

# LBM JOURNAL<sup>®</sup>

FEBRUARY 2026 | \$15 U.S. | LBMJOURNAL.COM



## DEALER OF THE YEAR 2026

CATEGORY: \$50MM-\$100MM

**RED RIVER LUMBER**

**DISCOVER THE DESIGN AND  
MATERIAL TRENDS DRIVING  
TRIM AND MOULDING**

**LEARN HOW LBM PROS ARE  
PUTTING AI TO WORK**

TEAM MEMBERS OF RED RIVER LUMBER,  
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FEBRUARY 2026



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**CATEGORY: \$50MM-\$100MM**  
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# DEALER OF THE YEAR 2026

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PUBLISHER / EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
**Rick Schumacher**  
Rick@LBMJournal.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
**Richard Hart**  
Design@LBMJournal.com

MANAGING EDITOR  
**Wendy Sturges**  
Wendy@LBMJournal.com

SOCIAL MEDIA & PODCAST MANAGER  
**Sally Lacey**  
Sally@LBMJournal.com

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

DIGITAL COORDINATOR & SALES OPS  
**Tina Saucke**  
Tina@LBMJournal.com

JUNIOR ART DIRECTOR  
**Lindsay Scott**  
Lindsay@LBMJournal.com

OPERATIONS SPECIALIST  
**Carey Milesenko**  
Carey@LBMJournal.com

### MEDIA CONSULTANTS

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER  
**Jodie Cook Redwood**  
Jodie@LBMJournal.com  
800.324.3492

NORTHEAST + SOUTHEAST

**Mike Schwartz**  
Mschwartz@LBMJournal.com  
310.487.2385

CENTRAL + WEST

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# CONTRIBUTORS



DUDLEY



DAVIS



HARTMANN



KATHREIN



CARY



SOULE



WAGNER

## Rick Davis

### **Stop Bidding and Start Proposing** | P. 16

Rick Davis is the contributing sales editor for *LBM Journal* and regarded by many as the leading sales trainer and consultant in the LBM industry. He has been the owner of Building Leaders, Inc. for 20 years and trained tens of thousands of salespeople in our industry.

## Thea Dudley

### **Credit Across Countries** | P. 20

Thea Dudley started out working with her subcontractor Dad but quickly realized manual labor wasn't for her. She moved into the power seat—granting credit and collecting money. Over her 30+ year career, she's worked for manufacturers, dealers, and contractors by leading credit teams and improving cash processes.

## Bradley Hartmann

### **Five Lessons Learned from a Top Sales Shark** | P. 18

Bradley Hartmann has written 15 books and hosts both "The Construction Leadership", and "The Craft of LBM Sales" podcasts. He advises LBM dealers, distributors, and manufacturers across the country and trains thousands of commercial and residential construction leaders annually through his executive coaching and consulting, online training programs, custom workshops, and keynote speeches.

## Russ Kathrein

### **The Leadership Butterfly Effect** | P. 24

Russ Kathrein is vice president of lumber & building materials at Do it Best, based in Fort Wayne, IN. He is passionate about the art of leadership and the human element of business. He has successfully led operations by first getting the people part correct and aligning the team, then focusing on fundamentals.

## John D. Wagner

### **What's the Difference Between OPEX and COGS?** | P. 22

John D. Wagner is a managing director for 1stWEST Mergers & Acquisitions, which has transacted \$1.5 billion+ in deals with a specialty in distribution and LBM sectors. John is the author of 25 books and 2,600+ articles published in several major outlets. His most popular book is "M&A Basics For People in a (BIG) Hurry!".

## Dan Cary

### **In Depth: Trim and Moulding** | P. 38

Dan Cary is a writer, photographer, videographer, designer, and builder, based in Minneapolis, MN. He has spent the past 25 years creating content for multiple remodeling, home improvement, and woodworking publications and product manufacturers.

## Shane Soule

### **A Day in the Life with AI** | P. 26

Shane Soule has over 25 years of experience in the building component industry. His deep industry knowledge comes from hands-on experience across nearly every role in the business. Today, Shane serves as president of ProTec Panel and Truss. Under his leadership, ProTec has grown its reputation for quality and innovation in panel and truss manufacturing.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OUR EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS



## NOT ALL DISTRACTIONS LOOK LIKE THIS.

Most salespeople never master their time. Managers just shrug and say, “Well, find something that works for you.” And most reps never do. That’s why we built **The Weekly Game Plan**. Not a hack. Not a theory. It’s a 12-month system.

One: A physical planner designed specifically for LBM sales pros. Two: A short online training course that makes it simple to implement. Three: Every 60 days, **Bradley Hartmann** leads live coaching with a community of LBM sales pros facing the

same battles you are. It’s \$497. If you’re accountable for selling millions and won’t invest \$497 to take control of your time... Fine. Stay distracted. The puppy will keep you company while your competitors steal your accounts.



[theweeklygameplan.com](http://theweeklygameplan.com)

## FROM THE PUBLISHER

**IN EARLY 2024**, a reader shared that their company was testing the waters with AI and had found some practical uses for it in their business. They were curious how other LBM pros viewed this tech—as a potentially useful tool, or as something that has no place in their company. It was a great question, and we didn't know the answer, so we asked you via our Real Issues. Real Answers. survey.

The results were enlightening. The majority (55%) said that their company's view on AI was "Wait and see." The next biggest group (23%) reported to be "Testing the waters." The third most respondents chose "Scary. Not for us." The smallest group, just 9%, said, "We're on board."

At about that time, during a publisher's roundtable discussion at a media conference, the moderator asked for a show of hands for publishers actively using AI. Every person at the table rose their hand. Except me. Then, those who rose their hands shared how they were using it. For many, it was a tool they used every day. Clearly, I had some catching up to do.

Since then, in two short years, AI has become a dominant topic of conversation in the LBM community. A panel discussion on AI at LBM Strategies 2024 was a hit, so for our 2025 event, we upped it to a 90-minute workshop by John Marshall and Shane Soule on Leveraging AI to Drive Efficiency & Profitability, with a bonus 90-minute AI roundtable led by John Marshall. Both sessions were strongly attended and earned high ratings from our attendees.

To get a feel for how attitudes toward AI have evolved in the past two years, this issue features an updated Real Issues survey on Integrating AI (pg. 28). If you'd like to learn how other LBM pros are using AI or are curious to see how widely-used it is, this article is a great place to start.

Lastly, if you wonder how actual LBM pros use AI in real life, turn to page 26 for "A Day in the Life with AI." In this insightful piece, Shane Soule shares what AI platform he uses, with seven specific examples of how he uses it and why. As Shane states: "AI hasn't changed what I decide. It's changed how fast I can move and how much context I have when I make decisions. Time saved goes into coaching my team and strategy."

If you're either passionately for or against AI as a business tool, I'd love to hear from you.

— Rick Schumacher  
Executive Editor & Publisher



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "R Schumacher". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

HAVE A QUESTION FOR RICK?  
RICK@LBMJOURNAL.COM



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R.P. LUMBER



PIERRE PART STORE



LUMMUS SUPPLY COMPANY

## BY THE YARD

**R.P. Lumber** opened its 91st and newest location in Carlyle, IL. The family-owned, full-service home center and building materials retailer recently completed an extensive remodel of the former Wiegman Ford property. Over the past eight months, R.P. Lumber has transformed the well-known building into a modern, full-service retail home center designed to serve both professional contractors and DIY homeowners.

Following a two-week register round-up campaign by **Damariscotta Hardware**, Damariscotta, ME., \$2,500 will support the work of Healthy Lincoln County. The funds were raised one checkout at a time and matched dollar-for-dollar by the Do it Best member store.

Georgia-based **Lummus Supply Company** is marking 100 years in business. According to the company, Robert H. Lummus, Sr., formed the company in 1925 and has since grown to include four additional locations with over 90 employees.

**84 Lumber** is announcing the opening of its newest door shop, strategically located near Austin, TX. The door shop marks a significant expansion of 84 Lumber's manufacturing and service capabilities in Central Texas. Spanning 85,000 square feet, the new door shop is designed to support the growing needs of single-family home builders and multifamily construction projects throughout the greater Austin metro and surrounding counties.

Louisiana-based **Pierre Part Store** has completed a store remodel with the help of co-op Do it Best. Their major store revamp consisted of reimagined aisles, fresh inventory, and a smoother, smarter shopping experience to drive sales and provide a better customer experience.

**MILGARD Windows and Doors** has completed a significant renovation of its fiberglass window and door production facility in Tacoma, WA. After removing all existing assets and refurbishing the entire 150,000-sq.-ft. facility, MILGARD installed state-of-the-art equipment to support several innovative new product launches, including the upcoming C700 Fiberglass Series windows and doors.

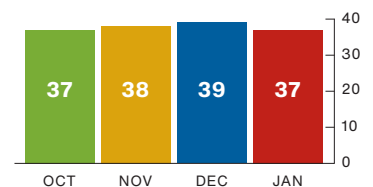
## INDUSTRY UPDATES

**LP Building Solutions** announced that charitable contributions in 2025 totaled more than \$1.6 million through the LP Foundation and other corporate giving efforts that support communities across the U.S. and Canada. This marks the sixth consecutive year of increased contributions and the second year in a row that donations surpassed \$1 million. The funding and product support reached more than 120 nonprofits and public schools.

**QXO, Inc.** announced that funds managed by affiliates of Apollo Global Management, Inc. and certain other investors have agreed to invest \$1.2 billion in QXO through a new series of convertible perpetual preferred stock. The investment strengthens QXO's financial flexibility in pursuing acquisition opportunities.

### Builder confidence down at the start of 2026

Builder confidence moved lower to start the year as affordability concerns continue to weigh heavily with buyers, and builders continue to contend with rising construction costs. Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes fell two points to 37 in January, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI).



### CORRECTION:

In the January 2026 issue of *LBM Journal*, on page 34, National Lumber Company's location should be listed as Baltimore, MD.

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FOLLOW, COMMENT, LIKE, AND TAG US. And send us your feedback to [Rick@LBMJournal.com](mailto:Rick@LBMJournal.com). Letters may be edited for length and clarity.





# HERE, IT'S "YES, WE CAN." NOT, "WISH WE COULD."

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**CULPEPER**  
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PEOPLE IN LBM



WHEAT



CHICK

**Guerry Lumber** has announced the promotion of **William “Will” Guerry Wheat** to president, following his successful four-year tenure as vice president of sales and operations. **Steve Chick**, the company’s current president, will continue with Guerry Lumber in a defined leadership role to support the transition and ongoing operations.



LOVELAND



KREOFSKY



DAVENPORT

After 42 years of dedicated service, **Maze Lumber** announced the company is marking the retirement of **Pete Loveland**, a fifth-generation member of the Maze family. Stepping into the role of general manager is **Andrew Kreofsky**, a sixth-generation family member who has been with Maze Lumber for nearly 18 years and most recently served as operations manager. **Amy Davenport**, who joined Maze Lumber in 2022, will take on Andrew’s former position.

**Spahn & Rose Lumber Company’s** longtime employee **Dave Sabers** is celebrating his 60th anniversary with the company at its Jesup, IA location. Sabers, now 78, joined the company shortly after graduating high school. He recently transitioned to a sales role within the company after working in management.



**Hancock Lumber** has welcomed **Curtis Pratt** in a newly-created safety director role. In this role, Curtis will lead Hancock Lumber’s safety team and oversee safety programs companywide, working in close partnership with team members across all locations.



**Jeske Hardware Distributors** has added **Jake Sitarz**, of Savage, MN, to the Jeske sales team as the account manager for the company’s Minnesota and Northern Iowa sales territory.



**LBM Advantage** has announced several strategic leadership additions and assignments to further strengthen its presence in the Southwest market:

**Justin Dishman** has been named forest products manager of the Conroe, TX office.

**Wade Dickert** joined as a forest products trader in Memphis, TN.

**Andy Polbos**, forest products operations and development manager, has also been assigned to the Conroe office.

**Cornerstone Building Brands** has announced the appointment of **Vishal Singh** as president of windows & doors.

**ECI Software Solutions, Inc.** announced the appointment of **Graham Younger** as chief revenue officer (CRO). Younger will lead ECI’s go-to-market strategy, bringing greater alignment across sales, customer success, and commercial operations as the company continues to scale.



**Tando Composites**, a division of Derby Building Products, has announced the promotion of **Michael Phillips** to regional sales manager for Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Phillips joined Tando Composites in January 2025 as senior territory sales manager.



**Owens Corning** announced that **José Méndez-Andino** has been promoted to executive vice president and chief innovation officer. Méndez-Andino has served as Owens Corning’s executive vice president and chief research and development officer since 2021.



**LP Building Solutions** announced the appointment of **Kaycee Casteel** as vice president of human resources. Casteel will oversee all HR functions, including workforce strategy, compliance with labor laws and company policies, and talent management across recruitment, retention and succession planning.



DISTRIBUTION NEWS

**Snavelly Forest Products** announced a strategic partnership with **Allura USA**, a manufacturer of fiber cement siding, and trim products. This collaboration will broaden Snavelly’s product offerings across North and South-Central Texas, including Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin, and into the Oklahoma City market.

## 2026 INDUSTRY EVENTS

### FEB 11-12

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

### FEB 17-19

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

### FEB 24

2026 WISCONSIN CONNECTION CONFERENCE  
Wisconsin Dells, WI | bldconnection.org

### MAR 2-4

LBM ADVANTAGE ANNUAL BUYING SHOW  
Nashville, TN | lbmadvantage.com

### MAR 6-8

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

### MAR 8-12

2026 CAMERON ASHLEY DEALER SHOW  
Orlando, FL | cameronashleybp.com

### MAR 10-12

LMC ANNUAL 2026  
Chicago, IL | lmc.net

### MAR 11

IDEAS SHOW  
King of Prussia, PA | ideasshow.net

### APR 26-29

NEXTGEN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE  
Kalispell, MT | lbmadvantage.com

### SEP 23-25

CONSTRUCTION SUPPLIERS ASSOCIATION 2026 CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW  
St. Simons Island, GA | gocsa.com

### SEP 25-28

DO IT BEST & TRUE VALUE FALL MARKET  
Indianapolis, IN | doitbestonline.com

### OCT 14-16

LBM STRATEGIES 2026 CONFERENCE  
Milwaukee, WI | lbmstrategies.com

### OCT 28-30

LMC EXPO 2026  
Philadelphia, PA | lmc.net

### NOV 9-11

FALL PLANNING CONFERENCE  
Everett, MA | lbmadvantage.com

### NOV 17-19

DECK EXPO  
New Orleans, LA | deckexpo.com

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## MERGERS + ACQUISITIONS

**Capps Home Building Center** has announced a significant expansion of its regional footprint into Central Virginia with the acquisition of **English's–The Complete Home Center** in Altavista, VA. The location will feature an updated showroom displaying products, such as windows, doors, composite decking, siding, and interior molding.

**Pacific Avenue Capital Partners** announced that an affiliate of Pacific Avenue, alongside **Cameron Ashley Building Products**, has acquired **Therm-All** from Incline Equity Partners. Therm-All is a fabricator and distributor of metal building insulation and related products serving commercial and industrial end markets.

**Builders FirstSource** has acquired the assets of **Premium Building Components**. The facilities in Ballston Spa, NY and Queensbury, NY are the first truss and wall panel operations in the state of New York for BFS.

**PrimeSource Brands** announced that it has acquired **Advantage Industries**, a provider of gate and fence hardware solutions. Based in Deerfield Beach, FL, Advantage specializes in innovative fence and gate hardware systems.

SEND NEWS AND UPDATES ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION TO [WENDY@LBMJOURNAL.COM](mailto:WENDY@LBMJOURNAL.COM)

## TOUGH CALL SOLUTIONS

NOV/DEC 2025 ISSUE SURVEY RESULTS FROM LBMJOURNAL.COM AND LINKEDIN.



### THE 11<sup>TH</sup> HOUR CANCELLATION

The day before your team was set to deliver a flatbed loaded with materials, the client changed their mind—and cancelled the order, telling your sales rep Jillian that entering the market was a “mistake.” Here’s how readers responded.

**Dig deeper. 41%**  
There’s more to the story than your market was “a mistake.” Ask and learn what’s really going on. Maybe you can save the sale and still move forward together.

**Enforce restock fee. 36%**  
Let them cancel, but enforce the 15% restocking fee, per the signed/dated purchase agreement. They won’t like it, but a deal’s a deal.

**Let ‘em walk. 18%**  
Work with them on this, and let them cancel, because when they change their mind and realize that your market is a perfect fit, you want to be their supplier.

**Bill ‘em. 5%**  
They can’t cancel an order of this size with less than 24 hours’ notice and expect to just walk away. Ask where they’d like their materials delivered, and bill ‘em.

### READER RESPONSES

“At my former company we had a 25% restocking fee and we required customers to pay 100% for all special order items in the cancelled order. All of this was spelled out in our credit application. I grew my former company from \$9MM to \$100MM in sales over 20 years while enforcing this policy, so don’t tell me this policy would hurt sales.”

— Jim Sobeck, Managing Member, New South Real Estate Partners

“There has to be more to it. I assume that Jillian has been to the jobsite to check it out for a foundation and check where the materials could be delivered. It seems like she was involved with the builder through the process. Jillian and the manager should do a face-to-face with the builder to be sure it wasn’t something that they did. I would want to find out if a competitor spoke with the builder and sweetened the deal. If so, that might be the time to talk about the restock fee.”

— Rich Goodwin, General Manager, Builders FirstSource

WANT TO SEE MORE TOUGH CALLS? CHECK OUT PAGE 48 OF THIS ISSUE, OR FIND MORE AT:

[lbmjournals.com/category/tough-call](http://lbmjournals.com/category/tough-call)



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**LBM TALKS**



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- Pro Plugs: Smooth and Woodgrain



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MAINTENANCE



WATER &  
GROUND SAFE



LIGHTWEIGHT



LOW THERMAL  
MOVEMENT



MADE IN USA

# You've Never Seen Trim Like This Before.

If your customers made a list of everything they would want in the perfect composite trim, would it look something like this?

- **Durable**
- **Lightweight**
- **Can be mitered**
- **Low maintenance**
- **Won't shrink or expand due to thermal changes**
- **Priced within the project budget**

Well, it's here: meet Arris™, the never-before-seen mineral-based composite trim from Edge.

## IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN

Arris is powered by proprietary **Surestone® technology**, an advanced mineral-based composite that has already proven its performance in high-quality decking. Now that same innovation is reshaping what builders can expect from exterior trim and providing a material engineered for the realities of modern construction.

Unlike PVC or wood composites, Arris is **inherently resistant to thermal expansion and contraction**. Whether boards are mitered tight or installed end to end, Arris keeps its shape and preserves its clean, finished appearance through scorching summers, bitter winters, and every condition in between. Snow or shine, it simply performs.



## PERFORMANCE FOR A LIFETIME

Arris features a durable, scratch-resistant white capstock that provides both protection and aesthetic appeal before it even gets to the lumberyard. With smooth and woodgrain textures available, installers can set it and forget it, with **no painting, sealing, or special preparation required**. The result is a trim solution that saves time today and minimizes maintenance tomorrow.

Builders can stand behind the quality because we do, too. Arris is backed by a **limited lifetime warranty** for real confidence in fewer callbacks and long-lasting exteriors.

## THE NEW BENCHMARK IN EXTERIOR TRIM

For professionals who expect uncompromising durability, stability, and beauty, Arris is more than another option: it is the new benchmark for exterior trim.

Visit the Edge booth W2567 in the West Hall at IBS to see it in person or get all the details at [ufpEDGE.com/arris](http://ufpEDGE.com/arris).

[ufpEDGE.com](http://ufpEDGE.com)



Get more information on Arris



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY #3

## A STORY ABOUT CONTINUING A LEGACY

When people ask what makes Morris Hardware special, I start with our story. Founded in 1845, our store has served McConnelsville for 180 years and is one of the oldest family-owned hardware businesses in the country. Today, Tom Schanken—our founder's sixth-generation descendant—and I are committed to carrying that legacy forward.

We've endured wars, depressions, pandemics, and the rise of big-box competitors, but our small-town spirit and commitment to neighbors have never wavered. Our customers — contractors, farmers, and DIYers—are the heart of Main Street, and we're proud to serve them.

Still, even a historic business must adapt. When our previous supplier could no longer support our needs, we sought a partner who shared our values. We found that in Orgill. I first met the company through our rep, Jake Thompson, whose genuine, no-pressure approach made the decision easy when it came time to change.

Orgill helped modernize key departments, update assortments, and refine pricing while respecting our independence.

At 180 years and counting, Morris Hardware is stronger than ever—proof that personal service and community connection remain timeless, and that we've found the right partner to help us continue that legacy.

*Shayna Roberts*

**Shayna Roberts**

Co-Owner, Morris Hardware | McConnelsville, Ohio

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BY RICK DAVIS

**EVER WONDER WHY** so many builders foist constant emergencies on your inside staff? Curious to know why it is so difficult to get customers to adhere to your policies? Do you have salespeople struggling with your standard credit terms? If these questions plague the profitability of your organization, you may be having a problem with the terms of your “marriage.”

## STOP BIDDING AND START PROPOSING

Most folks agree that salespeople are in an open-the-relationship business rather than a close-the-deal business. Our goal is not one order; but many. This means treating the start of the business relationship like a marriage. There are expectations that, if left undefined, start to grind away at the trust and quality of the relationship.

Speed is the enemy of profit, and a rush to take orders often creates a relationship fraught with mistakes and eventual antipathy. The buyer’s original acceptance of the price was based on a tacit expectation that rushed orders, emergency deliveries, and challenging situations would be dealt with as the top priority by you, the supplier. The failure to clarify expectations results in chaos and friction that hampers profitability for both parties.

Worse yet, the speed to launch a relationship based on price precludes the salesperson from establishing premium value to justify a higher price than the competition. Without justification to pay more, the only rationale available to the buyer is the bottom-line price.

To this, the best solution is to stop bidding and start proposing. A bid is a price, whereas a proposal is the offer to launch a relationship on terms beneficial to both the buyer and supplier. The proposal is an agreement outlining the objectives of the buyer, the capabilities of the seller, expectations of performance, and the cost-saving efficiency (for the buyer) that will result. Thus the relationship can be managed more efficiently.

Too often salespeople promise the best “service” without ever defining what that means. The problem is that everyone makes the same promise, thus allowing buyers to believe all suppliers are equal and therefore nothing more than commodities.

Service is proven, not promised. The best evidence that the future will be brighter with you is a proposal that differentiates the value of your offer as greater than the price; it is the total profit of doing business. There are four components of a proposal that enable the salesperson to differentiate significantly from the competition.

**1. What Was Heard and Observed.** This simple practice comes from Strategic Planning 101. It is a definition of the current situation and, in this case, a chance for the salesperson to prove they have taken a consultative approach to the buyer’s business by listing and understanding of the builder’s goals, operational practices, uniqueness, and the role of key players within the organization.

**2. Objectives.** On the surface, this would seem as simple as promising on-time delivery in full (OTIF). But there are deeper and more meaningful considerations to amplify. The products and services should define how the process of dealing with you and your branch provides the builder a competitive advantage, ease of doing business, operational efficiencies, and lower total cost. In short, the objective of your proposal should link your deep understanding of the prospect’s business to higher profits.

**3. Roles and Responsibilities.** Instead of presuming orders will be placed adequately for OTIF, a definition of protocols should be established. This is an opportunity for the salesperson to define deadlines for ordering, a cadence for communication (e.g., weekly Zoom calls to discuss upcoming projects and product needs), and the capabilities to handle emergencies in a mutually beneficial way (e.g., customer pickups rather than deliveries).

**4. Pricing and Products.** This is the first page to which the potential new customer will flip. Therefore, a proposal should be hand-delivered with your explanation of ways you will help your prospect succeed.

A rock-solid relationship with a customer is like a rock-solid marriage. It’s important to define the relationship before it begins. As Ben Franklin once said, “Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and half-shut afterwards.” Try proposing instead of bidding, and you will enjoy more long-term relationship success.

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

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BY BRADLEY HARTMANN

# FIVE LESSONS LEARNED FROM A TOP SALES SHARK



**IMAGINE A TOYOTA SEQUOIA.** It's like a 4Runner on steroids—17 feet long, nearly seven feet wide, weighing 5,600 pounds, and as tall as an NBA point guard.

Now imagine something bigger. Faster. A predator shaped by millions of years of evolution, slicing through saltwater at speeds that would embarrass Usain Bolt. A female great white shark.

Marine biologists don't want to imagine what this shark does all day—they want to know. To understand its behavior, they have to tag it.

Sales leaders interested in the science of sales success face a similar problem. They see the lag measures: quotes, orders, and revenue. But the lead measures remain hidden.

So, my team and I did what marine biologists do: We tagged a shark.

We found a top LBM sales hunter who agreed to let us study him for 30 days. We tracked every call, email, text, mile driven, and customer interaction. In honor of the captain in "Jaws," we'll call this LBM sales pro Quint. He's 30 years old, a former high school athlete with a bachelor's degree. Nothing about his resume predicts elite performance. And yet, in one month, Quint generated \$1.7 million in revenue—exceeding his goal by 31%. Beneath the surface, five patterns explained how he did it:

## 1. Relentless Communication is a Strategy

Great whites must keep swimming to breathe. Quint must keep communicating to sell. Over 21 sales days, he logged 2,340 interactions—1,003 calls, 1,128 emails, and 209 texts—and drove 1,887 miles on 11 planned travel days. High-frequency touchpoints keep him top of mind, surface problems early, and maintain deal momentum. Proactive communication today prevents expensive problems tomorrow.

Notably, more than 55% of his communication was internal with his inside sales team—an area he's now investigating to reclaim more customer-facing time.

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](mailto:bradley@bradleyhartmannandco.com).

## 2. Concentration Beats Coverage

Great whites aren't indiscriminate omnivores; they're selective predators. Quint is selective too. He manages just 17 accounts, allowing him to dive deep with each one. During the month, he spent 55 hours auditing takeoffs for his top customer. "Some reps might say that's not my job," Quint said. "And per the scope, it's not. But when I go above and beyond like this, there's no price negotiation later."

Fewer accounts create deeper wallet share, stronger loyalty, and higher revenue per relationship. Quint knows this level of focus is impossible with 50 or 75 accounts.

## 3. Responsiveness Compounds

Great whites detect microscopic vibrations in the environment. Quint does the same. During our study, four new accounts appeared via referral, worth more than \$250,000 in near-term revenue and potentially \$5 million over the next 12 months. None were active prospects. All were dividends from past responsiveness, situations when Quint made someone else look good.

## 4. Show Up When There's Blood in the Water

A great white can sense a single drop of blood from a mile away—and then it acts immediately. When deals are at risk, Quint doesn't send emails or hope customer service handles it. He gets in his truck.

Account management activities (versus sales-generating ones) consumed 43% of his time. This can be called inefficient. His customers call it trust. One builder emailed a competitor, CC'd Quint, and wrote: "You're cheaper, but Quint's my guy."

## 5. Built for the Long Hunt

Sharks can live up to 70 years. Quint plays the long game too. He stays competitive but refuses to race to the bottom. "This market won't last forever," he said. "The guy who's 30% cheaper can't sustain that price—but I can sustain my value."

Throughout the study, Quint consistently credited his operations team, drivers, purchasing, and inside sales. Apex predators only thrive in healthy ecosystems.

If you want better sales hunters, stop watching from shore. Enlist your best reps in understanding themselves. Measure behavior. Interpret patterns. If we can tag a shark, you can too—and you'll understand how to develop more of them.

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BY THEA DUDLEY

Hey Thea,  
We sell internationally, specifically in Canada, but only with 100% prepayment. Recently our sales manager has been advocating for a change in this policy, offering credit lines to those Canadian customers. I greatly appreciate any advice you have on the potential risks involved in extending terms to Canadian customers. I would also like to understand what recourse I have, if any, if payment issues arise.

— Out of country, out of depth

## CREDIT ACROSS COUNTRIES

Dear Outta,  
Think football (American) versus football (European).

Americans call European football soccer. This is probably why so many of us found Ted Lasso so damn funny. It is the same name, but different. There is a ball, teams, a field, uniforms, and lots of scrambling around. Same with debt collection in other countries. There are basic similarities and despite the simple nature of the straightforward “didn’t pay for materials” concept, there are notable differences between debt collection in the U.S. and debt collection in other countries. For our purposes, Canada.

You have the same recourse that you would in the U.S., only you would be doing it in another part of North America, specifically, Canada, using their legal system and their attorneys (barristers or solicitors) or collection agencies (same name, mostly same game). Concept is the same but the game has different rules and terminology.

Basically it’s the equivalent of a “somebody done somebody wrong” song. One company extends credit, another company agrees to pay in a defined period of time, then

the train goes off the rails right out into the land of broken promises and unfulfilled dreams of increased profits.

If your company is serious about selling on open account in Canada, connect with a Canadian attorney because you have some groundwork to do. Not just any attorney, one who specializes in construction and contracts. Your credit application will need to be reviewed and revised to reflect the laws in that country. You will need to add “international” to your commercial credit bureau report options. What are the timelines and steps you need to sue someone in that country? Does the collection agency you are currently working with do work in that country? If not, can they recommend one?

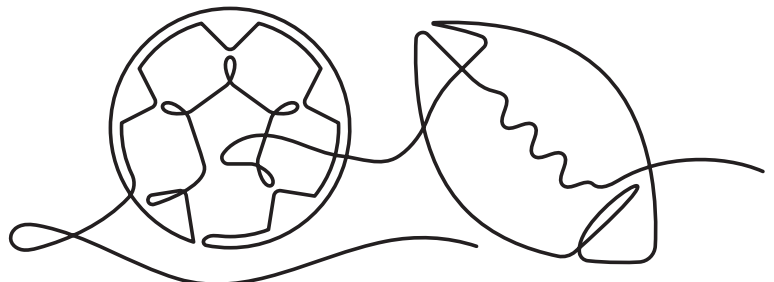
Let’s not forget about the fun and exciting world of mechanics liens! Yes, Virginia, there is a whole world of mechanics lien rights in Canada to learn, complete with its very own set of timelines, rules, and challenges. Sort of a “good news/bad news” scenario.

Another option to consider is trade credit insurance. Sure, it costs some money but they will be able to provide a playbook and act as your private tour guide for extending credit in that country, complete with insurance if you follow the rules. Consider it an investment in your company and education.

Before you go down the rabbit hole and invest a lot of time and effort into the above, how serious is the advocating? Sit down with the decision makers and have the discussion on what the risk versus reward is for opening up credit lines in the current land of COD. Will it make a difference in your market share or merely increase your risk exposure? What is the motivation behind the advocating for offering credit accounts? If it is only to take the same customers, who are used to prepaying, and offer terms, is it really worth it? The groundwork is the same. If there is a plan your sales manager has developed to increase sales and add to the profitability and market share, that is a different story. Talk though it.

Soccer or football, both require teamwork to achieve a common goal, just like any successful business relies on collaboration and communication. Get your team together and take the field.

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



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/in-shur-uhns/ (noun)

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BY JOHN D. WAGNER

# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OPEX AND COGS?

**KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE** between COGS (cost of goods sold) and OPEX (operating expenses) from an accounting perspective is key to understanding two essential KPIs of business. Essentially, COGS is what you pay to get the product ready for sale (usually raw materials, some types of freight, and some types of direct labor). On the other hand, OPEX is what you pay to keep the business running (usually salaries, rent, utilities, maintenance, insurance, and marketing).

**COGS affects gross profit.** COGS has the most direct effect on gross profit dollars (GP\$), and your resulting gross profit margin percentage (GPM%). Here's why: If COGS rises or falls—and if there is not a corresponding reaction in your retail pricing—your GP\$ will rise or fall as well. For instance, if you have an increase in COGS, and you *do not* pass along that increase as higher retail pricing, you are “eating COGS,” e.g. absorbing a cost that your customer really should be paying. As a result, both your GP\$ and GPM% will decline.

If you are fortunate enough to have your COGS decline, and you elect not to reduce your retail pricing, your GP\$ and GPM% will increase.

**OPEX affects EBITDA.** On the other hand, OPEX has the most direct effect on your EBITDA. When you deduct OPEX from gross profit dollars, you end up with operating income. The operating income gives you EBITDA, after accounting for interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization. Although EBITDA (or more precisely Adjusted EBITDA), is the number to which a “multiple” is applied to determine a company's acquisition value. You can't have a healthy EBITDA if you

don't have healthy GP\$ that have been accurately calculated, and you can't have an accurate read on GP\$ if you aren't accurately logging COGS where they belong.

There may be more art than science in the allocation of expenses to either COGS or OPEX. For instance, freight and labor may appear in *both* COGS and OPEX on your income statement, yet they should never be double-counted. For instance, a COGS like the cost of lumber obviously would not appear as an OPEX expense. But other types of COGS can get tricky, since freight related to acquiring materials is part of COGS, but freight for deliveries to customers after a sale has been made is part of OPEX. Likewise, production labor is COGS if, say, you run a component manufacturing plant. But administrative or managerial salaries for managing that plant are widely considered OPEX. If you misallocate, you are clouding the waters and not getting a clear picture of the profitability of your company.

Briefly, let's use an example to examine the relationship between COGS, gross profit dollars, gross profit margin, and retail pricing. Recall that sales minus COGS is gross profit dollars. Say that your COGS are \$900,000, but you wrongly attributed \$100,000 in administrative costs to COGS. You have overstated your COGS, driving down your GP\$ and GPM%. In response, you may jack up retail pricing to maintain your GPM%, potentially losing a competitive edge to a competitor who has their COGS and OPEX properly logged.

Ironically, the misattribution of OPEX to COGS *understates* your OPEX by \$100,000, but your EBITDA remains unchanged, because EBITDA deducts both COGS and OPEX in the super category of “expenses.” But you are getting a false read on GP\$ and GPM%, leading you to make misguided decisions, especially in the areas of buying and retail pricing.

Contrarily, if you bury freight costs from suppliers in OPEX (rather than in COGS, where it belongs) you'll find GPM% and GP\$ will be artificially high.

Finally, there are tax implications to getting your COGS and OPEX accounted for correctly. The tax treatment of COGS and OPEX differs significantly in timing, deductibility, and impact on taxable income. COGS is deducted directly from revenue before calculating taxable income, which immediately reduces your tax liability. This means COGS provides a dollar-for-dollar reduction in taxable income when goods are sold. OPEX is deducted after the gross profit calculation, affecting the final taxable income differently. While OPEX is still tax deductible, it doesn't have the same impact on reducing gross taxable income as COGS. It is to your tax advantage to properly and consistently account for COGS and OPEX over a period of time.

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

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BY RUSS KATHREIN

**MOST PEOPLE HAVE** heard the classic explanation of the butterfly effect: a butterfly flaps its wings in one part of the world, and that tiny action contributes to a tornado forming thousands of miles away. In leadership, the principle is just as real. Small comments, offhand opinions, and casual observations can trigger large and sometimes unintended consequences inside an organization. Newer leaders often learn this only after a well-intended remark sets off a chain of activity they never expected.

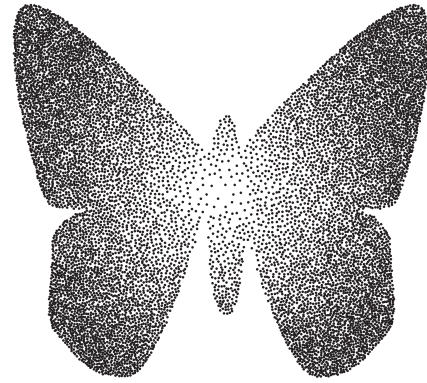
The higher you rise in an organization, the more amplified your words become. A CEO may believe they are sharing an informal thought, but the organization often hears a directive. Leaders must understand this dynamic because it affects culture, priorities, and the focus of teams. The butterfly effect is always present. The question is whether you are creating clarity or chaos with the wings you are flapping.

## THE LEADERSHIP BUTTERFLY EFFECT

I saw this firsthand when a CEO expressed a simple desire to build stronger relationships with the senior leaders of our primary suppliers. It was not presented as a mandate. It was shared as something he would like to do more intentionally. The head of purchasing took this to heart and made it his personal goal. He wanted to fulfill what he believed was an important expectation. As the end of the year approached and the pressure of meeting annual objectives grew, this casual comment evolved into a full-scale initiative.

Because of the timing of annual vendor meetings and the narrowing window to accomplish goals before year-end, the result became a flurry of activity far beyond what anyone intended. For several weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, three or four high-level meetings and dinners were scheduled each week with key suppliers.

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



These were valuable conversations, but the sheer volume created strain on schedules, workloads, and planning. A small comment from the top had grown into a tornado of activity. The CEO never asked for such intensity. Yet the organization responded with the full weight of interpretation and good intent.

A different example showed me how the butterfly effect can shape culture in unexpected ways. Years ago, the head of procurement at a university called to share his frustration that one of our managers was not responding to his request for a large window order for a dormitory. It was a significant project, one any supplier would normally welcome.

When I met with the manager and asked why he had not responded, he stood up and pointed to the mission statement on the wall behind his desk. It stated that we would be the preferred supplier to the professional builder and contractor. He looked at me and asked, "Where does it say we will sell to universities?"

Somewhere along the way, our mission statement had been interpreted narrowly rather than directionally. Again, a small choice in language had created an unintended effect. Leaders must be aware of how people internalize and apply the messages they receive, especially when those messages come from senior leadership.

Both situations taught me the same lesson. Leaders, especially new ones, must recognize that their words are not taken at face value. They are magnified, interpreted, and operationalized. What feels like a gentle nudge to you may feel like a mandate to someone else. What feels like a strategic definition may be seen as a strict limitation. The butterfly effect is always shaping behavior inside your organization, whether you realize it or not.

The responsibility of leadership is not to avoid speaking for fear of misinterpretation. It is to speak with clarity, intention, and context. When you craft mission or vision statements, ensure that your teams understand the spirit behind the words, not only the literal phrasing.

New managers often underestimate how much people listen to them. Your influence extends further than you think, and small comments can create large outcomes. The butterfly effect in leadership is powerful. Used thoughtfully, it can move an organization in positive and aligned ways. Left unchecked, it can create storms of confusion.

Your words have wings. Make sure they take your organization where you truly want it to go.



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# A DAY IN THE LIFE WITH AI

## Inside a Component Manufacturing Business

BY SHANE SOULE, PRESIDENT,  
PROTEC PANEL & TRUSS  
MANUFACTURING LLC



**AI DIDN'T CHANGE HOW** I run my business; it changed how much friction exists between decisions and execution.

I oversee three component manufacturing locations across Michigan and Indiana. My days are filled with meetings, follow-ups, and decisions that affect customers, production, and people. Too much of that context used to live in my head or in conversations that disappear.

After evaluating ChatGPT and other options, we rolled out the AI program Claude Team across our leadership. Combined with Otter AI for transcription, these tools help us capture information and turn it into action faster. Here's a look at how I use these tools in an average day:

#### **5:45 a.m.**

I had a meeting yesterday with one of our larger customers. I recorded it with Otter, and this morning I'm uploading the transcript to their Claude Project.

We set up Projects for major customers so Claude remembers past conversations, pricing, and challenges. I drop the transcript in: "Update your memory, then help me build the next 90 days of our sales plan."

It identifies three opportunities that we discussed but never actioned and drafts a follow-up plan with dates and owners. What used to rely on memory is now captured.

#### **9:15 a.m.**

My operations team had a Teams chat about handling material shortages when builders change orders last-minute. Good discussion, but it's a chat thread that will get buried.

I copy the conversation into Claude: "Turn this into a clear process for our operations manual. Include decision points, who's responsible, and when we escalate."

Five minutes later I've got a structured process document. I make one edit and send it to Kyle. Without this, that chat disappears and we're repeating the discussion in three months.

#### **11:30 a.m.**

Something feels off with one of our lumberyard customers. I export six months of their job data from MiTek and drop it into Claude.

"Show me sales trends by month and by sales rep. Are we gaining or losing business?"

Volume is down 18% over three months. One sales rep who handled 60% of their orders is now at 15%, and the close rate dropped from 75% to 30%. That's not a market problem, that's a relationship problem.

I forward the analysis to John: "Let's meet tomorrow to discuss this account."

#### **2:00 p.m.**

Mason, my director of design, drops in with a 100-page commercial plan. He needs specs—loading, spacing, materials, species—for floor trusses, wall panels, and roof trusses.

Normally this takes two hours. He uploads it to a Claude Skill we built for this. Five minutes later, Claude gives him a complete spec sheet with page references.

He takes it to the design team. We compressed a two-hour bottleneck into five minutes, which means we quote the job today instead of tomorrow. In commercial work, speed wins bids.

#### **4:00 p.m.**

I've got a one-on-one with Alex, my VP in Michigan, in an hour. I upload last week's transcript: "Review this. Pull out anything unresolved or where Alex needed my help. Give me three questions I should ask."

It flags staffing concerns at Battle Creek we didn't nail down, reminds me he's waiting on approval for a saw purchase, and suggests I ask about the sales pipeline since we talked about it being soft but didn't dig into specifics.

I walk into the meeting prepared, with nothing falling through the cracks. Alex notices.

#### **5:30 p.m.**

Before tomorrow's production review, I need talking points: "We ran 87% efficiency last week, down from 92%. Main issues were material delays and equipment breakdowns. Write me a five-point agenda."

Claude structures the conversation: acknowledge the drop, review root causes, discuss what we controlled versus what we couldn't, identify corrective actions, set expectations. This takes three minutes instead of 30.

#### **6:00 p.m.**

My six direct reports are all using Claude now. John uses it for sales execution, Jackie for financial analysis, Julie for HR documentation. Everyone's found their own friction points.

**AI HASN'T CHANGED WHAT I DECIDE.** It's changed how fast I can move and how much context I have when I make decisions. Time saved goes into coaching my team and strategy. I make the calls on people, pricing, and capital. I just do it faster with better information.

# INTEGRATING AI

This month's Real Issues. Real Answers. question has to do with AI and how it might be integrated into operations within the LBM industry. When we asked readers last month what their biggest business concern for 2026 was, many of you responded that AI is something you're looking forward to incorporating into your businesses.



What insights would you share with the LBM dealer who posed this scenario: “Our biggest challenge going into 2026 is integrating AI across every department in a way that’s specialized and effective. The ‘why’ behind it is simple: AI has the potential to drastically improve efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making across the business. But it takes time, structure, and full buy-in from every level to do it right. The challenge isn’t the technology itself—it’s getting our people, processes, and culture aligned around it so that it becomes part of how we operate every day. Would love to learn how other dealers are integrating AI into their operations.”

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

BY LBM JOURNAL READERS

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

“We are still trying to wrap our heads around the whole idea of AI. We see many positives, the challenge is getting everybody on board.”

“When we discover what works and what doesn’t work, we’ll get going.”

“AI has been useful for reviewing and summarizing the key points of documents like contracts, agreements, etc.”

“For us, the biggest challenge going into 2026 is knowing when and how to move from monitoring AI developments to actual implementation. We see the potential for AI to improve efficiency and decision-making, but our focus right now is on observing proven use cases in our industry and understanding where it can add the most value. The technology itself isn’t the barrier—it’s ensuring that when we do adopt AI, it’s structured, supported, and embraced across every department. We’re interested in learning how other dealers are approaching integration so we can build a roadmap that fits our people, processes, and culture.”

“We are monitoring the possibilities. We have no plan for implementing the technology at this time.”

“We are trying to start at the top. We are starting to use it behind the scenes to validate the usefulness to pass those experiences and examples down.”

“We are evaluating the use of AI functions in everything from sourcing to advertising and marketing.”

“Not considering it. Last I checked, we ran our businesses, not the machines.”

“It started with chatting it up, getting people to play with it. Now the speech: ‘You won’t lose your job to AI. You will lose your job to someone who knows AI.’”

“I’d love to hear more from others, too!”

“In my experience, the biggest factor slowing AI adoption in LBM isn’t the technology itself, but comfort and familiarity at the leadership level. Younger, more tech-forward teams are already using AI effectively in their daily workflows, while broader adoption often lags in industries with longer-tenured leadership. Other industries have moved quickly because AI use is increasingly expected, measured, and embedded into how work gets done. LBM will likely see faster adoption as leadership demographics shift and competitive pressure increases.”

“We currently are not using AI.”

“Just now testing the waters and learning, it’s too early to tell.”

“We are still at the early stages. We have come to realize that most of our employees are using AI but they are using different platforms. Once we realized the amount of our employees using it, we started an initiative to work on AI policy which would require our team to use one platform. From there, we are reaching out to other industries that can help branch our current software with AI.”

“The use case for AI in a small-scale operation is limited to customer correspondence and ad copy, neither of which were areas we need its assistance with.”

“The AI most often used within our organization would be Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT. We use it for writing professional emails, integrate it for customer communications (newsletter, contractor events, etc.). We also use it for drafting and personalizing annual performance reviews, periodic performance improvement plans, drafting solicitation letters to prospective accounts, and various meeting agendas.”

“Still evaluating.”

“We are using AI on what makes sense. So with takeoffs, there is good opportunity for AI and we are working with a 3rd-party company to provide reputable takeoffs using AI and shorten our lead times. We use AI in marketing, purchasing, and AP. But we do not require every person and every team to use AI. Some of our teams are more fluent with AI than others and it helps us integrate it more effectively rather than an all-or-nothing approach.”

“Early stages of implementation—mostly using for estimating and problem solving.”

“We are just beginning to actively use AI in our company. For the most part, our initial dabbling is using it to analyze past sales and purchasing data to help give us more information on product usage, turns, and GMROI.” ▶

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

“We are a manufacturer and are looking at how it would help increase our efficiencies and lower costs. This is a back-burner priority item right now.”

“I love asking it technical questions—it explains it better to customers than I could.”

“We use AI in designing products and service to generate ideas we have not thought of. We use it to analyze trends and to do mundane admin work.”

“We use AI to help beef up our marketing materials and communications through email.”

“AI is currently very siloed into the different groups and how and what they are using AI for.”

“Takeoffs.”

“Integrating AI for the sake of integrating AI isn’t much of a plan. Someone has to identify the company processes that will be improved by integrating AI into them. I have read that the biggest gains will come not from modifying a process to incorporate AI but to wholly restructure the process around AI. However, not every process will be a good candidate for either one of these approaches. Once you’ve redesigned the process, training your staff to use it correctly becomes like retraining them on any kind of process improvement. Once they become comfortable with the AI within those processes, employees are likely to identify other areas that will benefit from AI.”

“Some of our sales teams use it to find targets and create travel plans.”

“I definitely do not plan to train my employees on AI prompting and then say, ‘Go!’ Because nothing will happen. But I’ve announced that I am learning AI and willing to share what I have learned. My curious employees are asking me to share. I will tackle something in their area first since they are already on board. Like any other technology improvement, the rest will come along for the ride, just at a slower pace.”

“I use ChatGPT to search for broader answers that ensure I’m learning more about my customers and suppliers than I could from only word of mouth from peers/managers.” ▶

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## 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 227 members, with more coming in each month. In all, the companies have provided 28,855 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:

CAROLINA LUMBER & SUPPLY COMPANY Atlanta, GA	est. 1900	DELAWARE COUNTY SUPPLY COMPANY, INC. Boothwyn, PA	est. 1924
LEARNED LUMBER Hermosa Beach, CA	est. 1924	GEORGE M HALL LUMBER West Homestead, PA	est. 1893
CLARKS LUMBER Herington, KS	est. 1925	SAN ANTONIO LUMBER COMPANY San Antonio, FL	est. 1923
ORGAIN BUILDING SUPPLY Clarksville, TN	est. 1921	MILTONVALE LUMBER CO. Miltonvale, KS	est. 1900
ISSAQUAH LUMBER Issaquah, WA	est. 1889	LUMMUS SUPPLY COMPANY Acworth, GA	est. 1925
SCHOLL LUMBER Houston, TX	est. 1845	ATTICA LUMBER CO. Attica, OH	est. 1925

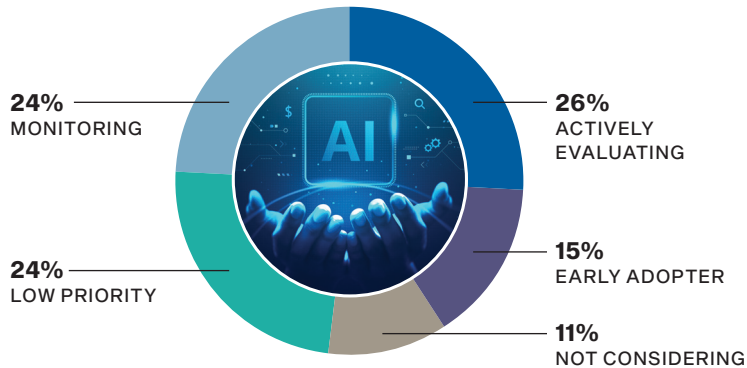
### Nominate a company for the LBM Century Club

[lbmjournal.com/nominate](http://lbmjournal.com/nominate)

For a complete listing of LBM Century Club members,  
visit [lbmjournal.com/lbm-century-club](http://lbmjournal.com/lbm-century-club).



When it comes to integrating AI in your operations, which of the following best describes your company?



**Comments from dealers:**

“We use it to help with social media marketing content and some policy writing, but that’s about it.”

“We are experimenting with AI tools, both within our current ERP/ecommerce, as well as external tools. We hope to assess how it can enhance the customer experience, improve marketing, and lead to operating efficiencies.”

“Single-store owner. Waiting to see how to adapt.”

“We are using AI in a few instances now and are monitoring how it may be able to be utilized to speed up our estimating process in the future.”

“I use ChatGPT for a multitude of things from analyzing data to helping me write things according to the tone in which I am trying to set. ChatGPT has helped me a great deal in expediting regular daily tasks.”

“I plan on having a look at some technology at the IBS in Orlando on Feb. 26.”

“I do not believe there is a need for AI at this time.”

“Some people use AI for certain tasks, but it is not for everyone. We have, for about a year now, more people adopting it as time has passed. We are looking to update our AI use policies as not to compromise company information.”

“We use it in three ways:

1. The marketing department uses it for generating social media captions and brainstorming.
2. Our IT department uses it as a coding assistant to speed up the creation of new tools.
3. We occasionally use it for outlining training documents or drafting emails.”

“Too busy to explore.”

“Some employees use it on desktops. We are looking at AI functionality in our software.”

“Just not something I feel I’m looking for. I need help physically moving material, not virtually.”

“Yup, so I use a combo of AI platforms from Canva AI to ChatGPT and Gemini, sometimes all together to knock out a project or task. All have completely changed how I do stuff. Each AI platform does one thing really well so understanding which platform does what well is super important to the accuracy of your work coming out of AI.”

“Certain members of our team have actively integrated it into their workflow, but it’s mostly in marketing and copywriting. Has yet to be implemented into key areas that we’d like: estimating, scheduling, etc.”

“Low priority, however, we have a handful of people that are using it and will be the champions when we have no other choice but to use it.”

“Too much conflicting info on the internet. The big question is what to do and what to believe.”

“We are using certain applications and are evaluating others to analyze cost and time savings.”

“We have some key employees in our back office that are using some AI to assist with purchasing, etc. Our IT department is also doing ongoing research on now we can move forward incorporating more AI.”

“We are working with a company to provide takeoffs with AI. We use some AI with our AP department.”

“I use it daily for creating procedures and emails.”

“With roofing supplies and the variations of customers’ needs, the adaptation is really not a known entity yet.”

**Comments from vendors:**

“We have instructed all team members to look for ways to leverage AI to increase efficiencies.”

“AI spells the destruction of our industry.”

“Working with AI with teams from sales, operations, and marketing.”

“Currently taking an AI class and reading multiple books to best visualize how to fit AI into my business.”

“We have adopted much of the Copilot functionality, and are building out teams/processes to evaluate/adopt AI into our work.”

“I am finding ways to use it to promote my website and craft more professional sounding emails.”

“Pilot people and leadership are using it.” ■

**HAVE A REAL ISSUE?**  
Send it to Rick@LBMJournal.com.

# LBM JOURNAL<sup>®</sup> DEALER OF THE YEAR 2026 CATEGORY: \$50MM-\$100MM

## Congratulations Red River Lumber!

Founded in 1992, Red River Lumber has grown from a local yard into a full-line building materials partner serving Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. Family owned and operated; it supports builders, remodelers, and homeowners through multiple locations and a premier Design Center offering everything from lumber and doors to flooring, cabinetry, and appliances.



Deeply involved in local chambers, homebuilder associations, and civic organizations, Red River Lumber reflects a modern, community-minded approach to the independent building materials business. Recognized for its broad product offerings, design expertise, and regional leadership, the company stands out as a trusted partner. Backed by the LMC network's 1,900+ locations and buying power, Red River Lumber delivers exceptional value, premium materials, and proven expertise.

There's no limit to what they can do.

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[www.LMC.net](http://www.LMC.net)

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# RED RIVER LUMBER CAPITALIZES ON PARTNERSHIPS

Red River Lumber team members. From left: Larry Coker, Ray Escamilla, Stephanie Escamilla, John Butler, Adam Pettit, Mike Craven, David Messersmith, Jim Bradley, David Ward, Cory Venable, Ryan Porter

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

BY WENDY STURGES

**THOSE FAMILIAR** with the North American river systems may recognize Red River as a major waterway running through Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Over its nearly 40-year history, Red River Lumber has grown much like that river, stretching from its roots in Texas to serve those same four states.

CEO Mike Craven, who took ownership of the company in 1997, has seen the company's growth firsthand.

"[When] I got started in '97, we had one location and six employees," Craven said. "I'm really, really fortunate that in the second year, we started adding some really good people. And that we've had people that have stayed—we still have two employees that we hired within the first 12 months of me coming on board."

Fast-forward to 2026 and Red River Lumber has become a 135-employee, multi-yard company serving markets with its own design center and distribution partnerships that give it an edge in the region, Craven said.

Adam Pettit, marketing director for the Red River Lumber family of companies, said the company has flourished under Craven's leadership. Pettit is a second-generation employee; his father was one of Craven's early hires in the late 90's.

"Mike has a lot of strength in being able to attract and retain the right people, and making this a great place to work," Pettit said. "So the way that our people take care of our customers is our primary strength."

However, Craven was quick to point out that the company's strong foundation goes beyond just who's at the top.

"It's got to be the culture. I'm down the list in establishing the culture, we've got so many key people. It could be one of our yard guys, one of our drivers, it could be an admin person. We have a lot of people that take it to heart and really work with their teams to create a sense that the customer knows they're in a different business when they walk in one of our locations." ▶



**Growing in the marketplace**

Over the past three decades, Red River Lumber has expanded to three main lumberyards and a design center, but has also made a number of key acquisitions, the most recent being Hamel Plywood in Hot Springs, AR.

That growth has allowed the company to position itself not only as a lumber supplier, but as a source for custom granite and stonework, trusses, flooring, doors and windows, decking, and more.

In addition to the company's lumberyards, Red River Lumber has also established partnerships to become dealers of Owens Corning composite decking, Red River Brick, and MAC Metal, an architectural siding company that manufactures heavy-gauge steel siding for residential and commercial use.

"We see a lot of growth opportunities in more of a distribution sense, where we do not necessarily need a full-blown lumberyard if we can go after a niche market with five or six really cool products," Craven said. "So it's a focus on having a much more efficient cost of operations. I think our growth will be more in that area than anything else."

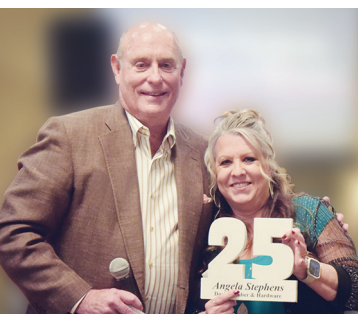
The company is also reinvesting in internal operations to continue growing and manage inventory more closely. Red River Lumber began working with ERP provider DMSi in recent years to streamline processes, which Craven said was a major game-changer for the company.

"We're definitely working to modernize. We're working with the DMSi Agility team on some reports that will be beneficial to us. When we found DMSi, I tell you, it's been one of the best moves we've made, because they are family. They have been so energetic and enthusiastic to help us with everything. It's not often that I find a fellow dealer that speaks highly of their software company, but we definitely do."

Pettit said the company has also been focusing on its marketing efforts to further strengthen its visibility in its service areas.

"Our social media strategy is to feature our people. We try to do as many [Instagram] Reels as possible, and we also try to enforce or enhance the know, like, and trust factor. A big part of our strategy is to make our salespeople known so that when a potential customer walks into the showroom, they already feel like they know that person."

**Part of the company culture is being able to attract and retain the right people, and making Red River Lumber a great place to work. The employees take it to heart and really work to create a sense that the customer knows they're in a different business when they walk in one of their locations.**



FROM TOP LEFT:  
 CEO Mike Craven and Angela Stephens, recipient of 25 years of service award.

Matthew Cox serves as general manager of the Davis Truss location.

Bosco Gamble serves as general manager at the Red River Lumber Oklahoma location.

The company celebrates employees throughout the year.



The company has diversified to offer trusses and other specialized products.



Davis Lumber & Hardware is part of the Red River Lumber family of companies.

### Leveraging local relationships

That focus on people and building partnerships extends beyond Red River Lumber's day-to-day business. One such relationship is with LMC, the company's longtime co-op, which Craven said his team works closely with not only for purchasing, but for the leadership and development opportunities it offers for employees.

"Over the years with LMC, we've tried to take advantage of all their programs for development of our employees at all levels," Craven said. "One of the great things LMC offers is a program for leadership development, [its Executive Masterclass], with either the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania or the Kellogg Institute at Northwestern. We've had about 10 or 12 people that have gone through the programs. We'll have another person go in this spring, so we are continuing that investment."

Craven said Red River also often participates in LMC's roundtable discussions, something he recommends for newer LMC members to take advantage of.

"They're a constant source of training and education, so utilizing the roundtables and having Ruth Kellick-Grubbs [president of LBM advisory firm Kellick & Associates] as a consultant because of our membership there has been truly beneficial. I highly recommend that to any new member of LMC to try to get into a roundtable group."

Red River's partnerships also extend locally. In 2025, the company announced a partnership with Texas A&M's Texarkana campus that allows Red River Lumber employees to access university courses at a discounted rate. It has also long been involved with Texarkana College, a local community college. Craven currently serves as chair of the college's foundation, which provides scholarships and resources for students.

That involvement not only serves the local community, but the LBM industry as a whole but educating the next generation of employees and pros, he said.

"We're very heavily involved in their construction and technologies agenda, and we give scholarships annually to that. And those people usually come in and will intern with us for six months during their program of study with Texarkana College," he said. "We know that we've got to do all we can to educate our community of the career opportunities in construction and building materials." ■



Team members of The Design Center at Red River Lumber, from left: Bryan Kemp, John Butler, Taylor Knighton, Doug Beeman, Vickie McClanahand, Steve Raley, Lisa Thomas, Jason Harvey, Amber Satterfield, Jon Wiborn, Jody Rose, Austin Cloud



### GET TO KNOW RED RIVER LUMBER

FOUNDED:	1992
LOCATIONS:	12
EMPLOYEES:	135
CUSTOMER BASE:	65% Pro / 35% Retail/DIY
OWNERSHIP:	Family
PRIMARY BUSINESS SOFTWARE:	DMSi
PRIMARY CO-OP/ BUYING GROUP:	LMC

# TRIM+MOULDING

## Discover the design and material trends driving this dynamic product category

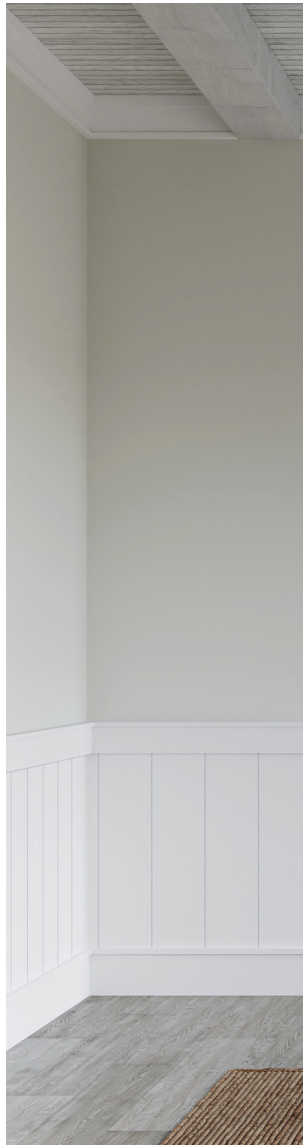
BY DAN CARY

**TRIM AND MOULDING** is much more than a finishing touch—it is a key design and structural element that enhances both the appearance and durability of a home. Whether installed inside or outside, trim serves as the bridge between architectural components, cohesive design flow, and protected material transitions.

Inside the home, trim mouldings such as baseboards, crown moulding, door casings, and window trim add dimension and character to otherwise plain walls. Beyond aesthetics, interior trim also protects wall edges from wear, scuffs, and impact, maintaining a home's pristine appearance over time.

Exterior trim plays an equally crucial role in defining a home's curb appeal and structural integrity. Installed around windows, doors, and rooflines, exterior trim provides visual contrast and outlines architectural details, adding depth and personality. More importantly, it acts as a protective barrier against the elements, contributing to the home's overall weather resistance.

For these reasons and more, trim and moulding represent key offerings for dealers, and a genuine opportunity to stand out from the competition.



Crafted from 100% cellular PVC, Royal Trim & Mouldings delivers the clean, traditional, and authentic look of wood without the maintenance and upkeep.



The combination of natural finishes, such as wood grain, with painted surfaces remains a popular trend. Similarly, the use of deep tones and matching trim and siding tones, as shown with Edge's Timeless Collection Shiplap siding finished with Midnight Black and matching trim.

### Challenges and optimism going forward

"Demand for trim and moulding should remain strong and continue to grow in 2026. Year after year, trim proves to be one of the most stable categories, driven by steady repair and remodel activity," reports Chris Guimond, CEO at Modern Mill. "Homeowners continue to invest in upgrades that enhance the look and longevity of their homes, which keeps trim at the center of many projects. This consistency positions the segment for another solid year ahead."

However, the trim and moulding category, like the rest of the construction industry, continually faces new challenges. The past year was no exception, to say the least. When asked about the state of this segment heading into 2026, Steve Booz, VP of marketing at Westlake Royal Building Products, stated, "Home renovation activity has stayed strong, and that steady investment is helping drive growth across the category. According to the Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) from the Joint Center for Housing Studies, annual spending on home improvements and maintenance is expected to hold steady through the middle of 2026, which is a good sign for the industry overall. We're seeing homeowners prioritize cost-efficient projects that deliver strong visual impact and lasting value. Smaller-scale renova-

tions, such as a trim and moulding feature wall, are increasingly appealing because they're both affordable and transformative."

The wisdom of targeting value-focused projects is reinforced by Danny Moe, sales manager, International Wood Products (IWP). "Our analysis of budgets, feedback, and housing forecasts indicates that growth in the coming year will be relatively flat, a prediction that is likely echoed by many others in our market segment. However, flat housing growth doesn't mean resting on our laurels; we'll continue to seek out additional market share with the products we offer. In a softer market, builders are looking for ways to value-engineer, and many of our wood trim products meet their needs and quality standards but at a competitive price point."

It's no secret that increased material costs, especially those created by recent tariffs, have added to the complexity of planning. Milton Lozano, products director for Tamlyn, stated: "The challenge of increased aluminum and steel material costs due to imposed tariffs was not unique to Tamlyn; it affected our entire industry. We navigated this difficult period by leaning on our core values: family, value, and service. Having been in business for over 50 years, we understand the ups and downs of our industry, but our commitment to our customers means we communicate with them every step of the way." ▶



SilvaStar recently launched a fire-rated version of the SilvaTherm thermally modified line of products, delivering natural wood that is both beautiful and fire-rated.

Acknowledging the challenges of rising costs, Steve Conroy, president of SilvaStar Building Products, stated, “Cost pressures from duties and tariffs will continue to impact the category. At SilvaStar, we are actively working to mitigate these challenges for builders by delivering added value. By focusing on solutions that reduce labor and streamline installation—such as ‘one-touch’ products like SilvaPost and SilvaSoffit—we enable builders to install paint-ready materials without additional finishing, helping control costs and simplify the build process.”

In addition to material costs, Corbin Rinehart, technical sales director for WindsorONE states that “Labor and installation skill gaps remain the biggest hurdle. Even the best material can pose challenges if it’s installed incorrectly.

Education, through jobsite training, co-branded content with industry partners, and better dealer engagement, is key. The manufacturers who thrive will be the ones who stand shoulder to shoulder with their dealers and builders to protect craftsmanship first.”

Rinehart also explains, “Builders are paying attention to sustainability and supply chain transparency. U.S. manufacturing and vertically integrated sourcing contribute to a stronger, more self-reliant American supply chain.”

**What’s new?**

While wood, composite, metal, and PVC are all well-established trim materials, Edge recently introduced a mineral composite to the mix. Arris Trim is a moulding made of mineral



WindsorONE’s primed pine boards, like all of its products, are manufactured in the USA.

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composite, based on SureStone technology, also found in Deckorators’ premium decking. Demetri Kotiadis, director of marketing and product development for Edge, describes its benefits: “Among its many benefits, mineral composite trim is impervious to water, lighter than other dense composite materials, very low maintenance, and, importantly, has a very low coefficient of thermal expansion and contraction. It’s very stable.” Dom Beaulieu, managing director at Edge, adds, “We’re excited to be launching this innovative new moulding material. There is nothing like it.”

**Pre-finished and fire-treated moulding in high demand**

Speeding up installation efficiency on the jobsite is typically a win for contractors. One way of doing that is applying factory primers and finishes to trim moulding, leading manufacturers to offer contractors more pre-finished options. This increased demand for pre-finished products was reinforced by IWP’s Moe. “In the West, we’re seeing a bigger push for pre-finished trim options. Pre-finished trim has been popular on the East Coast and in parts of the Midwest for

some time, but hadn't quite gotten a foothold out West. We think pre-finished trim options will continue to be a growing trend in the West."

SilvaStar's Conroy highlights two key trends shaping the market: "First, pre-finished and natural wood aesthetics are gaining momentum. Second, demand for fire-treated products continues to grow. Fire-treated materials are becoming a necessity as Wildlife-Urban Interface (WUI) compliance rises to the top of builders' priorities following recent wildfire events. Products like SilvaWood two-tone siding offer a Class-A, fire-rated solution that is both visually striking and ready to install, significantly reducing labor and finishing time."

Products that simplify day-to-day work for contractors and builders are always worth considering. Modern Mill's Guimond recognizes, "They want to save time, reduce jobsite frustrations, and achieve consistent results, which is driving an increased interest in factory finished materials that eliminate onsite finishing needs. Factory-finished ACRE by Modern Mill arrives at jobsites ready to install, provides a uniform finish, and removes the weather dependencies that typically slow projects down."

### Deep tones, natural looks

The trend of using deeper tones for siding and trim also continues. "In order to support not only the value of pre-finished products for the jobsite, but also the growth of dark colors, we'll be launching our Premium Finished Trim in 2026. We are taking our finger-jointed and edge-glued engineered wood trim and offering it pre-finished in black," stated Edge's Beaulieu.



IWP recently began stocking pre-finished options for LP SmartSide trim. This has allowed them to help customers lower costs, shorten lead times, and meet what is now a growing trend in the West.



The Grove Collection from Westlake Royal Building Products is designed to capture the warmth and character of real wood while offering the durability and low maintenance of cellular PVC. This porch ceiling achieves a natural look without the upkeep that comes with traditional materials.

Pre-finishing trim to mimic natural materials, such as wood grain, is also in high demand. Chris (CJ) Johnson, director of product & marketing at Westlake Royal Building Products, stated that they are seeing "a big surge in demand for woodgrain finishes as more homeowners look to bring a natural, organic feel to their spaces." ▶



Factory Finished ACRE by Modern Mill arrives at jobsites ready to install, provides a uniform finish, and removes the weather dependencies that often slow projects down.



Edge's EvoTrim tone-on-tone siding and trim, also referred to as color drenching, aligns with the growing trend of installing siding and trim that feature matching tones.

Creating an authentic wood-stain appearance on low-maintenance PVC trim also continues to be popular. Director of Marketing at James Hardie, Dan Gibbons, states, “Versatex continues to expand its Canvas series, which delivers an authentic wood-stained finish, but without the maintenance. Overall, we offer nine different real wood-stained colors.”



Initially launched for porch ceilings, soffits, and awnings, the James Hardie Canvas Series has expanded to include Canvas Versawraps for columns and trim moulding profiles to add extra accents to covered spaces.

In addition to letting users virtually apply an endless variety of different sidings, trims, and colors on a project in a matter of seconds, Edge’s Visualizer design tool also has unique mapping capabilities with AI intelligence built in.



**Seeing is believing (and often means buying)**

Trying to explain to a customer how a trim style will look on their project versus showing them what that trim will actually look like can be a game-changer in terms of their confidence in making that buying decision. Using design and modeling software isn’t new to the world of construction and remodeling. Paint companies have been using apps that let customers preview their walls with any color in the rainbow. The added power of new technology, such as AI, and allowing contractors to upload construction drawings, is improving accuracy and flexibility at an astounding pace. For example, Edge offers its Visualizer design tool to designers and homeowners.

“We’ve tested it with blueprints, with renderings, as well as photos, and it gives you a very realistic view of what that project will look like. It’s exciting to have a premium tool that not only serves as a piece of inspiration, but also serves as part of the planning process,” added Edge’s Beaulieu.

Beyond creating 2D renderings, the ability to rapidly create accurate custom prototypes with 3D printing makes it easier for customers to make choices. “A great example is Tamlyn’s work for the Buffalo Bills’ new venue, Highmark Stadium. The project required 2,500 linear feet of our XtremeInterior trim, all custom profiles. By providing 3D printed samples of these profiles more quickly, we enabled the architects to bring their designs to life much more efficiently,” says Tamlyn’s Lozano.

Whether updating an older home or completing a new build, choosing the right trim materials, profiles, and finishes can transform a space from ordinary to refined. No matter what type of trim moulding is selected, the craftsmanship of the contractor is equally important. WindsorONE’s Rinehart says it well, “Many contractors underestimate the power of differentiation through detail. Trim and moulding are storytelling materials. They convey craftsmanship and pride. Builders who market their finished work,

document installations, and align with brands that back their craft stand out in a crowded market. Contractors who champion that narrative elevate both their reputation and the value of their work.” ■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

**CONTRIBUTING MANUFACTURERS**



**STEVE BOOZ**  
Westlake Royal  
Building Products



**CHRIS (CJ) JOHNSON**  
Westlake Royal  
Building Products



**DOM BEAULIEU**  
Edge



**DEMETRI KOTIADIS**  
Edge



**STEVE CONROY**  
SilvaStar



**DAN GIBBONS**  
James Hardie



**CHRIS GUIMOND**  
Modern Mill



**MILTON LOZANO**  
Tamlyn



**DANNY MOE**  
International  
Wood Products (IWP)



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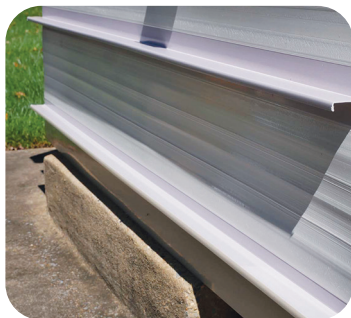
Contact: John D. Wagner | 919.796.9984 | [j.wagner@1stwestma.com](mailto:j.wagner@1stwestma.com) | [1stwestma.com](http://1stwestma.com)

EACH MONTH, HUNDREDS OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES VIE FOR INDUSTRY ATTENTION. HERE ARE SOME THAT OUR EDITORS THINK WILL INTEREST LBM JOURNAL READERS.



**MOUNTAIN BLACK ROOFING FROM ELEVATE**

Elevate recently introduced its newest metal color, Mountain Black, which is now available across Elevate’s metal roofing, edge metal, and wall panel portfolios. According to the manufacturer, FEVE (fluoroethylene vinyl ether) resin technology provides a number of benefits, including superior color consistency; high resistance to weathering, chalking, fading, and airborne chemicals; color adhesion engineered to perform through forming, bending, and fabrication; and a paint finish warranty of up to 35 years. [elevatecommercialbp.com](http://elevatecommercialbp.com)



**LEDGERSHIELD DECK FLASHING**

Engineered to help prevent catastrophic deck failures while making the job more efficient, LedgerShield is a patented two-piece ledger flashing system made from 99% pre-use recycled PVC by North America’s largest vinyl extrusions manufacturer, Vision Extrusions Group in Ontario, Canada. The product integrates all code-compliant flashing requirements and top and bottom z-flashing flanges with ice and water guard where it’s needed. Designed so that a novice can install it in just a few minutes, the manufacturer says it costs less per linear foot than traditional flashing products. [ledgershield.us](http://ledgershield.us)

**STRONG-BOND FROM SIMPSON STRONG-TIE**

Simpson Strong-Tie has launched Strong-Bond™, a fast-curing adhesive for everyday anchoring and repair of concrete, masonry and stone. Strong-Bond features innovative Color Cure™ technology, which dispenses blue then changes to gray when cured for efficient, guesswork-free installation. Its fast-set formulation cures quickly across a wide range of temperatures, from 104°F (in as little as 20 minutes) down to 14°F (in approximately four hours). According to the manufacturer, Strong-Bond adhesive can be used in both wet and dry conditions. It comes in a 10.1-fluid-ounce cartridge for dispensing with a traditional caulking tool. [strongtie.com](http://strongtie.com)



**RIDGE PREMIUM WITH COOL TREAD TECHNOLOGY**

Envision Outdoor Living Products, manufacturer of Envision composite decking and Fairway Railing collections, has added Cool Tread Technology to its budget-friendly Ridge Premium capped composite decking line. According to the company, Cool Tread Technology boasts a surface that is up to 25% cooler, with up to 33% better traction and up to 61% less moisture absorption than average leading competitors. Available in three new colors—Baja Tide, Silver Drift, and Kodiak Bay—Ridge Premium is available in square-edge and grooved-edge profiles. Like all Envision capped composite decking options, Ridge Premium is said to be resistant to staining, splintering, cracking, rot, and insects; and doesn’t require staining, sanding, or sealing. [envisionoutdoorliving.com](http://envisionoutdoorliving.com)

**OLDE STYLE WEATHERWOOD SHINGLES FROM IKO**

Inspired by natural aged wood, the Olde Style Weatherwood color is designed to bring a heritage-inspired look to IKO’s Dynasty and Nordic shingles. According to the company, Dynasty shingles feature a Class 3 impact rating, while Nordic shingles deliver Class 4, the highest rating for hail impact resistance. Both lines are reinforced with IKO’s ArmourZone technology, providing a 1-1/4" nailing surface and a limited wind resistance warranty of up to 130 mph. Tear-resistant tape backing is said to help prevent nail pull-through and blow-off, and FastLock sealant is engineered to activate under sunlight for a strong bond against water infiltration. [iko.com](http://iko.com)





**EVERPLY+ FROM GENESIS PRODUCTS AND GARNICA**

Genesis Products, in collaboration with Garnica, recently introduced Everply+, which combines an advanced thermally-fused laminate (TFL) with a plywood core. According to the manufacturer, the result is a high-performance decorative panel featuring a void-free core for stability and machinability, and dimensional thickness accuracy for consistency and ease of fabrication. Produced in a zero-waste Garnica facility, using 100% renewable resources, the product is suitable for cabinetry, furniture, and interior design applications. [genesisproductsinc.com](http://genesisproductsinc.com)

**ECHO AND LUXE FROM FABUWOOD**

Fabuwood, a semi-custom cabinetry manufacturer, recently launched Echo and Luxe, two new door styles in the company's Allure framed series. This dual debut expands Fabuwood's design portfolio, offering homeowners and designers a wider range of styles. Echo features minimalist lines and a more dimensional look, while Luxe offers a wood veneer door with an MDF core, delivering a smooth sheen paired with subtle wood grain. The launch also introduces Canyon Oak, a finish available exclusively for the Luxe door style. [fabuwood.com](http://fabuwood.com)



Storage Systems for LBM Dealers

- The Auto-Stak System
- Cantilever Rack Systems
- Metal Buildings
- Drive-Thru Systems
- Millwork Storage Systems
- Pallet Rack Systems
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* Starwood Rafters	40	888.525.5878	starwoodrafters.com
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UFP-Edge	14-15	844.529.5882	ufpedge.com
Uline	30	800.295.5510	uline.com
Westlake Royal Building Products	OBC	800.521.8486	westlakeroyalbuildingproducts.com

\* Denotes regional distribution.

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

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



# LBM<sup>JOURNAL</sup> DAILY

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You've been offered a new opportunity in your company, but first you need to find your replacement—which has turned out to be tougher than expected. What would you do?

# CHASING THE PERFECT HIRE



**SINCE GRADUATING** from college over 20 years ago, you rose steadily through the ranks with a regional building material distributor. The last seven of those years have been spent as general manager of one of the company's strongest distribution centers. You've loved the job, especially the amazing team of people who make your location a leader.

Then the CEO called to talk about your future with the company.

"You've done a great job for us, and the board of directors and I believe you're just getting started," she said. "We've decided to create a new role for you, vice president of business development, to help us continue to grow. The position, along with a nice bump in salary and perks, is yours as soon as you hire a suitable replacement."

One name immediately came to mind: Quinn, the very sharp, up-and-coming GM of one of your largest customers. He would be perfect. However, as a key employee with an important customer, Quinn is also effectively off-limits.

Four months have passed since that potentially life-changing call, and while you're anxious to get started on your next adventure, you have yet to make that critical hire. You've done all the usual things—posted the job, worked your network, and interviewed several promising candidates. A few have come close, but there's always something missing. Or is there?

When you talked it over with a longtime college friend, he didn't sugarcoat it. "Other than Quinn, who may not even be interested, I don't know that the perfect candidate exists. If you want to take the next step with your career, you need to pick someone and pull the trigger. That VP position may not last forever."

As excited as you are for your next career move, you're determined not to do it until you find the right person. Maybe your friend is right. Maybe the "perfect candidate" will never apply, and your refusal to hire a qualified replacement will cause you to lose the VP opportunity.

What would you do?

## CAST YOUR VOTE ONLINE AT: LBMJOURNAL.COM

**Just do it.** You've been offered an incredible opportunity, a position created just for you. Hire the most qualified candidate you've interviewed and move on.

**Trust your gut.** You haven't come this far by taking shortcuts. The right candidate is out there, and when you meet them, you'll know. Take your time and do it right.

**Poach Quinn.** Companies recruit from customers all the time. Plus, maybe Quinn is ready to move up. Let him know you're looking ... and see how he responds.

**Talk with the CEO.** Be candid. Explain your position, that you're excited for the VP opportunity but serious about finding the right replacement. Ask for her perspective.

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

# **LBM** JOURNAL<sup>®</sup> **DEALER** OF THE YEAR **2026**

## **CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER**

There's no question that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive in the lumber/building material industry. A hearty congratulations to **LBM JOURNAL'S 2026 DEALER OF THE YEAR** award winners.



**CATEGORY: \$100MM+**

**CARTER LUMBER**

Kent, OH

**CATEGORY: \$50MM-\$100MM**

**RED RIVER LUMBER**

Texarkana, TX

**CATEGORY: \$10MM-\$50MM**

**PETER LUMBER COMPANY**

Pleasantville, NJ

**CATEGORY: \$10MM**

**ISSAQUAH LUMBER**

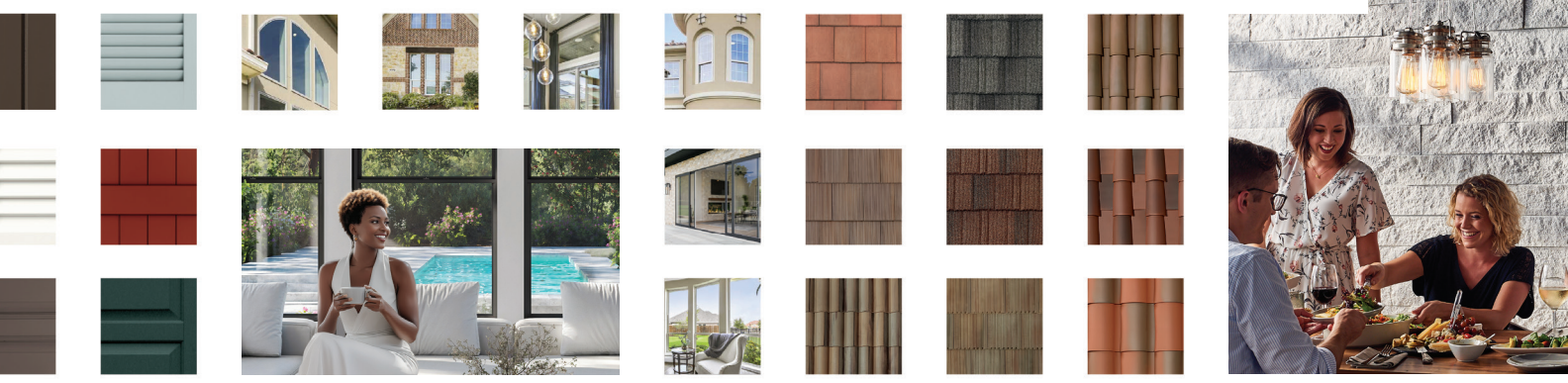
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