior products look and feel authentic. One example of this is Harbor Mill shake and slate siding; we scanned historically accurate cedar shake to ensure Harbor Mill reflected the truest sense of design. In another example, Signet fiberglass doors replicate the warmth and depth of real wood, while offering the durability and energy efficiency homeowners expect.

What are consumers most looking for when they choose home exterior products?

Homeowners are looking for products which are true to the architectural style of their home. We provide a wealth of resources on provia.com to educate and inspire homeowners so they can imagine and realize the home exterior of their dreams.

It is important to have products and colors which fit together, and ProVia wants to walk alongside the homeowner in that journey. Provia.com has great tools to help in this process which are also a lot of fun to use! These include vision boards, our door and window configurators, home exterior visualizers, design articles, and much more.

How is the growing interest in green building, sustainability, and resiliency influencing product development?

Rising interest in green building and sustainability is increasingly tied to resiliency, as extreme weather events push the industry toward tougher, longer-lasting materials. The trend underscores a growing expectation that building products must perform sustainably while standing up to harsher conditions. And with the elevated ENERGY STAR 7.0 standards introduced in 2023, we continue to look at ways we can increase energy performance of ProVia doors and windows using new technologies from our supplier partners. In recent months this has become increasingly important as nearly everyone is being impacted by rising utility costs.

In a world where builders are constantly dealing with diminished workforces, how can ProVia's product offerings help builders work smarter or faster?

We are constantly thinking about how to make products easier to install. A few examples which come to mind are our Harbor Mill shingle and shake siding and ProVia entry doors. For Harbor Mill we studied installer frustrations and worked to design a product they will love. With our entry doors, we have been focused on delivering complete entry doors where, when the product is delivered, everything the installer needs is in the box.

We also have a focus on training with our customers. We currently offer Installation Certification Programs for doors, windows, and roofing. Additionally, we work with industry organizations like CMHA (stone) and PEPA (siding) to equip our customers with training and resources they need to onboard new installers.

We are also thinking about the role of technology plays. As an example, on our door and window products each box has a QR code which can be scanned to access install instructions specific to that product.

What training or educational opportunities from ProVia can LBM dealers take advantage of to be a better resource for their customers?

As a ProVia dealer we encourage our customers to make installation training one of the first things they do. Our door, window, and roofing Installer Certification Programs are intensive hands-on classes that we hold onsite in Ohio. The pros experience a full immersion into ProVia's proven practices and culture. They also have a chance to tour our manufacturing facilities to see firsthand how our products are made. Plus, ProVia has a YouTube channel with a wealth of instructional videos from our installation support team. ■

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J.C. SNAVELY & SONS: THE POWER OF FAMILY

FOR THE LAST 147 YEARS in Landisville and Lancaster, PA, J.C. Snavely and Sons has been a family affair. Starting out as a supplier of flour, feed, and coal, the company transitioned over time to lumber and building materials. Today, its offerings include millwork, gypsum, steel products, doors, windows, and building material supplies, and it continues to evolve.

“Something interesting about the history of lumberyards is that they used to be the one stop shop for everything—trusses, panels,” says Steve Snavely, the company’s president, “and we had a time when we had done all of those. And then, as the market changed, when you had companies out there supplying just doors, companies supplying just trusses, the competitive advantage to us was to be more specific about what we’re good at, which is selling lumber and building products, as opposed to all those other things.” While they no longer manufacture these items, JC Snavely still offers them.

Part of the company’s success is being family-owned, a factor that gives a sense of security to customers. Shown from left: Chris, Nick, Steve, and Jesse Snavely.

It's that level of strategic thinking that has played such a vital role in the company's success. As a founding member of Lumbermens Merchandising Corporation (LMC), J.C. Snaveley and Sons has been uniquely positioned to take advantage of market evolution.

"LMC was founded 90 years ago, and my grandfather was one of the original stockholders," explains Snaveley. "They got together and decided if they went in together as a group to purchase materials, they could have better success in getting better prices and better availability to materials. So we've been a member of LMC for 90 years, and we are the last business left that was a part of the original stockholders. We are very loyal to LMC, probably 80% of our purchases go through them. And you know, we were always brought up with the fact that, you know, why would you buy from somebody else when you can buy from your own company?"

"LMC has around 200 employees; I can make one call and buy several trucks of lumber, plywood, or OSB," he adds. "With a couple of phone calls, I can go about running our business here and let the buyers at LMC do their job, come back with different numbers and then I can say, okay, here's the direction we're going. Here's when we need it. And then we're just left with the paperwork."

Leaning into strengths

That partnership through the years has enabled the business to set itself apart from the competition by being able to do custom work. "We're pretty diversified here," says Nathan Van Name, vice president of sales. "For example, our drywall division for this year is one of our strongest performing divisions. And then pair that with our architectural millwork, and they really set us apart in that we're able to do a lot of custom things that our competitors can't do. The ability for us to supply lumber on a job, as well as to be able to supply the doors, to be able to supply the windows, the cabinets, and team that up with the architectural custom millwork, it allows us to provide a complete package to our customers."

"Our architectural millwork is very interesting, because a lot of years when we are hitting the cover off the ball, so to speak, in the building material side of things, the millwork has been on the softer side, and now we're seeing the flip," Snaveley points out. "We're seeing the architec-

tural millwork division really picking up. We have a backlog that's probably over a year, maybe two years with sales. And it doesn't always work that way, but with our diversification, it really helps balance out. While lumber and panels are slower, windows, doors, gypsum and steel products, ceilings and stuff like that, have picked up, and so has the architectural millwork. So that rounds us out."

Snaveley also credits the company's success in part to being family-owned, a factor that he feels gives a real sense of security to his customers. "Our customers have access to the people that run the company, so we're involved in the daily operations," Snaveley explains. "We're involved with being accessible by emails to take care of issues, to help our customers. So compared to when you're dealing with either a national chain or a bigger company, where you might only be dealing with somebody in a certain territory, for us, you're dealing with the people that can make the decisions."

That family ownership is something that continues to undergo transformation. "So right now, we're the fifth generation, which is myself and my brother-in-law," Snaveley explains. "The next generation, which is generation six, is a part of an ongoing transformation that started about five years ago." ▶





Rather than being content to simply ride things out, the company is looking for ways to expand and grow. Whether that's expanding their drywall division and moving more into commercial, or exploring opportunities into residential.

“An easy way to summarize that,” says Van Name, “is over the last five years, there’s just been the task of transferring some of the equity of the company. It’s exciting times as that happens, but Steve and Chuck Fessler [the company’s chairman] are still in the driver’s seat, and I think that’s important to understand, too.”

This isn’t to say that the company doesn’t face challenges. Like most LBM dealers, J.C. Snively and Sons are concerned about maintaining margins and not losing jobs to the competition. As Van Name explains it, “I think one of the biggest things we’re facing right now is making money on a certain job, when we see some of our competitors pricing it. It makes us scratch our heads as to what their strategy is. So right now, our goal is to remain profitable. To put it politely, it’s a competitive market right now to get the jobs, and so we’re seeing that we have to really sharpen our pencils on some of these jobs to get them.”

The other side of the coin, of course, is about potential opportunities that can be taken advantage of. “I think the biggest opportunities right now are going to be with a lot of the assisted living that has kind of went by the wayside after COVID,” says Snively. “We’re starting to see a lot of that come back, and a lot of our general contractors are starting to get into this, not only new construction but with remodels

and additions onto these facilities. That’s a great opportunity for us, given that these facilities are a lot of wood built structures that take a lot of lumber.”

Looking to the future

The excitement about the future for the business is evident when talking to Snively and Van Name. Rather than being content to simply ride things out, they are looking for ways to expand and grow.

“Our mission and objective is to always be growing in some facet,” says Snively. “So whether that’s expanding our drywall division and moving more into commercial, or maybe exploring opportunities into residential, it’s exciting. As well, there are potential opportunities possibly partnering with other lumberyards that maybe are looking to move on and get out but don’t want to close their doors. Is there opportunity for us to maybe do some acquisitions that way? There’s a lot of different opportunities out there, but whatever they are, our plan is to grow.”

It’s a constant process of learning, says Van Name, and staying true to the legacy of the business. “I think the biggest part of all this is just leaning on the thing you know as we move forward,” he comments. “We talked about growing, but we also have a mission to want to stay in the family. That’s a big thing that we’re really striving for as we start to set goals for our next generation. We have every intention of keeping this a family-owned company, into the next generation, and all the decisions that we have made up to this point show that Steve has made this a priority. We know it’s going to be tough, we know it’s going to be hard, and that our backs are against the wall, but that’s our goal. We want to stay an independent lumberyard and continue to grow in ways that support that.” ■



Get to know J.C. Snively & Sons

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DEMO VIDEO





MANAGING & MINIMIZING JOBSITE RETURNS



BY LBM JOURNAL READERS

Restocking fees are common in the industry, but it's difficult to stay competitive if other businesses don't require them. This month's Real Issues. Real Answers. question has to do with returns from customers and how they impact dealer revenue.

More than 120 readers responded to our Real Issues survey email (let us know at operations@lbmjournal.com if you'd like to be on the list). **THE QUESTION:**



What insights would you share with the LBM dealer who posed this scenario: "Customer returns are a serious challenge. We often know when the amount of material needed for a job is much less than listed on an order, but we can't refuse to send the material that is requested. Returns chew up a lot of profit margin, but none of our competitors use across-the-board restock fees. How do we stay competitive while reducing the number of returns that we process?"

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:

"To stay competitive while reducing returns, I would offer pre-order reviews and material optimization as value-added services to help customers order more accurately. I'd implement a fair, tiered restocking policy rather than a blanket fee, and use data to flag frequent return issues. I'd also train my team to tactfully guide customers toward smarter ordering. Finally, I'd provide quick jobsite refills to reduce the need for overordering in the first place."

"The solution to this is to do the estimating for the customer. Tell them what they need versus them telling you what they need."

"Identify and stock most common SKUs, then develop a streamlined return process—that's important. Charge restock fees on all special orders/non-stocked material based on the restocking policies of your suppliers. Do not issue credit until you have received credit from your supplier. If an item is sold non-returnable to you, it must also be sold non-returnable to your customer. On returnable material, insist all material be returned in 'new/resaleable' condition. And make all of this clear in your sales process. This will give your customers some flexibility on the most common item while protecting your margin. Your policies must be stated up-front and be fair. We are the customer's partner but not their bank. Time and condition must be factors in your policies. At the same time, be sure to maintain a pulse on hot products, make higher margin stocking orders so you can be more flexible with these SKUs."

"A material pick-up costs a company a lot of time and money, loss of man hours and missed opportunities for scheduled work. I believe that a charge or fee for a pick-up would help relieve some of the hits taken by the company."

"We have an in-house draftsman and estimator. If a customer does not use us to plan their job and they end up with a significant overage in spite of a salesperson's best effort to guide them, we would then assess a restocking fee. Across the board may not work, but case-by-case could help."

"Charging restock fees of at least 25% is our go-to number, and with our large contractors, we may hold on to material for a short time and send it out to the next job. On some items they may not get issued credit at all. We build it into the quote and as long as we are not overbid, we do not issue credit."

"I'm not sure of a way to do this without offending the customer."

"Most houses are being built over and over again, so you can whittle down a list pretty easily if you are paying attention. The issue is custom houses and the different habits of framing crews. Knowing your customer is key."

"We charge 10-15% restock fee and will not credit any material that is not first quality and resaleable. If the customer objects, I inform him that I will send it out on his next load. That ends the conversation. Most of the time they know the condition of what they sent back and do not want it on their next job."

"Return fees are likely the only thing that customers will take notice of that will force them to verify their material. Update your return policy to note that any return in excess of your chosen dollar amount will be subject to a return fee of 25% or more. This allows customers to still have a margin for error while not overloading employees with obscene amounts of product upon returns. If not already done, make sure customers understand that no pick-ups will be made if product isn't properly stacked and readily available for your employees to pick up. There is no time for them to be searching or stacking material when you are losing money and when they could be making more deliveries. You could also consider offering your own takeoffs (if you don't already) in order to manage customer orders. The return policy is an idea we have been floating and the latter two are what we have already implemented."

"There should be consequences, especially if it involves a truck and a driver."

"We have found that returns to some vendors have a certain timeline to even be able to return them at all. If we know the pro customer is ordering more than necessary, and if we can get the product in less than a week, then we tell them we will order a bit under their request and order more once they are mid-job so THEY don't get stuck with the product that we can't return. It seems to help when they understand that it would be on them to pay for product we can't return at all, such as composite decking." ▶

"If possible, think about sending packages out in phases so the builder can better monitor the amount of material needed. Also, sometimes we talk to customers in the same boat who are clearly ordering too much material and convince them otherwise. We have one customer who overorders almost every time, but they give us so much business that it's worth it to provide the service of free returns. We are working on getting a better system in place to make the return process for this customer more organized. Those who give us less business, maybe not so much."

"Have them sign off on the order and take a deposit to convey their commitment."

"Pick-ups and returns are as important as a sale. When stocking items, we try to do it quickly and with a smile. For special orders that cannot be returned, we do not give credit. For credit customers, we can look up the invoice to give proper pricing on the returns, but cash customers have to have the original invoice. Our charge customers know and understand our credit policies. We have a large sign behind the sales desk for the cash customers. Competition is strong in our area and we do not want to discourage our customers from using us as their lumber supplier."

"You should probably sit this customer down and explain to him how much it's costing you in added labor, fuel, and time as well as the loss of materials due to damage from all the handling."

"We charge a 10-15% restocking fee. Returns are only allowed if it is a stocking item and is resaleable."



"I sell doors and windows, and we pretty much go off the house plans, and then we make changes when we sit down with customers to get sign offs of any change."

"Our outside sales team is responsible for doing their own estimating. Some are really good, and some need improvement. Two key points here:
1. Work on estimating skills. Most builders/supers/PMs in the residential construction market do not have this skill. It will also help retain business when builders rely on you for this skill.
2. Question extra orders. Most outside salespeople will simply take the list and ship it. Most of these requests are coming from subcontractors. The lists are never seven of these, 13 of those. They are round numbers like 10, 20, or 50. That alone tells you they are not trying to accurately estimate additional needs."

"This is a tough one, especially since material can bow and twist with warm weather conditions. The No. 1 priority is customer service and sometimes it requires multiple drops and/or returns."

"Our special-order materials are listed as non-returnable. Our customers are aware of restock fees for materials that must be pre-approved before returning. We recently implemented a 60-day return policy as well, which is helping reduce the expense of processing returns."

"We charge a restocking fee on stock items. If the customer nails it, cuts it, paints it, we do not accept the return. We also do not accept orders cut to custom lengths."

"When materials take extra time to get, I work with the customers to check quantities and think through unforeseen issues to decide on the amount needed. If overordering, I'm clear about the return policy. In quotes I note any non-returnable items. Clarity is the most important thing."

"We do not charge a fee on stock items that can be sold as new. We pass along any restocking fees from our distributors on special orders. Unless every yard in your specific region bands together, this will not change."



"Communication, tailored to each specific customer, is crucial in order to minimize the returns. When a customer realizes that deliveries are frequently held up—due to a driver having to take the time to load up and return materials for credit—then they can be helped to understand the other side of the coin, and how it negatively impacts the efficiency of the entire operation. This can be used as a point to stress to customers that factors into keeping the material prices as competitive as possible."

"We offer takeoff services for all product categories, which gives us better control over the subcontractors who lack either the knowledge or tools to perform accurate material estimates. Tools we use include LBM Pipeline, Stack, Square, iStruct, isDesign, isPlan. We also operate a prebuilt header shop assembling pre-cut, solid-ply headers of various sizes and widths utilizing returned framing lumber capturing margin dollars on otherwise uncreditable material."

"Better project management and training with customers is needed so they know the costs involved. The builder will show the homeowner the bills but never the credits."

"I'd try to learn why they're ordering so much extra, and see if you can address those concerns before delivery. Have they had past problems with quality? Assure them your team is sending the best. Have they had issues with shortages? Build a system to double check their numbers. But at some point, if they're taking advantage of you, you need to impose fair-to-all restock fees."

"In our business, accepting returns is a competitive advantage. We may not be the cheapest price on the front end, but accepting returns is a service valued by the pro who doesn't want to be caught short mid-job." ▶

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“Our best defense is having an active, engaged salesperson working with our customers. They can better help anticipate ordering too much and can be quick to pick up the material when needed, reducing the amount of time it’s on the jobsite getting muddy, weathered, etc. We also try to identify the repeat offenders and have more discussions with them about how we can jointly reduce their returns.”

“As an industry, we need to standardize a restocking fee/ no returns on special orders.”

“We charge a restock fee. If they bring it back themselves and it is in good condition, we reduce the percent of the restock amount. If we pick it up on our truck, it’s 20%. Damaged material is not returnable.”

“I suspect returns are a challenge for all of us, and unfortunately I don’t think there is a one-size-fits-all solution. One process we have tried with success is targeting our worst offenders of large overorders. Our salesman sat down with them and politely explained how unprofitable the large returns are for both of us. We are vigilant in only crediting resaleable material in the same condition as when it was delivered. We pointed out to these contractors they end up paying for a lot of material that goes on the scrap pile because it sits on the job and gets damaged. With some of these customers, we did enact a restock fee structure based on volume. The fee is based on the percentage of the original order that was returned. The larger the percentage of returns, the larger the restock fee. We also waive this restock fee if they bring the returns back themselves.”

“Wait until the job is done, only credit what you can resell, process credit quickly. We only occasionally get questions, and most customers are happy to get the material off-site and receive some credit.”

“We have made returns more expensive, especially products that we delivered and stocked.”

“We have put ‘no return’ labels on some items, i.e. bags of concrete. It helps with our decision making if we refund for the product or not. Returns are a thorn in our side, but they must be done or you will lose the customer.”

“If you do the takeoffs, then the overage is your mistake. If the customer overorders, then a return charge should be accepted. Communication with the customer is the key.”

Responses from wholesale distributors, manufacturers, and service providers:

“If the material is stock, I would feel pretty comfortable with an across-the-board restock fee, be it 10-25%. The higher the restock fee, the more discouraging it would be to overorder, and therefore return material. If the material is special ordered, either do not allow returns at all, or charge closer to 50%, as the burden is on you, the seller, to try to move that product, and you may have to discount it very deeply in order to do so.”

“Overordering is out of hand and it needs to stop. Most dealers get multiple deliveries a week so they can order more material if needed.”

“This is a difficult situation since every relationship needs a balance of respect on both sides. For the health of your business, a restock fee is warranted but market competition is in play. An honest conversation is a start and possible moving up sales margin might help rectify this situation or at least help you capture the margin needed to service the customer.”

“It may be more efficient to send out add-ons rather than suffer returns”

“Work with your manufacturers on estimation tools. If one of my distributors asked me to help them or their contractors with takeoffs, I would be glad to help them learn, or sponsor takeoff software.”

“Get to know the customer. When it happens the first time, I as a manufacturer am happy to split the cost with you. The next time, it’s on them. Also, advise them when they order the material that returns will not be accepted unless they can be sold right back to another customer. Boxes that have been rained on, are dirty, or have been smashed in the back of a truck cannot be returned.”

“Would you rather have the carpenter contractor constantly calling to get material because the list was too tight? I prefer to overload the list slightly and make one delivery and one pick-up. Everyone stays happy!”

“We stick to our guns when it comes to returns. If you beat your competitors in service and performance you won’t have to apologize for returning items to stock with a fee!”

“Let them know up front whether it is a stock item or special order. For special orders, they should know it is not returnable. Stock items should have a restock. Of course, like everyone, for the best customers you may want to waive this.”

“We try and stock premium or highline grade SPF to cut down on customers overordering and culling.”

“It should be based on the customer. If you have a frequent offender, have a conversation with them and determine what the root cause is, and how this can be dealt with.”

“Appeal to the customer, ask for reasonableness.”

“We state right up front that custom orders are non-returnable. We have all customers sign off on the quotation. We also state right up front there is a restocking fee for returns and customers sign off on that when they pick up their orders. Why your competitors don’t charge for returns is THEIR loss. Don’t let it be yours. Returns ARE costly!”

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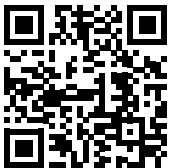
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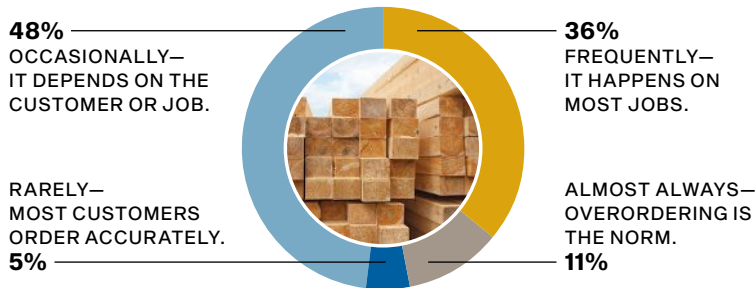
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Q How often do your pro-customers order more material than is needed for a project?



Comments from dealers:

“The key is to stay on top of your projects and get returns picked up in a timely manner.”

“Most are of the mindset that they want more than they need.”

“We deal with custom home builders. Some of them are really particular with quality issues and either order more than they need and select out the lumber with cracks and checks and return the balance. Or some of them order longer lengths and cut out the checks and cracks on the ends.”

Comments from vendors:

“We do the takeoffs and we are pretty accurate.”

“We charge a 15% restock fee which we will not negotiate. Returns are kept to a minimum by most.” ■

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MORSCHES BUILDERS MART BUILDS ON ITS 154-YEAR LEGACY WITH CULTURE, QUALITY, AND SERVICE

THERE ARE FAMILY-OWNED businesses and there are businesses that feel like family. For Morsches Builders Mart, it's a little bit of both. The Columbia City, IN-based dealer has built a culture of collaboration and trust that's helped foster a dedicated team of fulfilled, long-tenured employees committed to providing the best service to customers. And with more than 150 successful years under the company's belt, those approaches have clearly paid off.

Deep roots, ever-evolving

Morsches Builders Mart started in 1871 as a mom-and-pop sawmill, eventually operating under the name Morsches-Nowels Lumber Company. In the 1960s, third-generation owner Paul Morsches Jr. moved the company in the direction of cash-and-carry, renaming it Morsches Builders Mart and coining the phrase, "The Supermarket of Building Materials."

"It's [fitting] as we've evolved because now we specialize in providing all products from foundation to finish," says current owner and CEO Franz Morsches. "We're not just a lumberyard—we supply everything."

Now with five locations serving northeast Indiana and into Michigan and Ohio, Morsches Builders Mart primarily works with pros building custom homes; a quarter of their customer base is consumers. In some markets, they also work with large commercial contractors for projects like college dorms, football stadiums, and hospitals. "We specialize in getting them

materials that other places can't source," Franz says, including all sizes of framing and plywood, fire-rated materials, and engineered wood.

Franz started his career at the company in 1984 and took over as the fourth-generation owner 10 years later. "Now I'm the longest-tenured employee, and we're preparing for the next leadership change. We're blessed that we have a stable of bright, young employees—we are sitting well for the future."

Hands-off management nurtures employee loyalty

Franz credits his employees for the company's continued endurance and accomplishments.

"The key to our success is our exceptional staff," he says. "We have a proven track record of providing exceptional service because the longevity of our employees is incredible. It's not uncommon for people to come work for Builders Mart out of high school and stay here through retirement."

The company is connected to local schools and contractors, and many employees begin as part-timers in their teens and then follow career paths upward through the company based on their interests.

Jeremy Hammel is one such example. He started in the Columbia City headquarters yard as a sales clerk, and 33 years later is corporate operations manager. His son recently began training in the engineered wood department after graduating high school. At first, the variety and dynamics of the job were what held Hammel's interest. "There's always a new thing,

a new challenge, a new customer," he says. "And then when you get a few years in a family business like this, you develop relationships and learn what the family and the company are all about, and it makes it easier to stay. They promote from within and treat all of our employees really well. It was a fit from the word go."

Indeed, Franz Morsches' nod to his team isn't just lip service—it's evident in his management style and his overall approach. "It all fits together—everything in our business is relationships and partnerships," he says. "I feel that in the strength of our employees. I try to keep the best, I try to pay the best. ... If I have employees who are happy, that leads to customers who are happy."

It also helps that the idea of a "family-owned business" isn't restricted to those with the Morsches name. "I go over and above to take care of my people," Franz says, which includes recognizing the need for flexibility so employees can tend to their own families. "That gets reciprocated—I think they go over and above for me, and I try to do the same for them."

Scott Finney, EWP/estimating manager, can attest to that. "I live 30 miles away, and I have kids," he says. "[I appreciate] the flexibility to be able to take care of things as a dad with no questions asked. They know I'm going to get the work done."

Finney acknowledges the camaraderie of the team. "Everyone cares. When you spend as many hours as you do at work, when you enjoy coming there and the people you work with—that means everything." ▶



BY KATY TOMASULO | PHOTOS BY JASMINE'S DAWN PHOTOGRAPHY



Morsches Builders Mart senior management team. Clockwise from bottom left: Chris Peters, Scott Reed, Franz Morsches, Jeremy Hammel, Steve Lemmon, and Scott Finney.



“With our culture and environment, it’s one of the best places I’ve ever worked,” agrees Corporate Sales Manager Chris Peters. “That shows in the low turnover rate we have; we have a lot of long-tenured employees.”

When he started as a general laborer part-time while in college 21 years ago, Peters never expected to be with the company long-term. “I fell in love with the industry,” he says. Today, he oversees day-to-day operations and about 30 employees in Columbia City and also works with outside salespeople at all five locations.

Peters is quick to give a nod to Franz Morsches’ hands-off management style, which ensures staff can make real-time adjustments to help customers get what they need when they need it. This also includes allowing managers to run their branch like it’s their own store—recognizing that they know their local clientele best.

“We cater to so many different types of customers,” Peters says. “The way we run our business allows us to do that. We’re not corporate-minded, we’re not being micro-managed. That allows us to facilitate every customer’s need.”

“The customer comes first. Everyone says that, but I think our team truly embodies that,” echoes Turner Morsches, assistant manager at the Huntington location and future fifth-generation owner. “We strive to put the customer first. And that wouldn’t work without us working together.”

Peters sees the influence of family in the company’s longevity, particularly when so many other independents are being bought up. “It’s a testament to being in business for 150 years and family owned—we’re not going to let the big guys step on us. We’re going to be there to compete with them every day. The longevity and being family owned is an accomplishment.”

Morsches Builders Mart is deeply woven into the fabric of its communities, and its continued involvement in everything from schools to 4H to town events is both appealing for potential hires and a cultural pillar for current employees.

“Franz believes in taking care of the communities that take care of us,” Peters says.

Smart services, quality products

Even as LBM trends and economic influences have come and gone, what’s guided Morsches Builders Mart through the years is a thoughtful approach to business and growth. They’ve shied away from services that didn’t make sense for their markets or customers, such as installed sales or manufacturing, while embracing those that were clearly needed or that presented worthwhile opportunities.

“One thing we’ve always done that’s helped us succeed is we’ve been small and nimble enough that we’re able to change direction if needed,” Franz says.

This includes trying out new products; the company was one of the first dealers to stock Trex, for example. Perhaps most notably, Morsches Builders Mart was also one of the first to hire staff dedicated to engineered wood products 25 years ago; that department, in combination with estimating, has grown into one of the company’s flagship offerings and employs a team of five.

The department’s success began with seizing the opportunity to bring in Scott Finney from their wholesale EWP distributor that was closing its business. Finney thus was able to hit the ground running, creating a self-sufficient program that doesn’t rely on one manufacturer or proprietary product. This helps keep offerings flexible in both supply and pricing, bringing in EWP stock and setting up

systems in ways that make the most sense for the company and customers alike.

Finney works hand-in-hand with the truss manufacturer, creating a collaborative relationship that ensures customer opportunity while cutting out the middleman and associated wait time.

The department's estimating services has expanded, particularly in the past five years as builders' own estimators have aged out. "The new wave of customers doesn't really do that, so they're really leaning on us," Finney says.

Like the other areas of the company, remaining in tune with individual customers' needs is key. "It's more than just doing an estimate—it's a partnership. We sit with them and look at plans and come up with solutions," Finney says. "It's a testament that we can sit down with a customer and walk through it and figure out the roof pitches and overhangs and wall heights. If we have to, I can sketch up a cross section on AutoCAD and give them a drawing."

This hands-on mindset is part of what has helped establish a stable of long-time customers, some of whom have been relying on the company for decades. "We are quality minded; when we engineer something structurally for someone we have the long term in mind," Peters notes. "It's not about the sale; it's about making that customer happy and preventing callbacks."

Bright skies ahead

With sound strategies for management, operations, products, and services, Morsches Builders Mart has a solid path forward. For his part, Franz is excited about what the future holds, particularly handing over the reins to the next generation of ownership.

Taking over the family business wasn't always a given for Turner, who originally had planned to attend law school. During college, conversations with his father and grandfather awakened him to the opportunities at the company, compelling him to take business courses and leading him back home. After graduation, he did rotations under different managers across all five locations, and since 2016 he's been working at the Huntington store, first at the counter and now as assistant manager.

For others considering taking a role in the family business, Turner recommends staying anonymous as much as possible while also learning as much as possible. "I wanted to earn the respect of the employees and customers; I wanted them to understand that I'm here to work with them and for them," he explains. "I wear many hats and get to see all aspects of the business. It gives you a nice taste of what it takes to run a successful company."

In the LBM industry, reaching a fifth generation is a feat within itself, and a privilege that Franz doesn't take lightly nor for granted. "I'm grateful for the opportunities we've had," he says. "We're exceptionally lucky to have the people who've worked for us over the years. I give them all the credit for allowing us to continue the legacy." ■

Get to know Morsches Builders Mart

FOUNDED:	1871
OWNERSHIP:	Family-owned
LOCATIONS:	5
EMPLOYEES:	90-100
ERP PLATFORM:	Epicor
CO-OP/BUYING GROUP:	LMC
CUSTOMER MIX:	75% pro / 25% consumer



COLUMBIA CITY LOCATION

COURTESY OF MORSCHES BUILDERS MART





BY SALLY LACEY

MINNESOTA LBM PROS JOIN FORCES FOR GOOD

According to the Housing First Minnesota Foundation, more than 170 veterans experience homelessness every night in Minnesota. Starting in 2024, three pivotal organizations gathered builders, suppliers, and manufacturers with the goal of seeing an effective end to veteran homelessness in Minnesota. Once again, the collective LBM industry is making a difference in the lives of those in need.



Veteran Village will consist of 22 single-family attached homes for veterans and their families who are experiencing homelessness.



Housing for heroes

Projected to finish later this year, Veteran Village is a first-of-its-kind community featuring 22 units of supportive housing for up to 36 veterans and their families experiencing homelessness. This multimillion-dollar project is said to be Minnesota’s first dedicated multi-unit housing community built specifically to support veterans, with the goal of bringing an effective end to veteran homelessness in Minnesota.

Since 2017, members of the Housing First Minnesota Foundation, in partnership with Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) and Lennar, with support from many housing industry leaders, have developed more than 39,500 square feet of veteran-focused housing across the state. Sunny Bowman, second-generation owner of Dakota County Lumber, Farmington, MN, has been on the board of the Housing First Minnesota Foundation since 2022, and currently serves as its

president-elect. “The whole concept of the Housing First Foundation is that we do what we’re good at, which is connect with builders and associate members.”

Members include lumberyards, suppliers and manufacturers, a network of support for projects like this. “We do the same thing with a number of nonprofit organizations in other impact areas, but our partnership with MACV has been pretty longstanding, so they brought this opportunity to the Housing First Minnesota Foundation,” Bowman said.

In 2023, discussions within the foundation about ways to make the largest impact on veteran homelessness were circulating, but it wasn’t until 2024 that the concept of a village was born when Mount Calvary Lutheran Church came into the picture. Mount Calvary owned over two acres of land with a vision to do something impactful. Negotiations on the land began in the spring with an agreement resulting in December. ▶



According to Bowman, when the land was chosen for campus-style housing, those tasked with fundraising knew it would be an expensive project. “But we said, you know what? Our industry is so generous. As long as everybody pitches in, we’ll be able to get this across the finish line.”

“In the beginning it was a lot of vision casting, saying, ‘hey, we have the opportunity to get veteran homelessness in Minnesota almost to functional zero,’ painting the picture of how we do it and how they can be involved, and then everybody was immediately excited.” Bowman said the connections in the LBM industry were particularly generous in opening their personal network to her when she needed it. “I would be hitting a brick wall with whatever product category and they opened their network and made introductions. I saw that time and time again with all different vendors.”

Competing lumberyards worked together to make an even larger impact. “It was a lot more effective when it was Dakota County Lumber, Scherer Bros., Lyman Lumber, and Arrow Building Center asking together.” Competing businesses shared their notes and their networks to ensure this development was a success.

During the fundraising phase, some businesses and organizations donated large sums of money, while others gave what they could, chipping away at the demand of the project. “A \$20,000 donation from a small business is huge. The fact that everybody just gave what they could, I think, is really beautiful,” said Bowman. In-kind donations of siding,

decking, fasteners, appliances, and more covered roughly \$1 million of the costs.

After roughly a year and a half, their efforts were concluded. “The speed at which we raised the funds was a positive surprise. People are excited about the project and things really came together.” After breaking ground in May of 2025, the project is now in its first phase of construction.

Business that sustains

For Bowman, being a part of a nonprofit organization like the Housing First Minnesota Foundation makes complete sense. “The whole reason we’re in business at Dakota County Lumber is to do good with it.” Steve Finden, Bowman’s father and the founder of Dakota County Lumber, led with the vision of giving back to his community. One example of how Bowman continues his legacy is through her involvement with the Housing First Minnesota Foundation. “We get to do what we’re good at, which makes us money to use for altruistic purposes,” she says. “Being a part of something that fits our skillset and can make an impact on the community is great.”

When asked what advice she would give to others interested in executing a project like this, Bowman said, “Don’t doubt the capacity of our industry to give and do good. Don’t be afraid to work with your competitors and don’t be afraid to ask your vendors if they want to be involved. Not asking robs them of the opportunity to participate and feel the same joy you get through helping.” ■



Sunny Bowman
Leading Dakota County Lumber as its second-generation CEO, Bowman steers a team of 40-plus on its mission of making perfect deliveries to customers while making a meaningful community impact.



HOUSE THE HEROES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If you’re interested in joining forces with others to help house veterans in your community, here are some steps to get started:

1. Get involved with a local nonprofit housing organization.
2. Create a network of builders, suppliers, and manufacturers.
3. Be generous with your company’s time and resources.
4. Ask vendors to donate materials.
5. Collaborate with other local building material suppliers.



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FASTENERS

BY MIKE BERGER

As a time-tested revenue stream for LBM dealers, fasteners continue to evolve

FASTENERS have been around for a very long time. But could they be older than the dinosaurs? A Russian research team going by the name of the Kosmopoisk Group (which investigates UFOs and paranormal activity), claims to have found a one-inch screw embedded inside a rock from the Kaluga region of Russia that has been dated to 300 million years old. According to the group, the screw is the remains of an ancient form of technology that proves extraterrestrials visited Earth millions of years ago.

So, did a highly advanced civilization first bring fasteners to our world? The truth, as they say, is out there. One thing, however, can't be disclaimed: today, fasteners of all sorts comprise a vital part of any LBM dealer's inventory. And while their basic design has remained unchanged for centuries, fasteners of all forms continue to adapt and evolve to meet the changing nature of the building environment.

Fastening down the trends

It can be easy to view screws, nails and other types of fasteners as a somewhat stagnant category, especially considering they have been around for thousands of years. But time moves forward, and as building materials and construction methods change, so too do the fasteners that hold everything together.

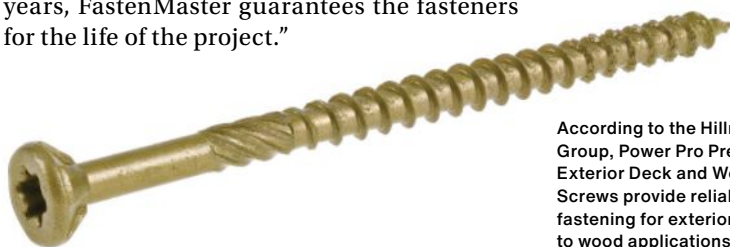
For example, the growing use of alternative building materials is spurring the demand for new fasteners designed to handle the need. Phil Lail, president of Pan American Screw, points to the increasing use of structural laminated and LVL wood beams as a driver for fastener development. “We have been developing new exterior coatings that offer better lubricity for driving larger and longer structural lag screws while offering superior corrosion resistance,” he says.

Arun Venkatesan, product manager for CAMO, also points to the rise of alternative building materials as a driver of fastener development. “One of the biggest shifts we’re seeing is the move toward alternative substructures, especially the use of steel framing and other metal and synthetic materials in residential and light commercial construction, matching the longevity of synthetic deck tops,” he points out. “This trend is particularly prominent in wildfire-prone areas, where metal offers a longer lifespan and superior fire-resistance compared to traditional wood framing. As a result, builders and specifiers are demanding fastening solutions that work seamlessly with metal substrates. It’s not just about strength, it’s about compatibility. Fasteners need to perform across a wider range of materials, resist corrosion, and maintain long-term durability in more challenging environments.”

Roderick Kabel, marketing director of Deck-Wise, agrees with Venkatesan. “One of the most exciting and fast-growing markets we’re seeing is the embracing of thermally modified wood for decking and siding applications,” he explains. “As the supply chain for tropical hardwoods continues to face pressure from regulations such as CITES [The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora] and recent global tariffs, thermally modified wood is quickly becoming an exciting alternative for a sustainable, high-performance building product. This has surely influenced our fastener innovation where we recognized early on that thermally modified wood has unique properties, espe-

cially its reduced moisture content and inherent brittleness that require a completely different fastening approach.”

One of the benefits of these new building materials that’s often cited is their increased longevity, which in some cases greater than that of the fastener itself—a factor manufacturers are working to address. “A growing trend is aligning all project materials with the lifespan of the primary component,” explains Anthony DiSanto, director of the decking business unit for FastenMaster. “For example, in a composite deck project, where boards may last 25-plus years, FastenMaster guarantees the fasteners for the life of the project.”



According to the Hillman Group, Power Pro Premium Exterior Deck and Wood Screws provide reliable fastening for exterior wood to wood applications. These screws reportedly require no pre-drilling, and a durable four-layer epoxy coating ensures superior resistance to rust and corrosion.

It’s not just the development of building materials that’s driving change in the fastener industry. The upswing in extreme weather events is also causing fastener manufacturers to develop advanced products that are suited for the challenge. “As extreme weather events like hurricanes, wildfires, and flooding become more frequent, residential construction is placing greater emphasis on resilience,” says Jacek Romanski, channel program director for ITW Construction. “Homes are increasingly being designed and remodeled to resist fire, mold, impact, and moisture—especially in high-risk regions. This shift is driving demand for high-strength, corrosion-resistant fasteners that comply with stringent building codes and stand up to moisture, rust, and structural fatigue.” ▶

Lag screw replacements such as the Simpson Strong-Tie Strong-Drive SDS Heavy-Duty Connector screw, SWD Double-Threaded screw and SDWS Timber and SDWH Timber-Hex structural wood screws install without pre-drilling and are reported to offer superior holding power.



OPPOSITE PAGE: FastenMaster recently introduced AutoFeed Cortex for Capped Composites like Trex and Cortex for TimberTech Fascia.

Timber Drive from Simpson Strong-Tie is a fastening tool for stand-up operation while driving large structural screws. It's designed for heavy-duty jobs that require repetitive fastening, such as decks, docks, boardwalks, piers and flooring, as well as metal straps to wood, engineered wood, or mass timber panels.

How people are living, especially in a post-COVID-19 world, is also having an impact on fastener development trends, as manufacturers look for way to meet evolving homeowner needs. As Jared Kamp, general fasteners category manager for Midwest Fasteners, explains, "In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Americans have migrated into apartments and smaller rental units, driven largely by a chronic shortage of affordable, entry-level homes. This shift isn't just a demographic blip—it's a structural transformation in the housing market, fueled by Wall Street-backed real estate investment funds chasing high-yield rental returns. While this boom in multifamily construction has reshaped skylines and suburbs alike, it hasn't translated into a major lift

for the DIY fastener industry. Why? Because new apartment builds are typically handled by large contractors using commercial-grade materials, leaving little room for homeowner-driven projects."

"That said, there are bright spots," he adds. "Backyard entertainment spaces—think decks, pergolas, and outdoor kitchens—continue to thrive, especially as renters and homeowners alike seek to maximize their living space."

Present and future challenges

While new product development brings solutions, the realities of the construction environment are creating challenges for fastener manufacturers, and LBM dealers should start now to put into place steps to help minimize these potential headaches. As Robert Shirley, North America product marketing of fastening systems and OEM market segment for Simpson Strong-Tie, points out, "The construction industry is in the midst of a number of economic, operational, and functional shifts driven by a tightening labor market, rising costs, and mounting pressure for jobsite efficiency."

Tariffs and supply chains

One of the biggest challenges facing the fastener industry is that of tariffs and supply chain uncertainty. "Tariffs and uncertainty [risk] are the biggest issues, with interest rates right behind those," says Brett Katsma, product manager for SPAX Engineered Fasteners. "The tariffs are causing ripple effects across the supply chain causing many challenges for LBM dealers and their customers, one being pricing uncertainty which is unsettling when quoting projects with long lead times."

While at the forefront of today's headlines, tariffs are poised to be an industry disruptor for some time. "One of the most pressing challenges continues to be the instability of global supply chains, a ripple effect of ongoing tariff tensions and the economic slowdown in China," explains Midwest Fasteners' Kamp. "These aren't just abstract geopolitical issues—they're reshaping how and where products are sourced, manufactured, and delivered. While many global companies have wisely diversified their supply chains—shifting production to countries like Vietnam, India, and Indonesia—China remains the backbone of global manufacturing. It still produces a staggering volume of essential components that power industries worldwide." ▶

DeckWise has launched additions to its product line that are intended for thermally modified wood. The design of its ThermoClip Hidden Deck Fastener includes no aggressive sharp metal teeth that can dig in, gouge the board, or cause breakage.



CAMO's new Countersinking Deck Screws feature a nibbed, countersinking head for a clean finish, reverse upper threads for strong pull-down power, aggressive lower threads, and a slashpoint tip for fast starts and reduced splitting. And they're coated in CAMO's proprietary PROTECH coating to resist corrosion from the elements and chemically treated wood.



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



"But here's the catch: if China's economic malaise deepens and begins to threaten political stability, the shockwaves won't stop at its borders," he continues. "Every country, every industry, and every supply chain could feel the impact. It's a high-stakes balancing act—diversify too slowly, and you're vulnerable; move too fast, and you risk losing access to critical infrastructure. In short, while the shift away from China is creating new opportunities across Asia, the world is still deeply interconnected. The challenge isn't just about finding new suppliers—it's about building resilient, flexible systems that can weather whatever comes next."

Vincent Pantaleo, director of sales, lumber and building materials for the Hillman Group, shares a similar viewpoint. "The main challenges

the fastener industry will face in the coming year that LBM dealers should be aware of are supply chain disruptions, raw material costs, technology advancements, consumer expectations, demand for customization, and market competition. LBM dealers should be proactive in addressing these challenges by building strong supplier relationships, staying informed on industry trends and regulations, and investing in technology and workforce development."

DeckWise's Kabel agrees. "The biggest challenges are the ever-changing tariffs, rising manufacturing costs, and supply chain instability. Many top fastener brands rely heavily on imported materials or offshore production, which leaves them vulnerable to pricing shocks and delivery delays. Dealers will soon feel the effects of unpredictable cost increases and limited availability."

Price volatility

Obviously, tariffs and supply chain disruptions have an impact on price, both for the LBM dealer and for their customers. "Although inflation is slowing, prices for building materials—including fasteners—remain elevated," says ITW's Romanski. "This affects both contractor budgets and homeowner spending. Offering engineered fastener options at bulk pricing and educational support on product efficiency and performance can help customers make informed choices saving them time and money in the long run."

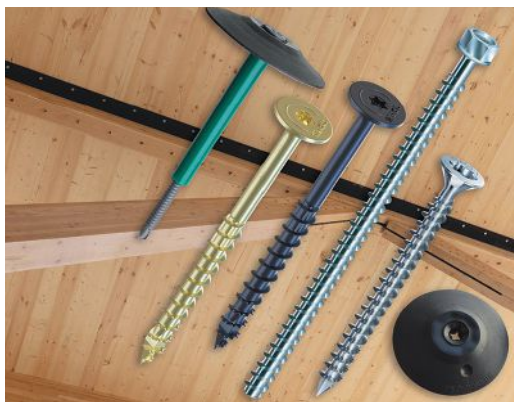
"Potential changes in trade policy could disrupt overseas manufacturing, leading to supply delays and inconsistent product quality," says Lisa Martin, marketing director for Maze Nails. "This creates risk for dealers who rely heavily on imported inventory. At Maze, we're proud to offer 100% American-made nails and maintain robust inventory levels—so our customers can count on reliable supply and consistent quality, even when imports fall short."


"Given the current challenges, I'd recommend that LBM dealers avoid relying on a single supplier for all their fastener needs," she adds. "Instead, prioritize suppliers who can consistently deliver both quality and availability—especially when it comes to meeting building codes, regulatory requirements and increasingly higher customer expectations. A diversified, dependable supply chain is key to keeping customers satisfied and projects on schedule. And buying made in USA is very attractive to many Americans." ▶

The GRK Fasteners AugerBolt Through Bolt Fastening System enables users to drill the installation hole and install code-approved through bolts in one step for greater productivity. The patented recessed tip revolutionizes through bolted installation, simplifying the notched 6x6 connection for pro deck builders, according to the company.



SPAX offers a variety of fasteners specifically designed for mass timber applications. According to the manufacturer, fasteners such as their XR Series, XF Series, and XC Series groups offer unparalleled strength and precision for secure and efficient assembly.





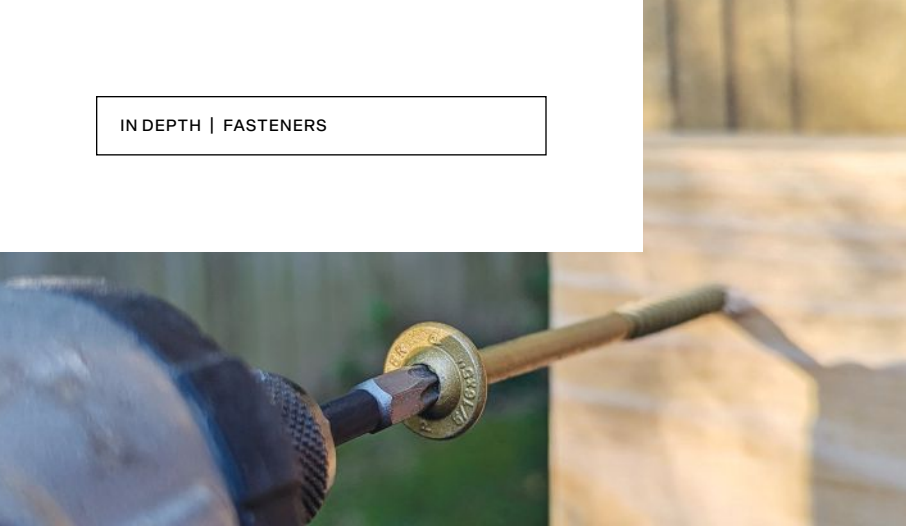
Recommend hot-dipped
galvanized fasteners coupled with
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From Midwest Fastener, SaberDrive Platinum structural screws are tested according to AC233 and AC257 standards for structural properties and corrosion resistance (ICC ESR #-4214), guaranteeing long-lasting performance in demanding environments. Suitable for engineered wood-to-wood connections, they are code-listed under IBC/IRC in accordance with ICC-ES AC233 & AC257.

And as Pan American Screw’s Lail reminds, these aforementioned tariffs are forcing fastener manufacturers to pass on price increases. “Right now the main challenge our Marmon Construction Fastener Group is facing is the 50% to 95% tariffs that are being imposed on all steel and aluminum products coming in from foreign countries. These additional costs are partially passed on to the consumer based on the impact they have on our cost. Products like light duty fasteners (decking and drywall screws) are difficult to produce domestically and remain competitive. We are moving many of our long length structural fasteners currently being made in Taiwan to be produced in our own factory in Ashland, OH.”

There are steps that LBM dealers can take to help ease price pain and product availability issues. “One measure of stability and added security is to hold deeper inventories in stock and be more open to higher priced North American manufactured goods,” recommends Midwest Fasteners’ Kamp. “Consider the in-aisle shopping experience. Retailers should be working with manufacturers and suppliers to make the fastener aisle more intuitive. That means color-coded packaging, clearer instructions, and project-specific groupings—so homeowners can find what they need without guesswork.”

For LBM dealers, points out FastenMaster’s DiSanto, delivering a shopping experience

that helps customers quickly find solutions while exploring innovative building options is key. “With the rapid evolution of fastening products, staying current can be challenging. Professional builders rely on their dealers for guidance in selecting code-compliant, material-compatible fasteners, so it’s important that LBM dealers not only stay current with manufacturing innovation but also continually work to educate store employees about the new and innovative products and the real tangible benefits that these products offer to pros.”

Strategies for success

Considering all these variables, it may feel like the cards are stacked against you. There are however, paths to success. Fastener manufacturers stress the importance for LBM dealers to develop a basic yet strong playbook to enable them to meet these challenges head on. As the Hillman Group’s Pantaleo recommends, to consistently meet customer needs for fasteners amidst the challenges within the LBM market, dealers should focus on several key strategies, including maintaining a strong supply source, staying informed on trends, providing customer education, offering options and quality, and delivering competitive pricing along with outstanding after-sale support.

“Focusing on these areas will enable dealers to effectively address customer needs, stand out in the market, and build lasting customer relationships,” he explains. “Make sure you have the right assortment of products and inventory to support your customers. With ongoing supply chain disruptions and raw material cost challenges, it’s essential to be aware of these issues and ensure all products are priced correctly in your store.”

Additionally, with the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, it’s more important than ever for lumberyards to stock fasteners that meet the highest performance standards, ITW’s Romanski points out. “This includes products with ICC-certified ratings, stainless steel, or specialty coatings—such as GRK’s Stainless Steel, Climatek or Paslode’s hot-dipped and mechanically galvanized options. These solutions are essential for ensuring code-compliant builds and retrofits, giving contractors the confidence they need and providing homeowners with lasting peace of mind. In today’s environment, basic electro-galvanized screws or nails simply aren’t enough to meet the demands of resilient construction.”

Maze Nails has recently expanded its product lineup in response to growing demand for high-grade stainless steel nails—particularly for coastal applications where corrosion resistance is critical. It has added several new options to its stainless steel line, available in both hand-driven and collated.



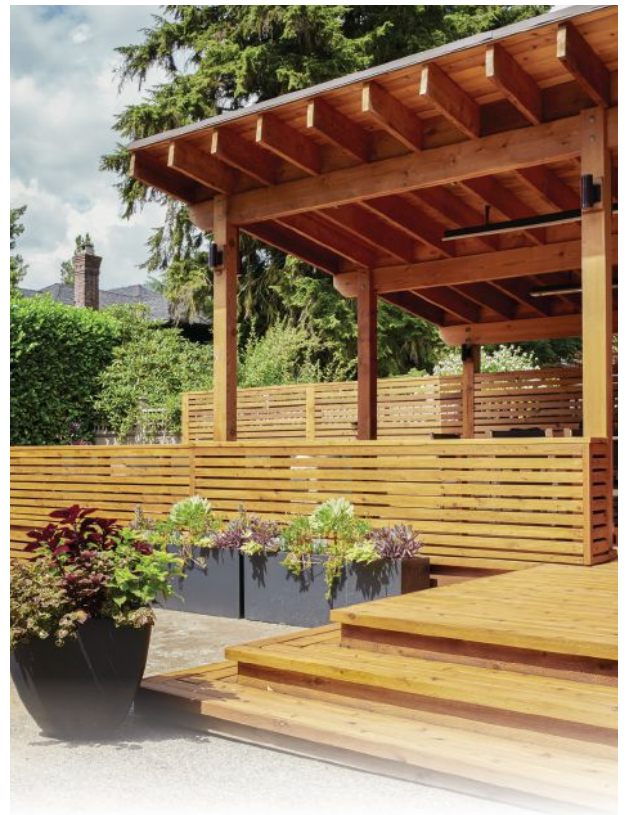


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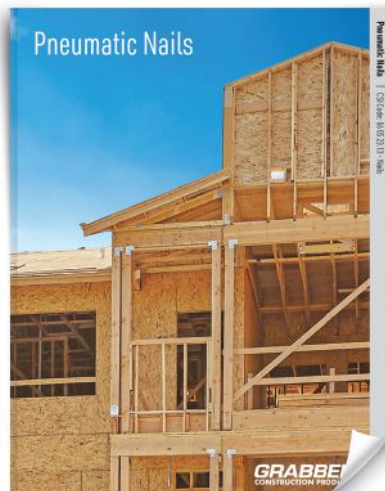
Pan American Screw's Big Timber division had just released its new Truss screw. They are available in a #14 x 4-1/2" and a #14 x 6", are fully threaded and have a high visibility coating. The 4-1/2" Truss screw is for fastening the stud to the top or bottom plate and the 6" version is used for double top plate to truss or rafter connections.

Rely on relationships

Of highest importance for LBM dealers, say most fastener manufacturers, is developing and relying on relationships, both with your suppliers and with your customers. Beyond merely procuring product, the ideal fastener supplier can serve as a source of education that can then be passed on to the end user.

"I believe one of the most important things our LBM partners need to focus on is educating themselves and their customers on the value that a particular fastener delivers to the builder," says Pan American Screw's Lail. "Finding and identifying a fastener supplier that not only ships you product, but one that helps sell and educate you and your customers adds a tremendous amount of value to the LBM dealer. Knowing and understanding what fasteners perform best in different applications ensures your customer is purchasing exactly what they need for their project."

Grabber now offers a broader range of pneumatic nails, staples, and coil nails—engineered for framing, molding, and general wood construction. To support this launch, it developed a new Pneumatic Nail catalog—designed for quick reference and containing the technical specs and submittals pros need on the job.



The fastener industry continues to be fragmented, and ongoing supply chain disruptions along with tariff-related price fluctuations can lead to uncertainty and inconsistent shelf availability, ITW's Romanski points out. "To navigate these challenges, lumberyards can benefit from building strong partnerships with dependable distribution networks that offer a broad selection of premium fastener brands. These partners should provide innovative, productivity-enhancing products that help streamline operations and ensure the right inventory is consistently available."

FastenMaster's DiSanto shares a similar opinion. "LBM dealers need to establish close partnerships with the trusted brands that are investing heavily in new product development and in product innovation," he says. "Most of those companies will be happy to host training and education sessions for the dealers to discuss product features and benefits. Dealers are where the 'rubber hits the road,' so it is critical that LBM dealer staff are well educated about these new products in terms of productivity, ergonomics, code compliance, application techniques, etc., so that they can in turn educate the pro contractors who look to them as the experts."

IN THE END, say manufacturers, success with fasteners for the LBM dealer comes from a basic strategy that relies on two core principles: product education and staying ahead of material trends. "Contractors and builders often don't have time to research the technical sides of new materials like thermally modified wood," says DeckWise's Kabel. "They rely on LBM dealers for guidance and recommendations that ensure long-term performance and job-site success. Dealers who understand the advantages of pairing the right fastener with the right material will stand out as trusted partners. Likewise, offering informed product support, updated training, and even basic display signage or demo installations can make a major impact."

And while no one can predict exactly what the next year will bring, points out CAMO's Venkatesan, the dealers who stay closest to their customers will be best positioned to succeed. "That means actively communicating with builders to forecast through the year and avoid being under inventoried. In today's environment, stock buffering can be a competitive edge." ■

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MILGARD AX650 MOVING GLASS WALL SYSTEM

MILGARD Windows and Doors, part of the MITER Brands portfolio and manufacturer of vinyl, fiberglass, and aluminum windows and patio doors, announces the launch of its new AX650 Moving Glass Wall System. According to MILGARD, the AX650 features maximum heights up to 10 feet and max panel widths of 5 feet. The AX650 system is available in three configurations: pocket glass, stacking glass, and bi-fold glass doors. The bi-fold is available in up to five panels, while the pocket and stacking configurations support four panels for expansive openings. In addition, the AX650 offers dual glazing. A Title 24 Energy Package is also available, making the system compliant with California’s energy standards. milgard.com



CERTAINTEED HEARTFELT GROOVE

CertainTeed has announced the expansion of its HeartFelt felt ceiling and wall system with the launch of HeartFelt Groove. Crafted from non-woven PES felt fibers, HeartFelt Groove is GREENGUARD Gold certified, Cradle to Cradle Certified Bronze, and meets Class A fire performance standards (ASTM E84 and CAN/ULC S102). According to CertainTeed, HeartFelt Groove is available in five shades of grey, and is designed to be easily reusable and 100% recyclable. Panels are available in an 8-foot length and can be field-cut for custom installation. certainteed.com

STEALTHLOCK UNIVERSAL DECK CLIP

In collaboration with CAMO, Deckorators’ StealthLock Universal Deck Clip is reported to adapt effortlessly to grooved boards in composite, PVC, and hardwood materials. Its universal compatibility allows installers to move between board types without changing fasteners, while its alignment with CAMO tools allows for a faster, cleaner, and virtually error-proof installation. According to Deckorators, the clip’s low-profile design not only enhances aesthetics but also supports flexible deck layouts across multiple joist types, and the clips are backed by a lifetime limited warranty. deckorators.com



MFM ULTRA HT WIND & WATER SEAL

MFM Building Products’ Ultra HT Wind & Water Seal recently achieved a Class A Fire Rating for use with Class A standard 3-tab and architectural asphalt shingles per ASTM E108/ICC-ES AC188. Ultra HT is a 45-mil, self-adhered roofing underlayment for use in steep-slope roofing and re-roofing installations. The product features a durable cross-laminated polyethylene top film with a traction coating for excellent walkability. The specially formulated mastic is high-temperature rated to 250°F for use under metal and tile applications. mfmbp.com



IQ VISE

According to Work IQ Tools, the manufacturer of the IQ Vise, the vise was designed to help trade professionals work easier, faster, and smarter. Crafted with hardened steel and cast aluminum for durability and lightweight portability, the vise features steel jaw plates that provide a secure grip for various materials. A “Quick Cam” reportedly allows for easy locking and unlocking of the articulating ball, facilitating quick and precise positioning for the perfect angle. The “IQ Lok” locks the ball in eight different working positions, preventing movement even during projects with higher torque values, up to 130 ft-lbs. And it includes double-sided IQ Vise Jaws featuring textured rubber for a firm grip on wood and flat objects on one side and rubber grooves and angles on the reverse side for securing pipes and materials of various shapes and sizes. workiqtools.com



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CORTEX PLUGS FOR TIMBERTECH COMPOSITE FASCIA

FastenMaster's Cortex hidden fastening line is now available in 18 colors for TimberTech's composite fascia boards in the Legacy, Reserve, Terrain+, Prime+, and Premier lines. According to FastenMaster, Cortex plugs for composite fascia are engineered specifically for fascia applications and are designed to accommodate fascia expansion and contraction over time. The new Cortex Fascia Plugs are available in packages of 105 plugs, 100 screws, one setting tool and one Cortex counterbore tool, or enough to install 50 linear feet of fascia. fastenmaster.com



MAXIMO ACCOYA DECKING

GMX Group has expanded the Maximo brand from tropical hardwoods and thermally modified wood to now include Maximo Accoya. The new line of decking will round out the brand's outdoor living offerings, distributed through GMX's wholesale division, Global Forest LBM. According to the manufacturer, Maximo Accoya undergoes an acetylation process that modifies the wood at the molecular level to enhance its natural beauty and durability. It resists rot, fungi, and termites, and endures extreme weather. It reportedly features superior heat performance compared to synthetic decking, stays cool underfoot, and is backed by a 50-year warranty. maximowood.com



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**PLY GEM 1500 VINYL COLLECTION
ALL-BLACK WINDOWS AND
PATIO DOORS**

Cornerstone Building Brands has recently introduced black interior and exterior options for the Ply Gem 1500 Vinyl Collection Windows and Patio Doors. This series of doors and windows feature a coextruded black interior and exterior. According to the manufacturer, this coextrusion technology provides UV protection and exceptional durability, along with proven color retention and weather resistance, as the color is integrated directly into the vinyl during manufacturing. As well, the Ply Gem 1500 Vinyl Collection is designed to contribute to overall energy efficiency with a range of glass packages, from Low-E for solar heat deflection to HPMAX triple-pane for ultimate thermal efficiency, and can be ordered with ENERGY STAR certification for any climate zone. plygem.com



QC SHAKE EXTERIOR CLADDING

New from parent company Derby Building Products, QCshake replaces the TandoShake brand. According to the manufacturer, QCshake's performance and style will remain the same for its Hand Split, Rustic Cedar 9, RoughSawn Cedar Single & Dual, and Cape Cod Perfection products. QCshake is reported to be impervious to moisture, resistant to severe weather, and an ideal solution for everything from ground contact to roofline applications. A low-maintenance shake with the look of painted cedar shingles, QCshake is available in a wide range of solid and variegated color options to complement a variety of home styles. qcshake.com



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EVA-LAST COMPOSITE FENCING

According to Eva-Last, its Evolver and Oasis bamboo composite fencing systems combine the beauty of timber with the durability and ease of advanced composite technology. Unlike traditional timber, Eva-Last fencing is reported to never need sanding, sealing, or staining. It won't crack, warp, or attract termites. Made from a blend of fast-growing bamboo and recycled plastics, these systems are designed to outlast timber while reducing deforestation and landfill waste. eva-last.com



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GAF	27	877.423.7663	gaf.com
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Hubtex	60	540.898.8636	hubtex.com
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* Manufacturers Reserve Supply	13, BB	973.373.1881	mrslumber.com
Masonite Corporation	39	800.663.3667	masonite.com
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Your longtime operations guru who's nearing retirement absolutely refuses to share his knowledge with the sharp young pro who is under his tutelage. What would you do?

THE CASE OF THE RELUCTANT MENTOR

AS THE NEWLY minted GM of a century-old lumberyard, you know that your company has a long, proud history of serving your market. You've witnessed many challenges our industry has faced during your 20-plus years with the company. Your goal is to meet emerging challenges head-on during your tenure, and to leave the company stronger when you move forward to your next chapter.

It didn't take long for you to realize the quantity and the intensity of serious challenges facing LBM dealers today. At the top of your list is the reality that many longtime members of your team are nearing retirement, and when they're ready for their next chapter, they'll take with them decades of invaluable knowledge. Thanks to state-of-the-art technology and an active social media presence, your company is fortunate to have attracted many strong young pros. As you see it, your challenge (and your opportunity) is for the experienced veterans on your team to pass along their years of knowledge to those who will be filling their shoes.

You and your team worked quickly to craft a mentorship program, and the early response has been very positive. The older, more experienced workers are pleased at how their knowledge is being welcomed and absorbed by their younger colleagues. And the appreciation that these future leaders have for their older coworkers is genuine, which makes the whole process that much better.

Then there's Gus. He's been with your company as long as anyone can remember, and he is the undisputed expert on LBM operations—a fact he wields whenever he feels threatened, which is often. Unfortunately, he seems especially threatened by Jill, the young pro he's supposed to be mentoring. "If I tell you how I do everything, then what do they need me for?" he hisses.

Though you've assured Gus that no one is gunning for his job, his continued obstinance is frustrating for you, and is making Jill rethink her decision to go to work for your lumberyard. What would you do?



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Demand. Sit down with Gus and make it clear that knowledge-sharing with Jill and others on your team is an expectation, not an option. Discuss consequences if he refuses.

Switch. Pair Jill with another aging veteran in a different department who is willing to share their knowledge with a young pro just learning the business.

Reward. Tie Gus's pay, perks, or retirement package to his active participation in mentoring Jill and other young pros. A carrot can be more effective than a stick.

Shadow. Encourage Jill to quietly observe Gus's daily work, so she can pick up knowledge without his active participation. Perhaps Gus will soften up and play along.

PHOTO: @ISTOCK.COM/ALVAREZ

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

They said we were 2% high • With all these takeoffs I gotta do, I don't have any time to prospect • Until mortgage rates come down, there's not much I can do • You can't forecast because there's an inherent unknowability in sales • They said they're happy with their current supplier • Our prices are too high • The economy sure isn't helping right now • Builders are building less right now, what do you want me to do? • My builders already buy everything on Amazon • People don't want to talk to salespeople • Placing orders through our website is so hard to figure out • Builders don't want to buy online • I can't get hold of the decision-maker • I didn't have the right number • I had to drive three hours out to a job because the yard forgot to add the base seal • The subcontractor is new • My inside team can't do it right, so I gotta do it myself • No one returns phone calls these days • I tried the CRM, I prefer my notebook and a long to-do list • I get better results with the old-fashioned door-to-door • All these big guys buy solely on price • If we can't offer rebates, we're not competing • What are we supposed to do about tariffs? • Gatekeepers block every call • They're not interested in our product • It's all LinkedIn and Instagram and social selling these days • They want the lowest price • The real deal is a discount • I would've hit my goal; Operations couldn't get three jobs out in time and that right there cost me \$50K • Our competition has to be doing way better • Some of our subcontractors are moving out of state • New builders moving in to build here • Making a job means wasting time with there's too much uncertainty • No one wants cold calls anymore • I've been making myself goals but the number of jobs is so low • We won't win any new work with this price • They're not interested in our product • They come to all these meetings • The only guy who will talk to me over there can't say yes • Sent them the proposal two weeks ago and they don't even beep • We need to talk about buying more inventory • They said no • Couldn't get a lead • I sent a team. Most of them didn't get the target • These guys. I'm not gonna beg for the business • Our prices are too high • They're not interested in our product • There are still ticks about our product • 2008 • The market is pretty saturated already • We oughta think twice about disrupting that • Nobody wants to meet face-to-face anymore • Everybody knows our competitors have bigger budgets than we do • If only we had _____, I'd be able to close more deals • The last person I spoke to over there wasn't interested, so it's pointless to call back • These permit reports are old • By the time I train someone else to do it, I coulda just gotten it done myself • My builders only want to talk to me • The leads are bad • They have more locations than we do • The product just isn't as good as the competition • The market is pretty saturated already • Our marketing department doesn't do anything to help us sell • We need better PK training • The timing just isn't

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