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Jan/Feb 2019



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An image from the Vintage Brewing Company website features Atlas's exposed trusses to market the space as a wedding venue. (Photo by Indian Summer Photography.)



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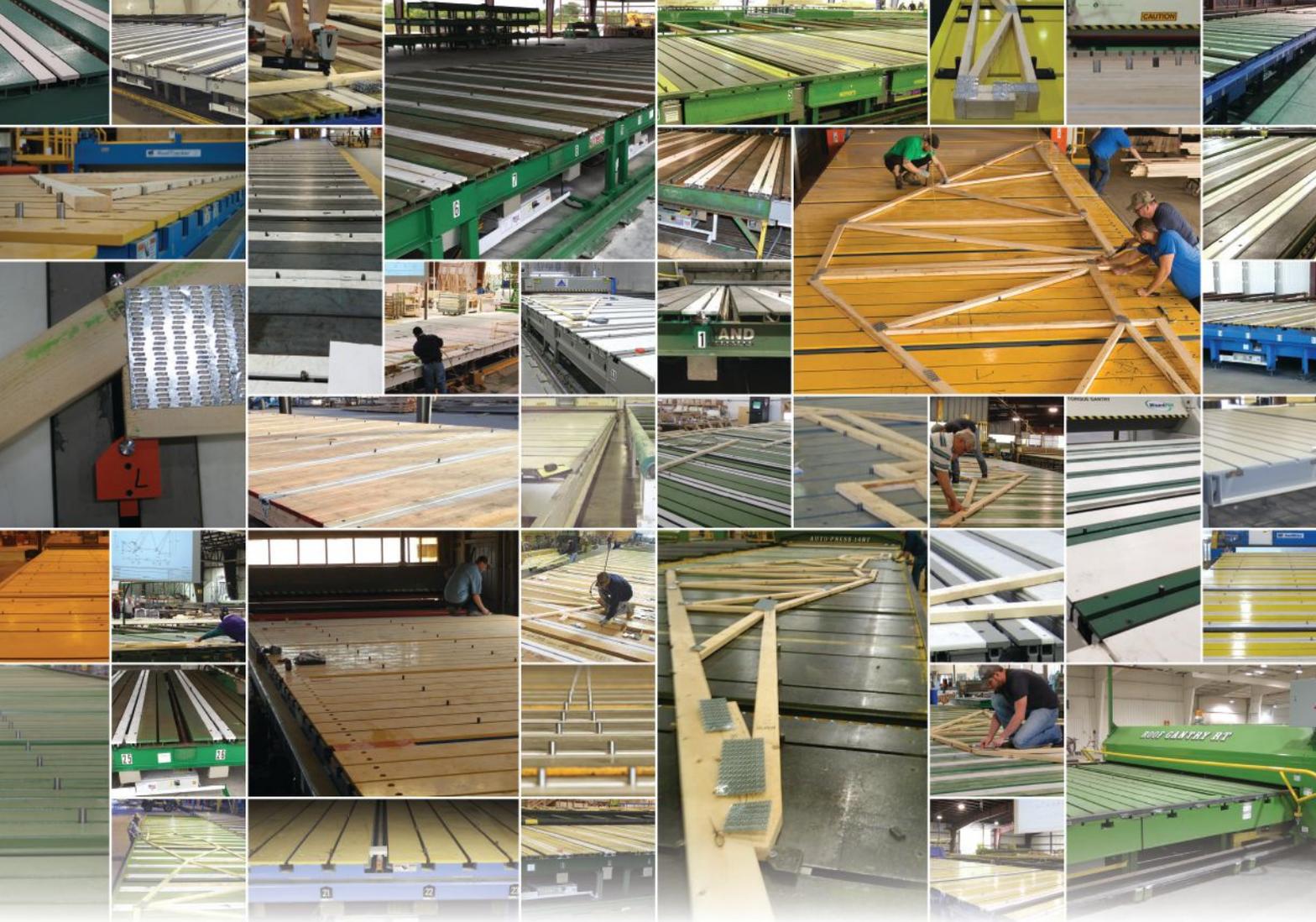
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The mission of *SBC Magazine* is to inform those engaged in the structural building components industry, which includes the membership of the Structural Building Components Association (SBCA), in an effort to promote their common interests. Further, *SBC Magazine* strives to ensure growth, continuity and increased professionalism in this industry by staying abreast of leading-edge issues and serving as the industry's primary source for information. The exclusive focus of *SBC Magazine's* editorial content is on the products and issues of importance to manufacturers and distributors of structural building components. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of Truss Publications or SBCA.

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE



Reaching More of the Industry Each Week

SBC MAGAZINE aims not only to serve as the voice of the structural framing and building envelope industry, it strives to be the main conduit for the information component manufacturers (CMs) find most valuable. Here's how we approach accomplishing those goals.

The print edition of the magazine is mailed out nine times a year to a little over 6,000 individuals across North America. Around the time it arrives in their mailboxes, another 4,500 receive an email with links to the digital edition. Interaction with the digital edition has grown steadily since its inception at the start of 2016 such that now an average of 2,078 unique readers access a digital edition of the magazine each week.

In addition to the magazine, SBCA emails out SBC Industry News and Energy Efficiency & Building Science News 48 weeks of the year and NFC Framing News the second and fourth week of every month. Over 6,300 people receive one or more of these email publications, and the amazing thing is that over 25 percent of the recipients open them, and an average of 13 percent read one or more articles.

In other words, SBC Magazine reaches a lot of people directly involved in the component manufacturing industry. Through the pages of the print magazine, we strive to share industry-specific best practices from CMs across the continent, as well as identify emerging trends in light-frame construction and explore solutions to technical challenges. We also shine a spotlight on some of the more challenging structures this industry frames and the people who help make it such a meaningful industry in which to work.

SBC Industry News pulls together some of the most impactful trends and insightful stories of the past week. We track which topics and stories garner the most interest and interaction and focus on those that, over the many years we've sent it out, have proven to be the most valuable to our readers.

Energy Efficiency & Building Science News focuses on the products, construction methods, and design trends influencing the building envelope. Many of the things highlighted in this publication will affect how roofs, walls, and floors are designed, insulated, and enclosed.



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NFC Framing News is intended primarily for framers and general contractors, but many of the issues they follow the closest—things like safety, OSHA compliance, and workforce management—are many of the same issues our readers face. This publication also provides insight into how framers and CMs are now collaborating through the National Framers Council (NFC).



If you aren't currently receiving one of these publications and you'd like to, you can [subscribe to them here](#). If you are a CM and you have done something you are either proud

of or think is noteworthy, please [let us know](#) and we will print it in *SBC Industry News*.

If you are a supplier to our readership, please make sure to send us your releases (editor@sbcmag.info) and we will consider those too. We may publish them in *SBC Industry News* or in *The Market Place*, which is the supplier-focused publication we add on to the digital edition of *SBC Magazine*. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean D. Shields".

Sean D. Shields, Managing Editor

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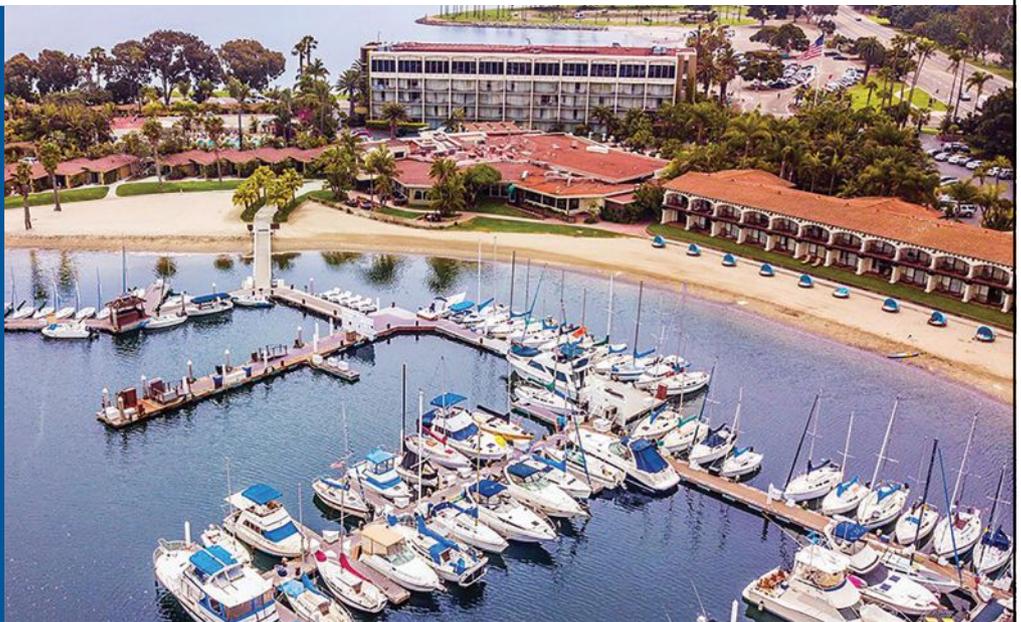
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The Value of One Good Idea

AS WE START THIS NEW YEAR, I want you to consider how much a good idea is worth to you. How much would you pay to purchase a solution that immediately increases your production capacity by five percent or removes a troubling barrier in your market and opens up additional sales opportunities?

Every day, you are asked to solve problems. Whether it's trying to increase production with existing resources to meet growing demand, address the changing needs of your customers, or accommodate the varying costs associated with your raw materials and transportation logistics, it's never ending and it's always a challenge. You can try to come up with all the answers yourself, but why would you want to? Especially when there is a large, national organization made up of your peers that are eager to share their lessons learned and industry best practices based on years of experience.

SBCA is a lot of things. In the largest sense, it's a group of component manufacturers (CMs) and suppliers that gives our industry a voice on everything from codes and standards to regulations and market trends. It also provides support to CMs on workforce issues and plant safety and helps develop industry risk management and best practice tools like jobsite packages, quality programs, and SBCRI research. These are the types of things none of us could do well on our own, so we band together and provide strength through numbers.



SBCA is also a facilitator. By hosting the BCMC show, Open Quarterly Meetings (see page 6) and regional meetings, as well as collaborating with state chapters, SBCA brings CMs and their suppliers together in a focused way we just wouldn't be able to do alone.

It's when we are together that the real value of the association is realized. We learn a lot during meetings and educational sessions, and we learn even more when we get together during and after dinner to talk through industry initiatives and challenges in the marketplace. So many good topics emerge from those unstructured conversations. Topics that help you think about your business in a new way. You gain a perspective you likely wouldn't have had without hearing the challenges and perspectives from other parts of the country.

I've heard many of those challenges and perspectives throughout my years of participation in SBCA activities. I think most of them are truly invaluable because they've provided me with a point of view I could never have achieved through just my own experiences.

How much is a new idea worth? If you're doing less than \$5 million in annual sales, your membership to SBCA is less than a thousand dollars. The cost of membership likely won't affect your bottom line, but having access to all the ideas SBCA helps generate will.

You can't really know or appreciate what you haven't seen or experienced. If you've been on the fence on whether to join, I'd love to talk with you further (president@sbcindustry.com). It's a decision I've never regretted and I promise you won't either. ■



Greg Griggs, SBCA President



ENSURE YOU'RE PROTECTED

Why quarterly insurance policy reviews are important

IMAGINE YOUR PLANT experiences a devastating catastrophe – a catastrophe that damages all of the equipment within it, large and small. Imagine that, once the dust settles and the reality of what just happened to you sinks in, you then allow yourself some slight relief from the thought that you have insurance. You should at least be able to recoup most of your losses.

Then, imagine your insurance company informs you that there are major gaps in your coverage for large pieces of equipment, and that the money you lost in the damage to your smaller tools would have been covered if you had purchased a certain kind of plan you didn't previously know existed.

A similar situation of loss and disappointment did happen to Shem Jessop, owner of Agra Tech LLC, a framing company based in Cedar City, Utah. While not a component manufacturing plant, a [devastating fire at one of his jobsites](#) near the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona this summer destroyed a multifamily structure he had been working on. In addition to virtually leveling the incomplete wood framing, the fire destroyed his tower crane and his crew's framing equipment.



Calamity can strike anyone, framers and CMs alike. CM Zeeland Lumber and Supply's Wyoming, Michigan facility was destroyed by a tornado in 2015. Imagine this happened to you.

In the aftermath, the shock and devastation of the fire was exacerbated by some painful lessons Shem learned about the state of his insurance coverage at the time of the fire – lessons he hopes to share for the benefit of others so they can avoid the same pitfalls. Shem's story is particularly instructive for owners of small to mid-sized companies without employees dedicated to monitoring insurance coverage. His experience helps demonstrate the importance of quarterly insurance reviews and provides some insight into what these reviews should include.

After the fire, Shem learned that though his destroyed tower crane was worth over \$200,000 at the time of the fire, it was covered in his insurance policy for only \$80,000 – the lien holder pay-off amount. Due to market demand, the value of Shem's crane grew far above the \$200,000 he had originally paid. In fact, this was something Shem actually noticed upon looking into his coverage months before the fire. Shem noted "several pieces of equipment [for which] we had some lack of cover-

age gaps," he says, and the destroyed tower crane was one of those pieces. He discussed the gaps with his insurance agent and assumed the issue was settled; however, while his coverage was corrected for several of the pieces, coverage for the crane was not.

First, Shem's experience underscores the importance of, as he points out, "keeping track of market value," and ensuring your coverage reflects the value of your equipment and lead times for finding a replacement. He

reminds companies to "periodically check what your equipment goes for so that you can adjust up or down if you need to so you're not over-insuring or under-insuring."

Spending money on premiums for insurance that doesn't appropriately cover what you have is, of course, less than helpful. To avoid mix-ups, it is prudent to send your agent/broker only the desired coverage amount of your equipment and avoid sending lien holder pay-off amounts, since this contributes to potential confusion. In addition, Shem advises that companies "check and double check" when it comes to correspondence with your insurance agent and any paperwork they return to you. A more thorough review of the insurance company's adjustments based on Shem's requests could have prevented a major loss in this case.

In addition to a loss due to a gap in coverage, Shem also incurred a preventable loss from a lack of small tools and equipment coverage. Shem's crew lost numerous uninsured hand tools in the fire, collectively amounting to an excess of \$100,000 in value. While listing all of these



Shem's wood framing during the fire.



Shem's destroyed tower crane in the aftermath of the fire.

items individually under a plan would have been tedious and unrealistically time-consuming, Shem learned that he could have insured these items under a small tools floater policy. Such a policy allows companies to insure tools worth \$2,500 or less in aggregate for a specified overall value, eliminating the need to individually list and insure each tool. Exploring these options with your insurance agent can mitigate your risk while also saving an extraordinary amount of time.

In short, Shem's advice is simple: Review your insurance policies at least quarterly to ensure coverage reflects the value of your equipment; communicate thoroughly and clearly with your insurance company about your needs, options, and any changes to your policy; and always check and double check the paperwork your agent sends after a change is made.

If he had to do things all over again, Shem says he would "have a date on

my calendar" set aside for quarterly insurance reviews and conversations with his insurance agent. Even if no coverage changes need to be made after a review, Shem still encourages that companies use that time to explore new options and discuss any business changes with their agents. "Get with your agent and make sure everybody's on the same page," he says.

Shem's experience illustrates that catastrophe can strike even smaller companies who might least expect it. "We're a small framer," Shem says, and so he thought something like this would "never ever happen to a company our size." However, the risk is there, and insurance is there to help prevent a major loss. It makes sense to ensure it will be there how you need it, when you need it. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Kevin Kutschenreuter explores business and manufacturing best practices to help component manufacturers advance the use of their innovative products.*

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Hold Hands Instead of Bandage Thumbs



A different approach to training new hires

WHEN IT COMES TO TRAINING

new production employees, Carl Allison warns: "Don't take anything for granted."

As component division manager for 84 Lumber, Carl knows that basing the success of a new hire on a trust in common sense and the hope that others will look out for the newbie doesn't work well. "Don't just rely on the 'you're a smart guy' approach," he says. "Thorough training is incredibly important, and focusing on safety

awareness is key." Recent articles have looked at how a better understanding of human needs can improve employee retention, and a large piece of that puzzle can be addressed by establishing a systematic approach to training for the newly hired.

"Take a look at a new guy that's building trusses that had a poor training program," says Carl. "He's swinging a hammer ten times to put on one plate. By the third day he's worn out and his hands are beat up." But it doesn't need to be this way, says Carl. "Best practices are key. We teach them to hit the plate only twice."

He explains that they use their senior employees to mentor the new hires. "In the first two weeks, we hold their hands. They're not expected to do anything real or build anything. There's no pressure to get up on the table and build product. We want them to feel like they're there just to learn."

Carl admits that "for a while, we were so desperate to hire people, we didn't take the time." He talked to one guy about why he quit after 13 days. The conversation shed a lot of light on the situation. "He told me that the supervisor hired him and then he never saw him again; he never even met the GM," says Carl. "The guy couldn't figure out open enrollment for his benefits. He hit his thumb five times a day and decided he just couldn't do the job."

Carl recognizes that everyone theoretically knows the importance of teaching safety and best practices, but he's learned that it needs to be about more than these basics to ensure everyone's thumbs stay healthy and they feel part of the team early on. It's about "teaching them the company's culture and leadership chain of command," says Carl. "Make sure your new employees know: Who do I go to when I have questions? What are HR best practices? How do my benefits work?"

Onboarding needs to be about "more than just how to swing the hammer

and build the truss," Carl adds. In addition to giving them the tools they need to be safe and productive, he says, "we are telling them the next step so they know how to get promoted." In Carl's experience, "when you do it the right way and spend the time to train them properly, they feel like they are part of something," he says. And that can make all the difference when it comes to retaining employees. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Mindy Caldwell explores how component manufacturers find success growing market share and building their employment base.*

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COMPONENT SAFETY



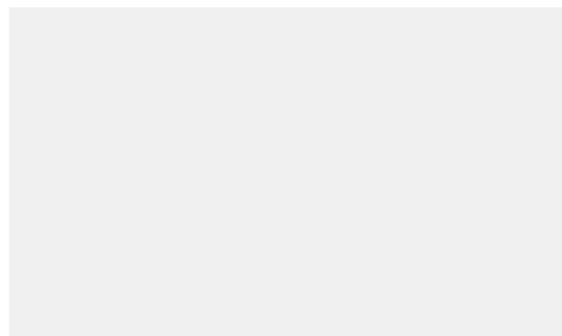
*Carl Allison
84 Lumber
Eighty Four, PA*

Regular Reminders Can Conserve Energy

Keeping your employees' hands safe could be as simple as adding a quick toolbox talk at the beginning of your next shift. How? Carl Allison of 84 Lumber noted that his employees, new folks in particular, were expending a lot of energy tacking plates to the lumber. Eight or ten hammer swings later and the result was a worn out employee and plenty of bruised and battered thumbs.

It's easy to overlook the obvious, especially if you're focused on production numbers without consciously including safety in everything you're doing. Now, just one part of Carl's training program involves this truss plate best practice: "We teach them to hit the plate only twice," Carl explains.

Teaching or reinforcing a best practice like limiting hammer swings (and protecting thumbs) doesn't need to be exhausting, just find a few minutes to gather everyone around a table and show a couple of examples. Rinse and repeat from time to time to keep these concepts fresh. **(Play video above to see an example.)**



Have a safety tip to share? Contact the SBCA Safety Committee at safety@sbcindustry.com

Mr. Stoltzfus Goes to Columbus



Why a component manufacturer also became a lawmaker



WITH A PAIR of tennis shoes and a pair of hiking boots, Reggie Stoltzfus battled the elements for 15 months and took to the streets of Ohio's 50th state legislative district southeast of Canton, Ohio, to tell voters why they should elect him to serve in the state legislature.

Reggie's campaign knocked on nearly 20,000 doors, listening to residents talk about their day-to-day issues and what the state could do to help them.

By Election Day, all of the door knocking and conversations paid off. Reggie, a Republican, garnered 27,051 votes, or 63 percent of total votes cast, beating his Democratic challenger, Cassie Gabelt, by almost 12,000 votes.

"The polling indicated we were going to win, but I wasn't taking for granted the possible 'blue wave' that everyone was talking about," he says. "My immediate reaction was relief that this 15-month journey was over and we were successful."

In addition to now being a freshman lawmaker, Reggie is president of Dutchcraft Truss in Minerva, Ohio. Dutchcraft is a floor and roof truss manufacturer with 30 employees working two seasonal shifts primarily building for residential and agricultural projects.

Reggie's desire to run for political office stems back to 2010, following the passage of the federal Affordable

Care Act. Opposed to the healthcare proposal, he contacted his congressman's office. After leaving a message, he expected someone from the congressman's office to call him back. Growing frustrated that he never received a call or email, he decided to run for office the next chance he could. In 2014, Reggie successfully ran for the Paris, Ohio, township board and has since served in that position until his recent election to the statehouse.

State Representative - District 50

Candidate	Votes	% of Votes
Cassie Gabet (D)	15,225	36.01%
Reggie L. Stoltzfus (R)	27,051	63.00%
Total Votes Cast	42,276	

"I see our country moving in a different direction than what our founding fathers really wanted this country to be," he says. "I see our freedoms getting eroded at every turn. For me, I feel it's my duty to do what I can to be a voice and keep those freedoms alive and not let the government get too big and take over our lives."

Reggie has many ideas he plans to take to the Ohio statehouse surrounding workforce development, vocational education, and many other issues. He said he is open to ideas from other component manufacturers in Ohio. "I live it every day, just like they do," he says. "I welcome anyone to bounce an idea off of me and see where we can go with it."

Reggie said he would like to see more CMs running for office and encourages CMs "to get out and meet anyone you can and let them put a face to the name and let them see you as a normal human just like them." Running for political office is no easy task, he says, but it is critical if the industry wants to get issues addressed in a manner that is best for component manufacturing. "If we aren't out there fighting for what we want, it's not going to necessarily go our way," he says. "We have to be that voice." ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: TJ Jerke tackles local, state, and federal issues that impact the daily operations of component manufacturers, and explores what they can do to advocate for their needs in the marketplace.

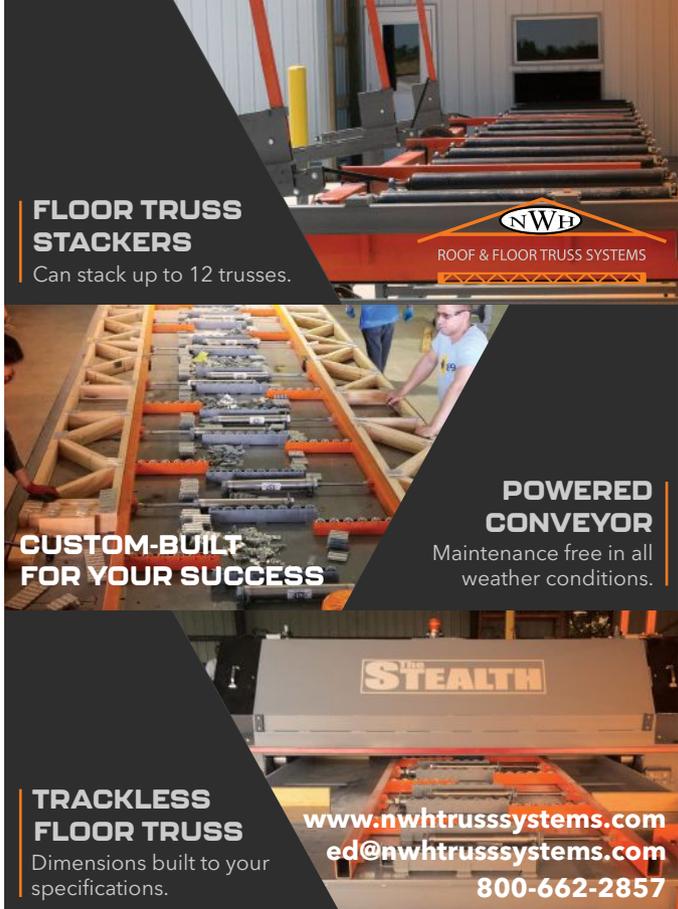
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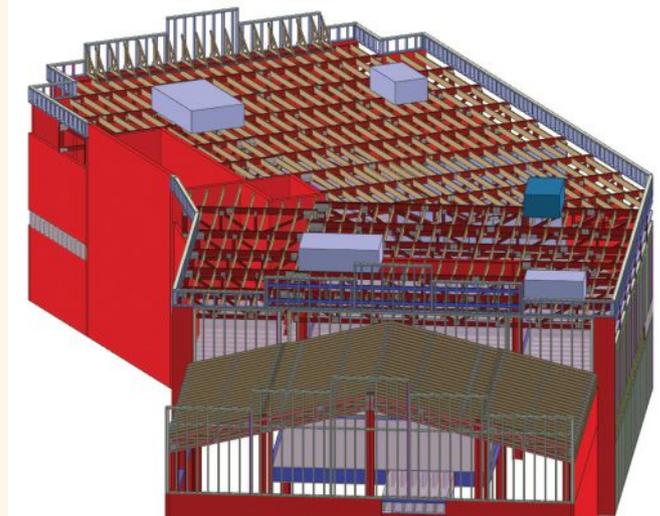
[Click here](#) for more photos and a time lapse video of the project from the ground up.

IT'S NOT OFTEN that a component manufacturer (CM) is asked to do a project that publicly displays the components they design and manufacture. If done right, these opportunities have the potential to positively represent the industry to the entire community.

One such project fell into the lap of Atlas Components, Inc. of Cherry Valley, Illinois. Mike Karceski, the company's president, says they had recently done some work for general contractor Friede & Associates on a large lake house in central Wisconsin. Pleased with Atlas's work, the GC contacted them when they were contracted to construct a large, complex building for Vintage Brewing



Exterior views of Vintage Brewing Company in Sauk City, Wisconsin. Design of the building began in early 2016 and the building broke ground in November 2016. It was finished in December 2017. (Photos by Tristin Rothwell.)



with Trusses

Company in Sauk City, Wisconsin. “They sent this exceedingly complicated plan,” Mike recalls. Comparing the project to previous work he had done, Mike says, “It wasn’t your modified big custom home, it was like four big custom homes.”

The project was a design-build project that required successfully joining numerous and diverse building elements. According to Friede & Associates, the finished structure would include up to 24-foot thick concrete foundation walls, a pre-cast floor system, structural steel framing for the upper two levels, exposed wood trusses, panelized wall framing, masonry elevator shafts and stairwells, EIFS (Exterior Insulation Finishing System), and a metal exterior skin. In addition, there would be a large glass viewing area through which guests could watch the brewing operation,

housed in a large vault area in the basement with walls 16-feet high.

Scott Truehl, Friede & Associates’ executive vice president and partner, says, “When we started talking about marrying all of those elements, it was important for us to be able to work with partners that we’ve worked with in the past that could help us understand what we were going to be looking for as well as what the finish was going to look like so that we could pass that information on to our suppliers.” Scott adds that “working with someone like Mike who we’ve worked with in the past” made it “easier to explain and talk about the importance of” the finished product.

Part of the challenge was that Vintage wanted a classic industrial look, using exposed trusses to help achieve it. Instead of hiding behind sheathing, Atlas’s trusses would be showpieces integral to the overall look and feel that Vintage wanted to create. For such a project that would require both intricate structural design and aesthetic concerns, Friede & Associates felt more confident offering the project to a CM whose work they knew and with whom they felt comfortable communicating.

When offered the project, Atlas knew the bid would have to cover the extra care and resources necessary to make trusses worthy of display. Karl Ropp, an Atlas truss designer

involved with the project, says, “Knowing that we would perhaps want to cull at least some of the lumber for visual appearance, or at least be cognizant of how it looked, that takes extra time and a little more care than we would normally have to do.” In addition to potentially more lumber culling, the design also included fire treated lumber (FRT) for the portions of the trusses that would be embedded in the wall. In addition, it was eventually decided that the trusses would be connected with a type of fastener not typically used on such a project: WS3, WS45 and WS6 MiTek screws. These extra material costs would add up. In addition to materials, extra labor costs would need to be accounted for as well, given the care that would need to be taken during production.

Atlas bid to design and manufacture the roof and floor trusses, leaving the walls to another CM. Once their bid was accepted, they assigned the project’s oversight to their most meticulous designer, John DeLuna, and let him “run with it,” Mike says.

The initial designs went through a number of revisions and requests for information (RFIs), but all the players on the project worked together closely to produce a stunning final project that went up during installation without any issues.

The building positively represents the truss industry and displays how exposed trusses can be used to create an aesthetically pleasing design. “I think it looks good, I really do,” says Mike. Vintage includes [numerous images on its website](#) displaying Atlas’s trusses in marketing the space as a wedding venue.

“It was incredibly well received right from the beginning,” says Scott. In fact, the building will be receiving a Gold Award in the \$2-\$10 million category at the Associated Builder & Contractor (ABC) of Wisconsin’s Projects of Distinction banquet in February of 2019.

Read on for more details about some of Atlas’s roof and floor design considerations (page 24), the production process (page 27), and the installation and completion of the project (page 28).



Vintage Brewing’s banquet hall, displaying exposed trusses, glass viewing area, and steel elements.



Dining area, exposed floor/ceiling trusses, and brewery. (Photos by Tristin Rothwell.)

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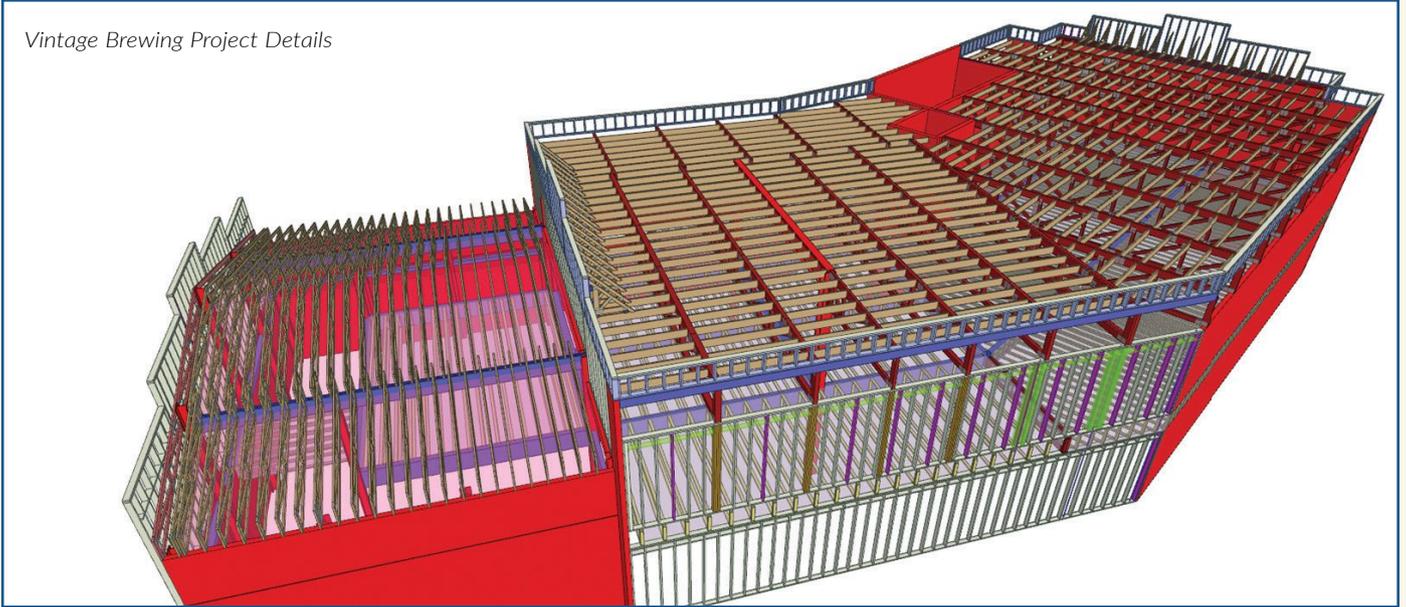
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DESIGNING BEAUTIFUL, YET INDUSTRIAL, LOOKING TRUSSES

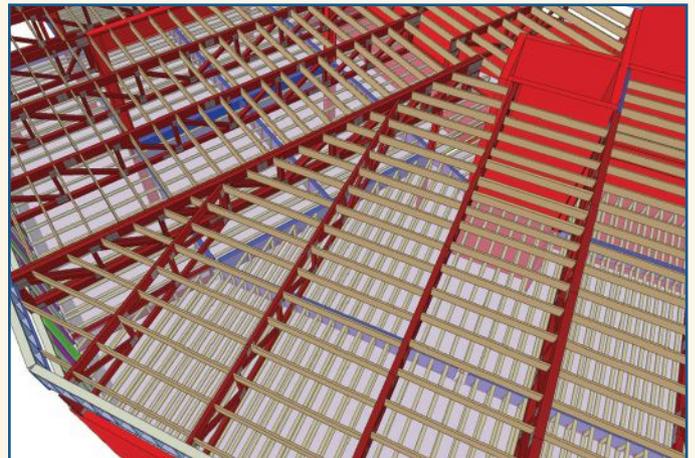
Vintage Brewing Project Details

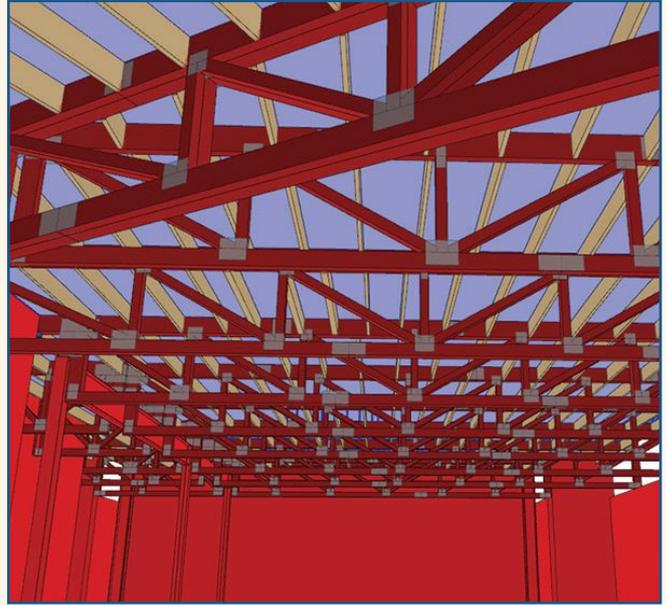


SINCE THE GC solicited their work, Atlas Components had the opportunity to provide input into the design of the project from somewhat early on. “We worked in conjunction with them [the architect and engineer] to create the structure,” says Mike. “We helped them out,” he says, and used “wood trusses to solve some of the structural problems that they had.” Through a back and forth approval process, Atlas was able to provide the industrial look Vintage wanted along with a structurally sound roof and floor system. Their design suggestions helped provide a viable and less expensive option for the builder such that they did not need to “go and design the whole thing with heavy timbers. They could have done that,” says Mike.

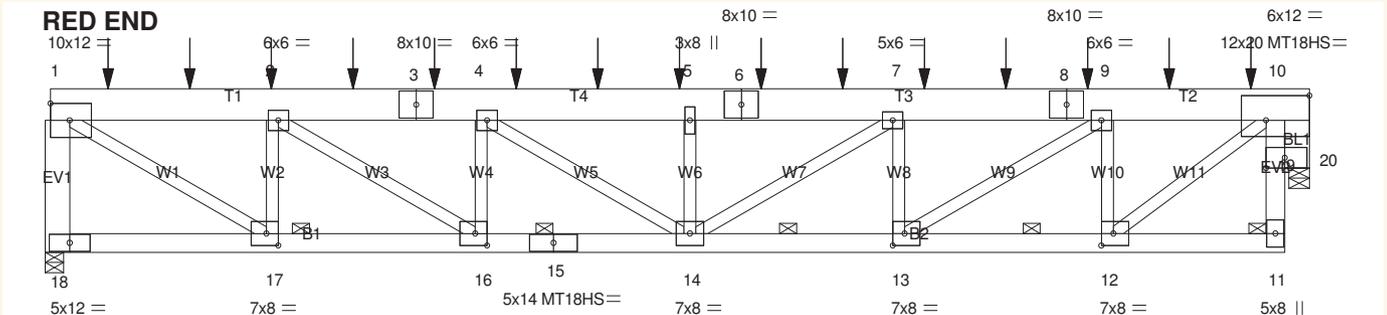
Most of the visible parallel-chord roof trusses were four feet deep and needed to span 30-42 feet, typically at eight feet on center. These larger trusses were “four-ply flat trusses that had 2x10s running between them on the top,” says Mike. In an area over a balcony, however, the trusses were single ply and two feet on center, but display a somewhat unusual pitch. “The bottom and the top have the same pitch so they’re sort of like parallel chord, but they’re not 4x2, they’re 2x4, and that’s all visible,” says Mike.

While John had primary ownership of the project, Atlas has a policy of bringing all of their truss designers in on considerations that are “outside of the norm,” says Karl. “We have a dynamic in this office where we will talk to each other, and I think that’s really valuable,” he adds. “That makes everyone better overall.” Given the complex nature of the project, the designers had collaborative discussion on multiple design features.



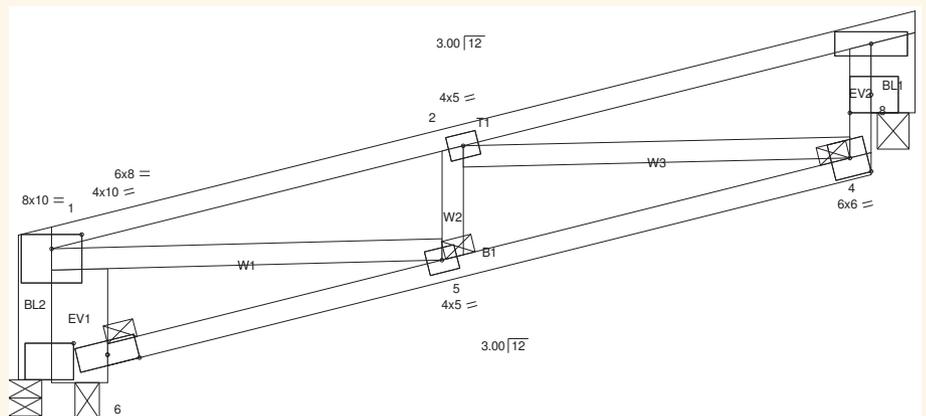


Visible floor/ceiling trusses above dining area

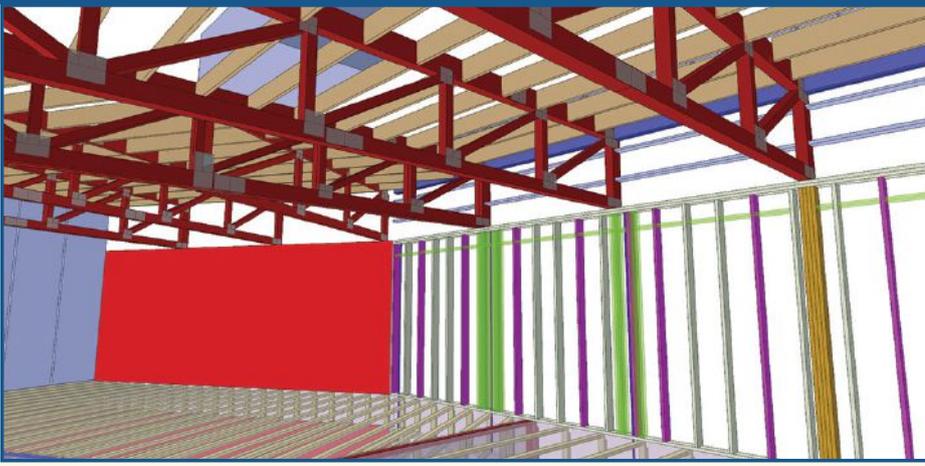


Floor/ceiling truss detail

One issue that required working through together was the fact that the ends of certain trusses needed to be made of FRT. Referring to the detail below, Karl says, "In the classic top chord bearing setup, the top chord goes through. Well this doesn't. This is relying completely on the plate for the shear and the load transfer and all that, but it's driven by the need to be all FRT." He explains, "The plate was doing the work of a hanger almost."



Fire-Treated Wood Truss Detail: BL2 is made of FRT.



Another feature of special consideration was a sliding partition wall (at far left in illustration above). The wall features a partition “that’s suspended from the trusses,” Karl says, and can be pulled out to separate two dining areas or tucked away into a recessed space in the wall to create a larger open area. He adds that “the weight is borne by the roof” entirely as “it doesn’t roll on a track on the floor.” The wall required going through a variety of load cases to account for when it is both pulled out and tucked away. Karl says, “When it’s parked in its garage, so to speak,” the partition’s entire weight hangs under the last few feet of the truss, “and when it’s open, it’s more uniformly distributed,” requiring a design that “works in all conditions.”

Atlas appreciated the responses to their requests for information and design suggestions, as their level of detail and depth was more than what Atlas typically receives. Ultimately, the detailed communication among all the players on the Vintage project helped facilitate its success. Instead of seeing the more detailed feedback as simply more work to wade through, Karl always welcomes as much information as possible, seeing it as critical for helping him solve problems most efficiently.

Karl says the level of detailed design recommendations that Atlas is willing to offer, even about matters not directly related to their part of the project, is one way Atlas differentiates itself from competition. “I want a fruitful, long-term relationship with people,” says Karl, and offering design help, “bringing to bear anything that I can to make it better,” can only help Atlas in the long run as clients notice Atlas’s expertise and willingness to go the extra mile to ensure a successful project.

In addition to displaying the aesthetic potential of trusses, the project also highlights the value CMs can bring to the design process when involved early on, giving them an opportunity to find and offer solutions using their unique expertise.

Read on to learn more about the special considerations Atlas made in producing (page 27) and installing (page 28) these trusses.

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PRODUCING A PERFECT-LOOKING PRODUCT

KNOWING THEIR WORK would be visible for the Vintage Brewing project, Mike says they “worked hard to make the trusses look pretty.” They took special care with the plates and lumber during production to prevent damage. “We saw this as an opportunity,” he says, as Atlas’s work could either “promote or hinder the industry as a whole.” Mike recounts that they wanted to create something that would cause onlookers to say “Wow, that’s really cool. I didn’t know you could do that with trusses.”



Atlas’s experience completing the job demonstrates that an aesthetically pleasing project such as the Vintage facility can include greater than usual work and resources that CMs should be sure to account for upfront. During production, the project required that Atlas reserve a special area in their shop for it. “It was such an ongoing thing that we created its own space,” says Mike. The project took approximately three weeks in production as opposed to the typical time of up to two days. One of the biggest expenses, however, were the fasteners used to assemble the multi-

ply trusses. The plies were attached with three rows of WS3, WS45 and WS6 MiTek screws. Each row of fasteners were four inches on center. The number of screws, says Mike, meant they had to use what “would normally be a five-year supply of hardware for one job.” Since they would be visible, templates were made to ensure the screws were placed evenly. Atlas had an engineering student as a summer intern at the time who was assigned the task of screwing all the plies together.

In keeping with the 19th century, industrial aesthetic, as well as Vintage’s desire for a darker atmosphere, the trusses were stained after installation.



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SMOOTH INSTALLATION STARTS WITH SMART PLANNING

ATLAS'S ROOF and floor trusses for the Vintage Brewing project were installed without any issues. Scott Truehl, Friede & Associates, says, "It went very well...the key there was the cooperation with all the players, understanding what the trusses were going to be like [and] how they were going to deliver them."

The finished building is now a jewel in the crown of Sauk City, which has seen more development activity as a result. Scott says that the city is looking into "redevelopment of other projects because of this project." In addition, the building has also been a contributing factor in road construction and utility improvements in the city.



Best of all, the Vintage Brewing project showcases the truss industry in a positive light and serves as a demonstration of the possibilities of truss design. It shows that, in the right circumstances, they can be both structural and aesthetic. ■

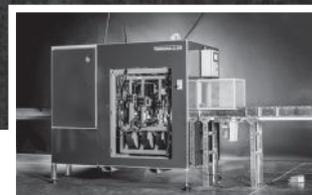
ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Kevin Kutschenreuter explores business and manufacturing best practices to help component manufacturers advance the use of their innovative products.*

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After the trusses were installed, they were stained to give the wood an aged look that fit with the 19th century industrial aesthetic Vintage was looking for in the dining areas. These photos show the trusses before and after staining. (Photos from Friede & Associates.)



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For example, Builders FirstSource recently added two additional computer stations in one area of their new Nashville, Tennessee location. "We basically cut the walking distance one-third or more, which meant we were freeing up two-thirds of the steps a couple of our folks were taking," explains Chris Cozart, director of component manufacturing systems. "We were able to take that recaptured time and turn it into being more productive in other areas." The productivity, Chris explains, can be even greater depending on the size of your manufacturing setups.

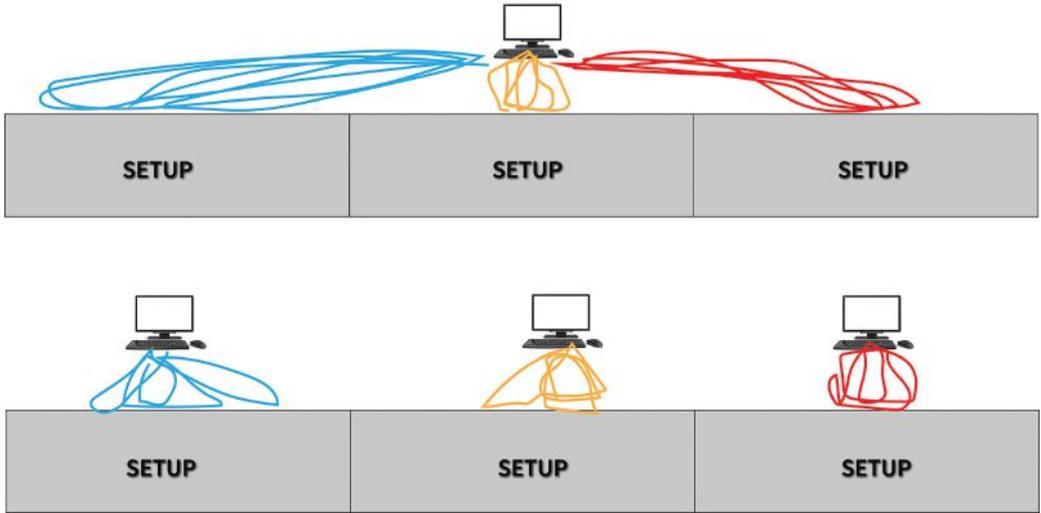
There are some costs associated with making these kinds of technology upgrades,



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but the return on investment (ROI) can be incredible once the new system is in place. "Sure, it might take a thousand-dollar buy-in," Chris adds, "but if the efficiency it cre-

ates allows you to push another job through in a day, and the profit from that job is a thousand dollars, you've made that investment back in only one day." ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Molly Butz searches for the ways information technology shapes and fosters ingenuity in the component manufacturing industry.

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Senior Truss Designer Nelson Truss Edgerton, WI

How'd you get into this industry?

Quite by accident. After graduating from UW-Madison with a Communication Arts degree in 1988, I took a sales job with Georgia-Pacific promoting building products to Madison, Wisconsin-area lumberyards during which time I became interested in their engineered lumber. Not too long after GP closed down their facility in Madison, I was asked to enter the truss world by a former GP client who also had a small truss company. That small truss company sent me to a component design school operating out of St. Louis at the time. Several years later, when searching for new employment, I resolved to work for a company with people I enjoyed and a job I liked. That short search led me to Nelson Truss as a truss technician where I have been since 2003.

What's your favorite part about being in this industry?

What could you do without?

One of my favorite parts about being in the component industry and my role as a truss technician is it is a unique job; at parties, I have met many a doctor, lawyer, teacher, etc., but I can say that I have never shown up at a party and met another truss

designer. But on a more serious note, I look at truss design as both art and science. We help builders and homeowners achieve beautiful homes while saving on labor,

materials, and frustration by solving their issues on paper or the computer before they reach the field. It is also satisfying to help families devastated by fire to make their lives whole again—many times upgrading their homes to be more beautiful, more structurally sound, and more energy efficient. With all of those positive things said about the industry, I sure could do without the extended truss lead times that inhibit us from helping more people get what they want.

What's your company, market, or SBCA chapter focused on right now?

Nelson Truss acquired new truss equipment recently. As a result of our increased production capacity, we needed more people. Trying to utilize our equipment as efficiently as possible along with training the new employees and positioning them in areas commensurate with their skills and interests is a great challenge at the moment.

What challenges do you see for the industry in the future, and what should SBCA be working on now to meet those challenges?

If the economy stays red hot and continues to expand, I see an increased need for more production capacity from component manufacturers and then an increased need for more field labor along with more raw materials. To help currently with our increased need for production at Nelson Truss, we partner with several other component manufacturers in and around our geographical area with whom I am grateful for their help. It would be really cool if the truss design files could be standardized across different software types, much like DWG and DXF files, so that we could more readily send our electronic truss designs to a wider cross section of truss plants any of whom may have a softer schedule at times—thereby keeping our clients on schedule with receiving trusses.

When you're not thinking about trusses, what keeps you busy?

After my immediate family responsibilities have been taken care of, I like to train Brazilian Jiu-jitsu several times a week. I find BJJ a great adjunct to life; despite the occasional stitches and black eyes, one gains humility, problem solving, learning to be comfortable in uncomfortable situations, resiliency, etc. In addition, I enjoy reading philosophy on the ultimate issues of life and spending fun time with family. ■

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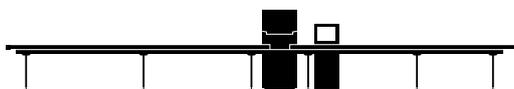
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AS WE ENTER 2019, we forge our hopes and dreams for the coming year while recalling our fondest memories of the 2018. One of our best memories as SBCA staff, though it was bittersweet, was posing for the photo above to honor SBCA member and friend of the industry, Kenny Cloyd, who passed away last June (see the Sept/Oct 2018 issue of SBC to read about his life).

This photo reminds us how close-knit we are and how much we enjoy interacting with and serving all of you. If there is any way we can help you this year, please don't hesitate to reach out at editor@sbcmag.info. Let us be a part of helping you achieve your goals this year. ■

A large piece of roasted meat, possibly pork, is shown on a spit. A hand is using a large knife to slice a piece of the meat. In the foreground, a wooden truss structure is visible, made of many thin wooden slats arranged in a triangular pattern. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a restaurant or food stand setting.

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A Primer on the Architectural Billings Index

Mark Your Calendar

JANUARY 16

SBCA Capital Area Chapter Meeting

Join chapter members at the Hyatt Dulles Hotel at the Dulles International Airport.

JANUARY 22

SBCA Webinar: President's Roundtable – An SBCA Update

Start out the new year by spending an hour with SBCA president Greg Griggs as he lays out leadership's vision for the year and provides an update on current SBCA initiatives.

FEBRUARY 14

SBCA Minnesota Chapter Meeting

Save the date – time and location to be announced. See website for agenda.

FEBRUARY 20

Iowa Truss Manufacturer's Association Legislative Breakfast

Join fellow Iowa CMs for a legislative breakfast at the Iowa State Capitol Building.

FEBRUARY 20

SBCA Carolinas Chapter Meeting

Save the date – time and location to be announced.

FEBRUARY 26-28

SBCA Open Quarterly Meeting

All are welcome to join SBCA's Board at the Bahia Resort Hotel in San Diego for education, committee meetings and a variety of networking opportunities.

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It's Time to Insist on Innovation

Mike Ruede is Executive Vice President of A-1 Roof Trusses in Fort Pierce, Florida. He serves on SBCA's Executive Committee and was the 2018 recipient of the SBC Industry Leadership Award.

INNOVATION IS A WORD that is currently criticized in the business world for being over utilized. However, I would argue its actual application is being seriously underutilized in our own industry. To be fair, our customers are not traditionally known for their swift adoption of leading-edge technologies. It's hard, then, for us as their suppliers to adopt a mindset of seeking out and investing heavily in new ways of doing things.

But the labor shortage is quickly changing all of that. Our customers can't find sufficient manpower to construct the buildings they want to build. As a result, they are being forced to look for new, yes innovative, ways to complete jobs using less people. That should be great news for our industry since one significant advantage our products have is that they require less labor, and less skill, to install.

Market share of roof trusses, wall panels and floor trusses have all increased since 2012, but not nearly as much as they should have. One of the problems is that we also struggle to find enough qualified individuals to increase our production capacity to meet the demand from our customers. Extended lead times prompt our customers to consider other alternatives and that should concern every one of us.

The Europeans and Australians have been struggling with a similar labor shortage in manufacturing and construction for a long time, and as a consequence they are ahead of us

when it comes to finding innovative, labor-efficient ways to get the job done. One needs to look no further than companies like Hundegger, Randek and Trussmatic to see some of the potential solutions to our labor constraints.

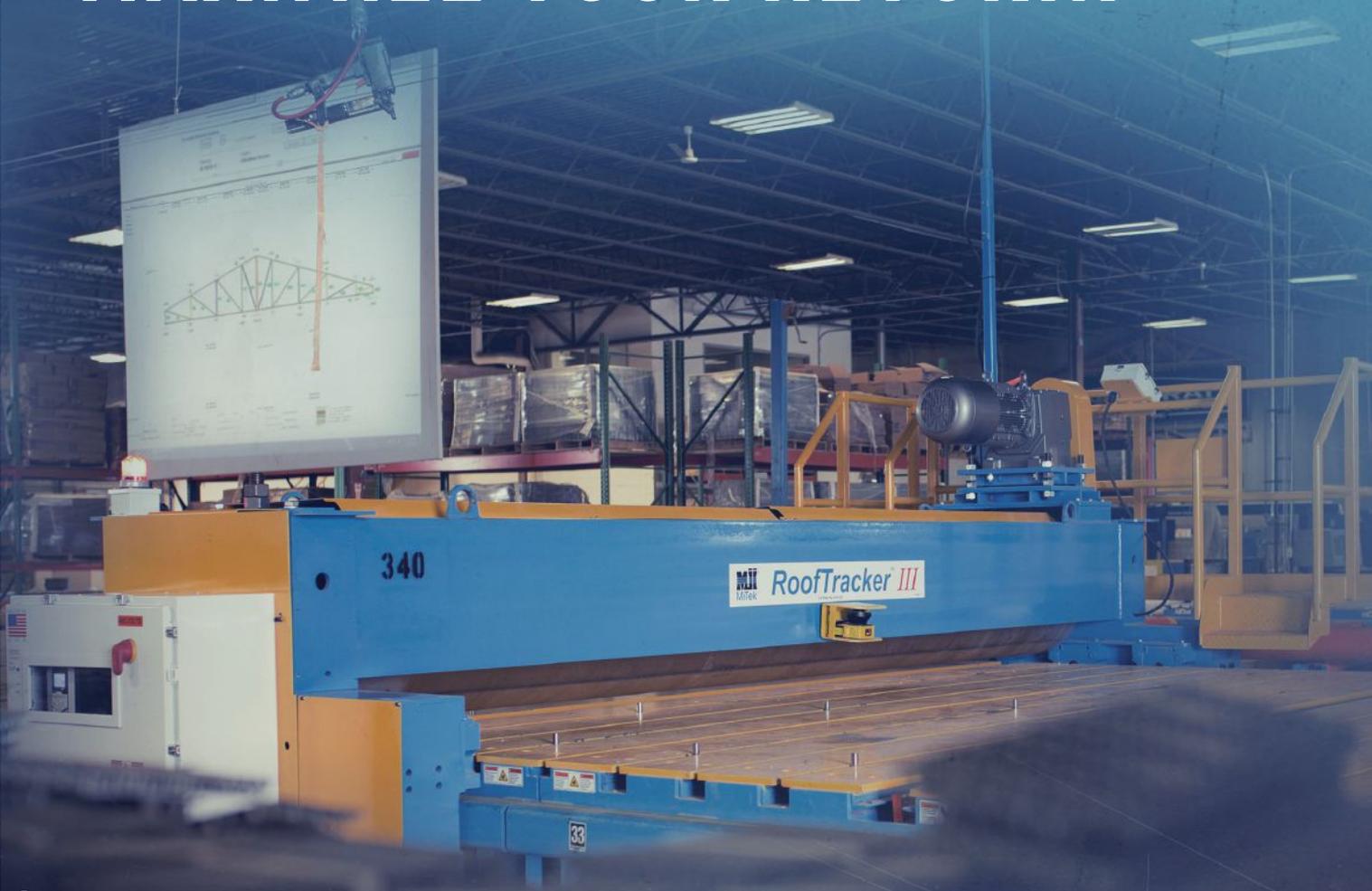
If our industry is going to effectively meet the future needs of our customers, we aren't going to do it by throwing people at it. We are going to have to find innovative ways to increase production capacity (and potentially delivery capacity) with less people. Component manufacturers need to be pushing their current equipment providers to find better solutions to our overall throughput challenges. We

“If our industry is going to effectively meet the future needs of our customers...we are going to have to find innovative ways to increase production capacity...with less people.”

also need to look beyond our industry and look at what other manufacturers are relying on to automate everything from batching to material handling.

I look forward to seeing what issues the SBCA Equipment Council takes up along these lines and what we can continue to push for individually with our suppliers. This is the year our industry needs to collectively insist on greater innovation in the plant or our customers may increasingly look elsewhere for solutions. ■

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SBCA UPDATE

CM & Supplier Team Up to Reach 600 Students

by Mindy Caldwell



BRIAN JOHNSON OF Eastern Engineered Wood Products (EEWP) has been involved in the Capital Area Chapter of SBCA for many years. So when he began pulling together a group to be a part of his Tech Room at the HBA of Richmond's first Student Construction Conference, one of the first calls he made was to SBCA staff. Brian had heard about SBCA's Emerging Leaders Committee and thought it would be powerful to have a member of that group in the Tech Room talking to students. It just so happened that 24-year-old committee member Jared Dix of Apex Truss (Warsaw, Virginia) was more than happy to lend his youth and enthusiasm for the industry to the effort.

"The Tech Room was EEWP's idea to give the WOW affect when the students walked in," Brian explains. "Jared was our spokesperson in the room." Brian and Jared were also joined by component manufacturers from Homestead Building Systems (Bristow, Virginia), as well as representatives from MiTek and Weyerhaeuser Trus Joist. Held in the training facility conference room just off the playing field, the space was "a very professional setting" for all of the interactive vendor stations. The group demonstrated "different design

software and videos displaying areas of structural design and automation (robotics) at the plants," says Brian. "Our message was that a student can go to a two-year community college and walk out with an architectural engineering degree and be designing in the components/EWP industry."

"The training center was a cool building for the event," says Jared. "This school district is starting career training in middle school. It was great to see students that young all the way through community college. There were most definitely a few stars that took serious interest in what we had to offer."

Jared also found the event beneficial for developing new relationships to take his workforce development efforts beyond the event and back to Apex, which is located in a "very rural" part of Virginia. He made a contact with the Henrico County Career and Technical Education (CTE) program that resulted in the opportunity to visit the house that is being built by students in the carpentry program at their Advanced Career Education Center. "The students build a house over the course of a couple of years with first and second year students doing the rough framing and older students learning how to do the finish work," Jared explains. "Apex will get involved by providing the trusses for their next project."

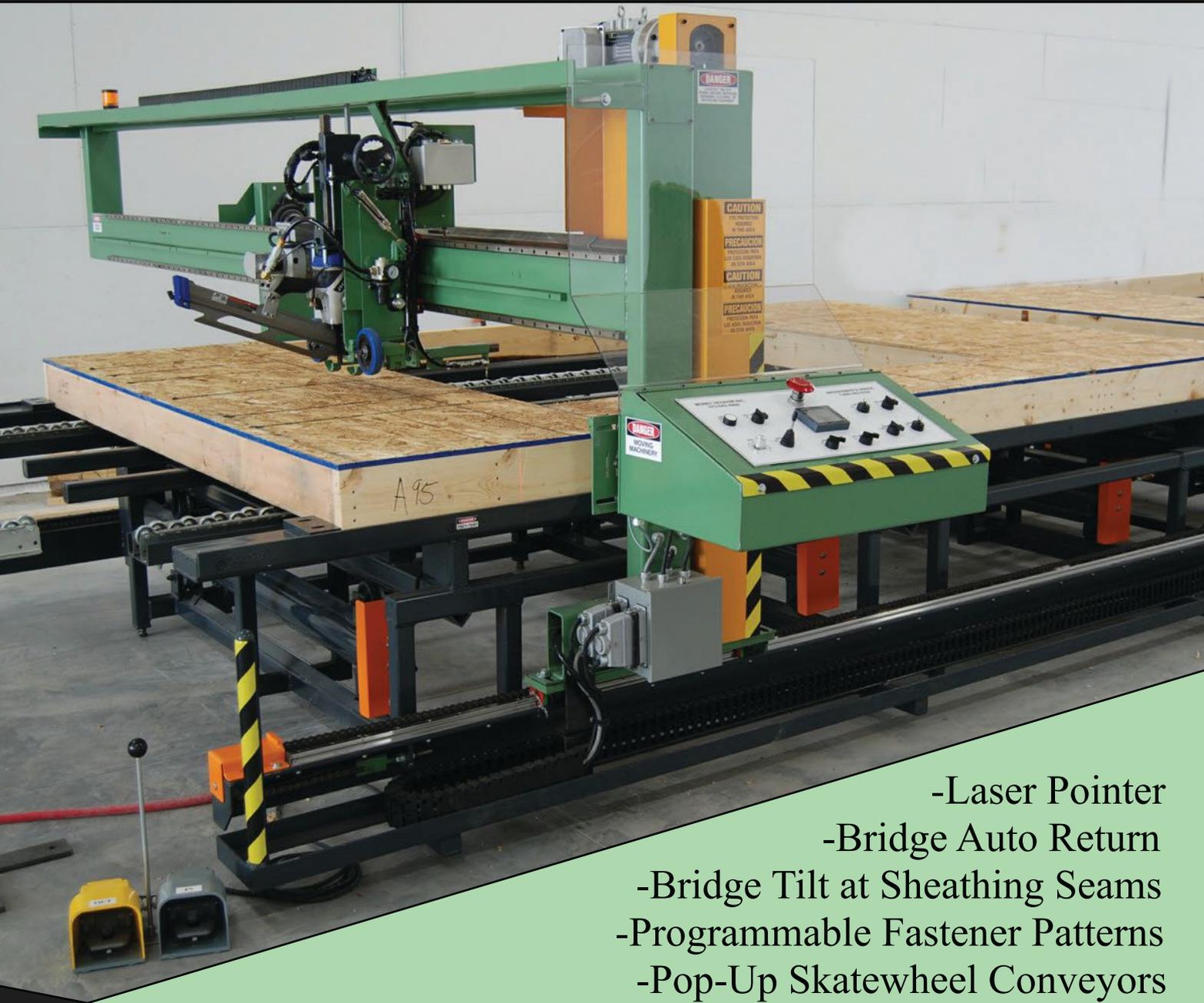
"It was a huge success!" Brian reports, as the event drew 600 students from four counties in the Richmond, Virginia area. Plans for a second Student Construction Conference are already in the works. "We are not stopping with this day in Richmond," says Brian.

Looking for more ideas on how to engage students in your local area? The Workforce Development section of SBCA's website features a variety of resources, including a video promoting the industry and several case studies that highlight the creative ways component manufacturers around the country are getting into schools and in front of young people with the career opportunities our industry has to offer. If you have questions, suggestions, or a story to share, please reach out at editor@sbcmag.info. ■



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CM Gets Girder Solution from Chapter & BCSI

by Laura Sonderlund & Sean Shields



THE MID-ATLANTIC CHAPTER MEETING that was held in November provided a good example of why it's valuable for component manufacturers (CMs) to gather together and share ideas. In this case, attendees to the Mid-Atlantic meeting checked their competitive hats at the door and as a collective group addressed an issue that Keith Myers of Woodhaven Lumber brought to light.

An inspector in a local township would not approve a three-ply girder because he couldn't see, and therefore verify, the nailing pattern attaching two of the trusses. Other attendees at the meeting commented on having the same issue on different occasions and suggested using screws to attach the trusses or flipping the initial two trusses before attaching the third truss so both sides of the girder would have visible nails. Although these suggestions were viable solutions, it wasn't necessarily as cost-effective or time-efficient as Keith would prefer.

After bringing the issue to SBCA staff, another potential solution was found within the BCSI Booklet and B9 Summary Sheet on nail fasteners for multi-ply girders. These documents outline that multi-ply girders are permitted to be fastened together by nails and visible nail heads are "not required if the multi-ply

girder is fastened by the truss manufacturer at the manufacturing plant, as the in-plant QC program and third-party inspection process assures that the fastening is performed per the requirements of the TDD."

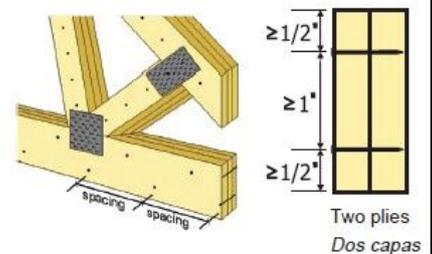
Between the meeting conversation and follow-up with SBCA staff, Keith now has a few options to consider to resolve this issue. Other events where this approach to problem-solving often occurs is the Building Component Manufacturers Conference (BCCM) and SBCA Open Quarterly Meetings (OQMs). If you aren't currently participating in SBCA events, consider attending for the valuable insight that comes from discussion among CMs and don't hesitate to contact SBCA staff regarding any questions you may have.

For additional information, SBCA has gathered a wealth of information CMs can access online that provide guidance, best practices and tools to address situations like the one Keith faced. The primary sources are SBCA's Topical Library, technical best practices, workforce development, BCSI, CM Toolbox and bestwaytoframe.com. ■

Nail Fasteners

Girder trusses up to three plies can be fastened together with nails. Nail each additional ply in accordance with the specified schedule on the TDD.

Note: Multi-ply girders that are fastened together with nails at the jobsite shall have the nail heads visible for inspection. This is not required if the multi-ply girder is fastened by the truss manufacturer at the manufacturing plant, as the in-plant QC program and third-party inspection process assures that the fastening is performed per the requirements of the TDD.



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INDUSTRY TRENDS

Crowd & Dancing Blamed for Clemson Floor Collapse

Originally published by: WSPA 7-TV • December 5, 2018

EDITOR'S NOTE: A report regarding the floor collapse at a party involving Clemson University students appears to confirm our speculation shortly after the event that the number of people confined to the small space combined with the rhythmic dancing were the likely causes of the floor truss collapse.



IT'S BEEN MORE than 6 weeks since homecoming weekend at Clemson University turned into a nightmare for dozens of people at a Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity party, after a floor gave way under their feet.

More than 30 people were sent to the hospital and everyone was left wanting answers.

In a new report published by a third party inspector, EFI Global, the lead engineer found that there were no problems with the way the floor was built at the Woodlands of Clemson clubhouse.

Instead, he stated the collapse was likely caused by the “rhythmic jumping up and down of the closely spaced crowd attending the party, overloading the trusses.”

Attorney John Reckenbeil of the Law Office of John G. Reckenbeil reviewed the report with 7 News on Tuesday, stating that because this was an unforeseeable situation for the building architects, he believes the property owners would not be liable.

“The floors weren’t built for them to jump up and down in unison and create the weight that they created,” he explained.

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Instead, Reckenbeil believes the liability would fall on the host of the party, the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. He further explained that if an indemnity agreement was signed with the apartment complex, the fraternity would be responsible for any damages.

"These people that were being the social host probably had some sort

of knowledge that they were going to have a big party and a DJ and dancing, and ultimately that they would be responsible for it."

Meanwhile, many who fell are still recovering from the fall.

"Why did they let everyone come into the party? So many people into the party, knowing the capacity," said

Kentravious Bell, a 21-year-old from Greenwood who had to get 6 stitches after falling through the floor.

"My hospital bill is like 5 thousand dollars."

Bell said a week after the incident, he got a lawyer to hold Kappa Alpha Psi responsible for paying his medical bills.

According to Reckenbeil, if the fraternity is sued by those injured for negligence, the money would likely come from the Kappa Alpha Psi's insurance company that was covering the event for the homecoming weekend party.

Still, with limits on what insurance can pay out for damages, Reckenbeil said it's likely not everyone injured would get all of the money needed to cover medical bills. "This is a situation where you've got multi-millions of dollars of damages that ultimately these individuals will never see." ■

Reprinted from SBC Industry News. Originally posted on December 17, 2018.



20 SBCA 19 Open Quarterly Meetings

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48' - 70' Stretch w/Sliding Tandems & Hyd. Front-End



20' Pintle-Hook w/Hydraulic Lift & Split Rollers



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48' Inverted Truss Flat-Bed w/Removable Side Sections

Stretch Roll-off Trailers



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53' - 80' Stretch w/Tri-Dems



48' - 70' Stretch



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Stretch Roll-off



53' – 80' Stretch Roll-off w/Lift Axle



Tandems & Hyd. Front-End



36' – 51' Stretch Roll-off



60' Stretch w/Flat Profile



42' – 60' Stretch Roll-off

Why Scientific Truss Weather Testing Has Value for CMs

by Evan Protexter, P.E. & Kirk Grundal, P.E.



STEP ONE OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD is to ask a question. In the article [Weathering Trusses, Exposing the Effect of Time and Nature](#), we took the first step and asked how weather might impact the performance of trusses including but not limited to truss structural performance characteristics. Now we can move on to step two. This involves doing background research to determine if performing testing is necessary, or if the information sought is already available.

Given the fact that trusses have been part of the building industry since the 1950s, it is reasonable to believe that some effort has been made to learn about trusses exposed to the elements.

The most critical part of literature research is determining whether the research answers the initial question in the first place. There are plenty of resources on construction using

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metal plate connected wood trusses: [Forest Products Laboratory, TPI 1](#) and [SBCA](#) to name three.

While all data can be useful, all reports that have been discovered so far have left the question of a truss's structural integrity due to extensive weathering unanswered.

While there have been no reports found that explicitly answer the aforementioned question regarding truss performance, a number of reports regarding truss plate movement due to moisture and weathering have been helpful.

One example of this is an [Alpine internal study](#) in which joint samples were exposed to weather under various storage conditions and tested for lateral resistance. This information increases our knowledge of plate movement and is being used as a reference.

The weathering testing that is taking place and is covered through this series of articles is critical to answer the questions that component manufacturers have about trusses that have been left outside. By performing testing that is directed at truss performance and not just one piece of the weathering puzzle, the industry will be able to say with confidence whether trusses left outside will perform as initially expected. ■

Reprinted from SBC Industry News.
Originally posted on December 10, 2018.

Additional Information:

- [SBCA Quality Control](#)
- [Structural Building Components Research Institute](#)
- [Best Way to Frame](#)
- SBC Magazine articles and news items:
 - [SBCA Testing Impact of Weather on Trusses](#)
 - [Weathering Trusses, Exposing the Effect of Time and Nature](#)
 - [How Long is Too Long?](#)
- [Topical library articles](#)
- Durability articles:
 - [Do You Know What It Takes to Pick the Perfect Plate](#)
 - [Preemptive Design](#)
- [FPL Research Unit: Durability and Wood Protection Research](#)

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Framer Contracts 101: Understanding Indemnity Provisions

by Kevin Kutschenreuter



Framing Subcontract Risk—Indemnity

- What does indemnity mean?
- Not all indemnity provisions are the same
- State anti-indemnity statutes may bar sole negligence indemnity or even concurrent negligence indemnity
- Goal of limited indemnity and no automatic obligation of defending the GC and owner

ONE OF THE PRESENTATIONS that sparked the most conversation and interest during the first annual Framer Summit (held October 23-24 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin) was NFC legal counsel Kent Pagel's (speaking in photo above) discussion of the major areas of risk framing subcontractors face. Kent, a partner at Pagel, Davis, and Hill, P.C., helped attendees understand the consequences of certain types of contract provisions and suggested ways to work toward more favorable contracts.

One area of particular interest was Kent's discussion of indemnity. Kent contends that this is the "most important issue for framers on the subject of contracts." He encourages framers to carefully consider the amount risk these provisions can often pass on to them. "Framers need to be mindful of agreeing to indemnity provisions that the general contractors and builders [include] in the contracts that they sign," he says. Kent cautions, "I think most framers don't appreciate the risk that they are undertaking when they agree to an indemnity provision."

In his presentation, Kent suggested that framers should try to negotiate a limited indemnity with GCs such that the framer (1) has no automatic obligation to legally defend the GC or owner in the event of a potential issue with the project and (2) does not end up indemnifying the GC or owner from anything other than his own fault. On the other side of the equation, Kent says that too often "framers don't deal with the issue of indemnity in the contracts that they have with their lower tier framers who actually perform the work." In the end, framers are caught needing to balance indemnity risk on two fronts: on one hand carefully assessing the risk being placed on them by GC indemnity provisions and, on the other, being sure to add appropriate indemnity provisions into their contracts with lower tier subs.

One goal of the NFC, discussed during the summit, is to work with Kent to develop contract best practices and suggested language that framers can use during contract negotiations. ■

Reprinted from NFC Framing News. Originally posted on November 27, 2018.

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Framer Contracts 101: The Risk of Being Under Insured

by Kevin Kutschenreuter

AT THE FRAMER SUMMIT, both Kent Pagel of Pagel, Davis, and Hill, P.C. and Lock Curtis of IronRisk Strategies, LLC offered helpful information about a framer's insurance coverage as it relates to GC contract requirements.

Many times, says Kent, "framers are agreeing to insurance requirements in the contracts that they sign," when in fact they do not "have the insurance that's stipulated in that contract, and in that situation they're in immediate breach whether or not they know it." Kent therefore urges a careful comparison of a contract's insurance provisions with the framer's insurance coverage, as well as the coverage of all subcontractors.

In his presentation, Lock mentioned

two emerging types of insurance coverage that framers are increasingly being required to carry—coverage requirements that framers should examine their contracts for before signing.

The first is pollution coverage for potential mold issues on framing products. "More and more often [framers are] being asked to carry pollution coverage and they don't have it and don't realize it and haven't built in the cost of it when they bid the project," says Lock. Instead of attempting to purchase the insurance after signing a contract, Lock encourages a proactive approach. "It's a lot less burdensome if you do it upfront as opposed to if you do it after they've signed the contract," says Lock. He says a good approach is for framers to buy it when they are "renewing all their other coverages." Doing so, says Lock, is "a lot less cumbersome, a lot less expensive, and one less headache when it comes time to getting paid."

Another type of insurance framers are increasingly required to carry is professional liability insurance to cover any changes they make to the design plans during construction. Lock says that while it is often assumed that engineers and architects are to be the ones carrying professional liability insurance, "because framers are now making changes to plans and not always getting them stamped and



approved by engineers and architects...framers in particular are being required to carry professional liability for any design changes they make."

Again Lock encourages a proactive approach to ensuring you have the appropriate insurance upfront rather than waiting until a contract is signed, as it can save framers time and hassle. "All of these compliance issues become mechanisms for general contractors to hold money," Lock says. "If you don't have the right limits or you don't have the right coverage they say, 'Well, we can't pay you until you get it.'" This "just delays what's already a delayed process of getting paid," says Lock.

Framers can help expedite this process by doing all they can to stay ahead of the game. Working with an insurance and risk management professional to remain up to date on emerging trends in insurance coverage requirements can help. ■

Reprinted from NFC Framing News.
Originally posted on December 11, 2018.



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“We’ve tried other options, but we always come back to Southern Yellow Pine.”



Located in Westminster, MD, Shelter Systems is in their 42nd year of doing business. The manufacturer of structural wood components – specifically floor and roof trusses – is known for innovation, forward-thinking, and always being one step ahead of best practices. With sales in the low-to mid-30 million-dollar range annually, the employees of Shelter Systems serve their residential and commercial customers well from North Carolina to Maine, and have exclusively used Southern Yellow Pine (SYP) for their projects for years.

Why Southern Yellow Pine?

“We’ve tried other options, but we always come back to SYP,” said Lenny Mills, general manager at Shelter Systems since 1982. “The durability and design values allow us to build longer spans and structural members. We value the flexibility this gives us in material handling and production”

An additional bonus: The strength and integrity of SYP allows for smaller metal plates than other species, which helps save money on plate costs.

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facility until needed, and deferring the invoices until the straps are broken.

“What I really like is that we’re working together with our vendor,” said Joe Hikel, president and CEO of Shelter Systems (and with the company since they opened their doors). “It allows us to be job-focused, not market-focused; our customized program allows us to win a better selection of jobs because



we know the product will be there when we need it.”

Both Hikel and Mills appreciate the weekly meetings with their GP rep to discuss Shelter System’s needs, pointing to them as the reason for a high level of communication between the two companies.

“Without having to concentrate so much time on a particular market, I’m able to spend more time concentrating on the business and our production flow – we always have sufficient stock at our disposal, and they truly understand how we do business and conform to that,” added Mills.

“The GP mills seem to be particularly quality-focused, creating a favorable product for component manufacturers like us,” continued Mills. “We haven’t had any delivery issues – never had an inventory issue – they fill our minimums and maximums and we move ahead with our business.”

Availability

Mills reports that Shelter Systems has never had an issue with getting the SYP they need, both because of their geographic location very close to the SYP wood basket, and because of the efficiency of distribution from GP. With GP bringing three new plants online by the end of 2019, this will allow the company to reach into areas previously untouched by SYP and expand their markets.

“GP helps make our jobs easier,” concluded Mills. “We want strong, reliable SYP for our trusses, and they’ve simplified the process to make that happen.”

Hikel agrees: “We are a SYP company, and the customized program we developed with GP allows us to do our job and complete our orders the way we need to; it’s the design values that put Southern Yellow Pine ahead of the curve for us, and it’s our customized program that makes GP such a strong supplier.”

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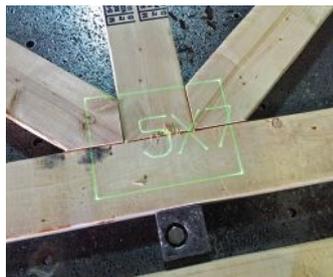


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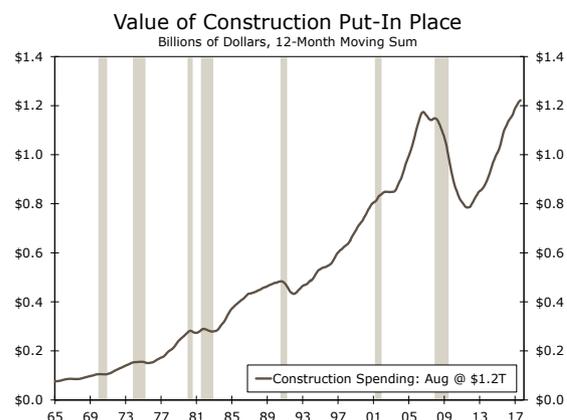
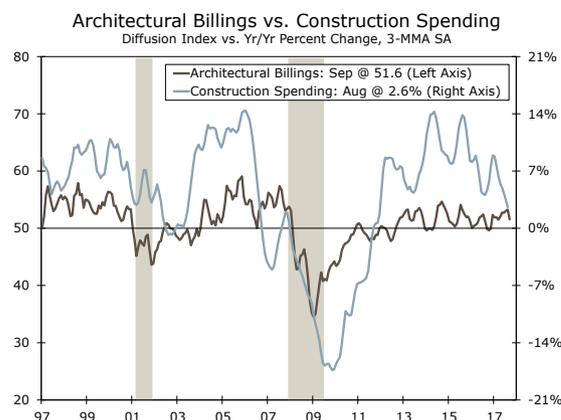
A Primer on the Architectural Billings Index

Construction spending has averaged almost \$1 trillion annually over the past decade, accounting for about 6.0 percent of GDP. Construction is also one of the most cyclical components of the economy, with nominal spending falling 37 percent from its peak in 2006 to its most recent trough in 2011, only to rebound more than 60 percent in the six years since (Figure 1). The recovery in construction spending has been relatively modest, and the construction spending-to-GDP ratio remains 0.8 percentage points below its long term average. Construction activity tends to peak earlier and trough later than other parts of the economy.

Understanding the underlying momentum within the construction sector is important to gauging the health of the overall U.S. economy. So far this year, growth in construction spending has moderated following stronger gains earlier in the cycle (Figure 2). That stronger growth was highly concentrated, namely power plant construction, energy infrastructure and investment in several massive new petrochemical complexes along the Gulf Coast. Office construction has been slower to come back online, with development activity largely limited to metro areas driven primarily by energy and technology. Industrial projects have been a notable bright spot, with the rapid emergence of e-commerce driving demand for fulfillment centers and growing volumes of international trade fueling demand for warehouses and distribution centers near the nation's leading ports. Part of the strength in industrial development, however, has come at the expense of retail construction, which has endured a much slower recovery.

Most data on construction spending are available with a relatively long lag. The Census Bureau typically publishes construction spending data on the first business day a full month following the month that is being reported. The September data were reported on November 1, at the same time the Institute for Supply Management released its survey for October manufacturing activity.

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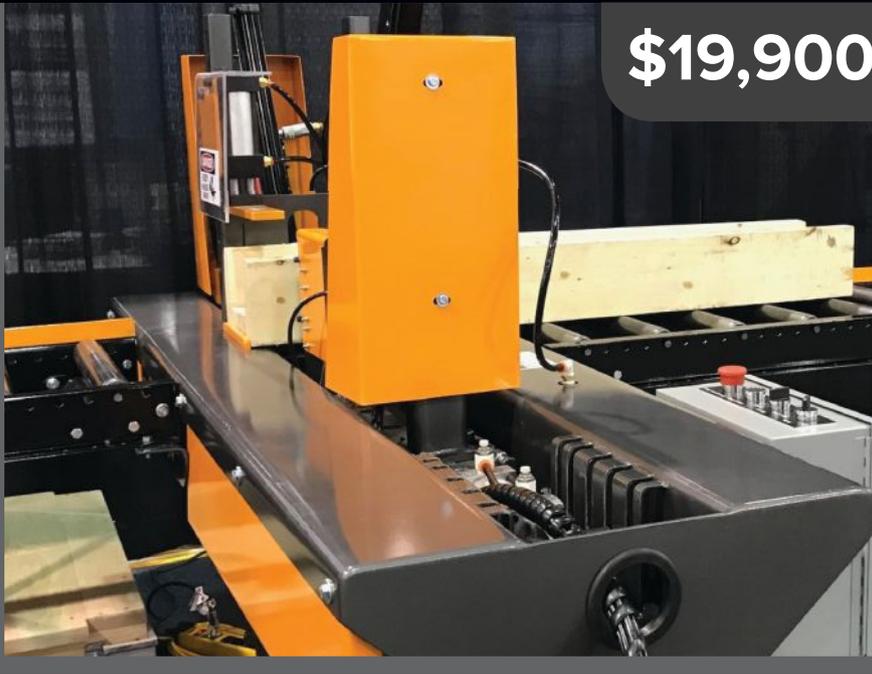
Figure 1**Figure 2**

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, American Institute of Architects and Wells Fargo Securities

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The ABI is one of the few regularly published leading indicators for construction spending.

Introducing the Leading Lady

The Architectural Billings Index (ABI), constructed from a monthly survey of architectural firms, is one of the few regularly published leading indicators for construction spending (Figure 2). Published by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the ABI provides a timely measure of the breadth of demand for architectural design services. The survey began in December 1995, and is sent on the 1st of each month to a national sample of AIA-member architecture firms. The sample consists of about 700 firms selected to represent the universe of 17,500 AIA-member firms, based on size, region and sector. Compared to the U.S construction sector as a whole, the sample is more heavily weighted towards nonresidential construction, with firms specialized in residential construction representing only 20 percent of the sample (versus about 40 percent of national construction spending). Moreover, most of the firms in the residential sample are primarily engaged in multifamily projects, including apartments, condominiums and student housing.

The survey consists of three parts: billings, new design contracts and inquiries for new work. Architectural firms are surveyed via an electronic questionnaire on whether each of these metrics increased, decreased or stayed the same compared to the previous month.¹ The resulting indices measure the *proportion* of firms reporting changes in each direction, not the magnitude of change. A score at 50 indicates positive and negative reports are balanced, while a score of 100 would indicate all firms reported improvements. A rise in the index above 50 means that more firms reported an increase in demand for design services than reported a decline in demand. This is different from a rise in demand, however, because the survey does not tell us how much demand has increased at firms reporting stronger demand or how large those firms are. Nevertheless, sustained higher readings in the ABI generally coincide with growing demand for design services.

Figure 3

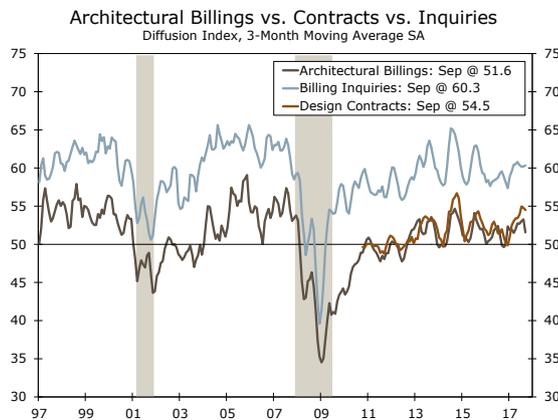
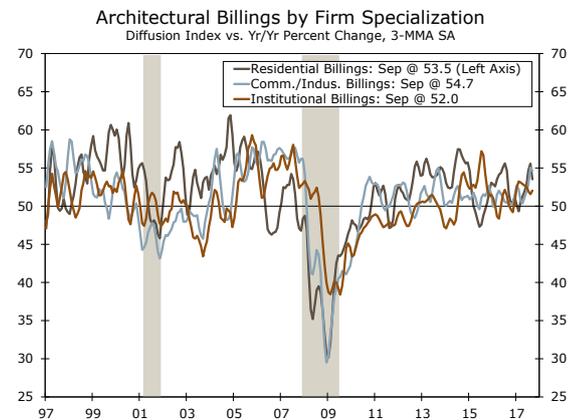


Figure 4



Source: American Institute of Architects and Wells Fargo Securities

Most Recent Data Show Some Moderation

The September ABI was reported in mid-October and came in at 49.1, after seven consecutive readings above 50. The drop pulled the 3-month moving average for the ABI to its lowest level since late 2016 (Figure 3). The new project inquiries index and new design contracts index both moderated on the month but stayed above 50, indicating that more firms are still reporting increased activity than reporting reduced activity. The inquiries index tends to lead the billings index, though it is typically more optimistic. Considering previous strong ABI readings this year and the relative strength of the inquiries and contracts indices, a one-month drop in the ABI should not by itself indicate a reversal of that trend. However, other indicators have tended to confirm some moderation in construction activity. Construction spending and commercial real

¹ “Increased” is defined as an increase greater than 5%. Similarly, “decreased” is defined as a greater than 5% drop.



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estate transaction volumes have both declined since January, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce and Real Capital Analytics.

The AIA breaks out the ABI by region and property type, which is helpful for understanding if regional variation in economic growth is driving changes in the overall index. In September, the ABI for all regions except the Northeast declined. The West, however, was the only region to report a reading below 50. High costs for construction labor and regulatory hurdles have been holding back new construction nationally, but this is particularly true in the West and may be reflected in recent ABI readings for that region. Over the past twelve months, the ABI for the West has averaged 50.1 (the lowest reading of all regions), meaning that architectural firms reported increased and decreased billings in essentially equal proportion. The West covers a vast geographic region and is home to some of the fastest growing metropolitan areas, many of which have seen a great deal of high-rise apartment and office development, much of which is now coming to market. The influx of new product may explain why the ABI has cooled off for the region as a whole.

The recent proliferation of hurricanes is not yet apparent in lower ABI readings for the South, but may weigh on future releases. As labor and building materials are diverted to rebuilding efforts, we expect fewer new projects to begin in Florida and Texas into the spring, which may push back on the pipeline of new projects driving demand for design services. The strong momentum in the West appears to be shifting to the South, however, and we expect strong demand for design services in this region, which typically accounts for the bulk of the nation's population growth.

The AIA also reports separate billings indices for firms grouped by commercial/industrial, institutional, residential and mixed specialization. Institutional billings moderated in the third quarter, but the commercial/industrial and residential components are both up in Q3 compared to the first half of this year (Figure 4). Leaner public sector budgets have weighed on public construction spending recently, with outlays down 4.9 percent year-to-date. This trend mostly shows up in institutional construction activity, which includes transportation projects, hospitals and recreation centers.

Leaner public sector budgets have weighed on public construction spending recently.

Figure 5

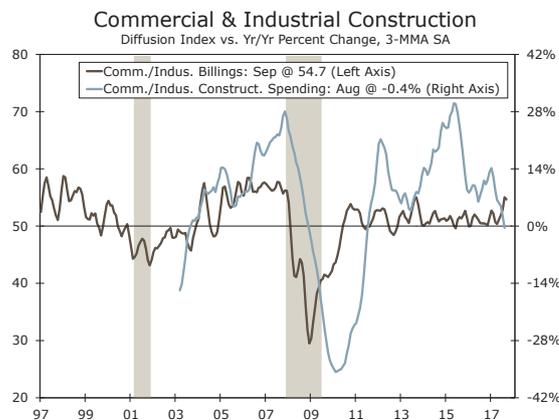
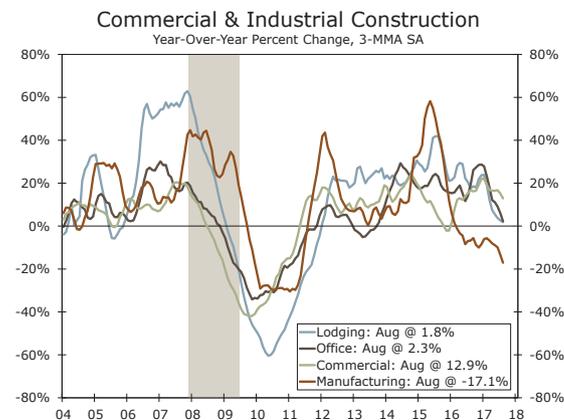


Figure 6



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, American Institute of Architects and Wells Fargo Securities

Key Takeaways

The AIA reports that the ABI tends to lead construction activity by 9-12 months. As a leading indicator, the ABI tends to be a better predictor of upturns in construction spending rather than downturns. Heading into the Great Recession, for instance, the ABI began to decline at virtually the same time as actual construction spending, making it a coincident indicator on the downside, but led the subsequent upturn in construction spending by roughly eight months. The difference in lead time between upturns and downturns may be due to the increase in delayed or abandoned projects during downturns, which show up in billings for design services but do not translate into future construction spending. According to a September 2013 AIA survey, 11.5 percent of

The ABI tends to be a better predictor of upturns in construction spending rather than downturns.

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We will be looking to the ABI to see if core commercial construction is gaining momentum.

architectural firm billings during the downturn came from projects that were later postponed or cancelled, as projects had a harder time finding tenants to commit to pre-lease new space and project financing became more difficult to obtain.

As a diffusion index, the ABI also doesn't capture large changes in activity concentrated within a smaller number of firms or within a single sector. This is because the ABI only measures the direction of change in billings for each firm (not the magnitude of the change or size of the firm). For instance, the commercial/industrial ABI did not foreshadow that growth in commercial and industrial construction spending would top out in 2015 (Figure 5). The recent volatility in commercial and industrial construction has been mostly concentrated in manufacturing (Figure 6). And even within that sector, most of the recent weakness has been due to a pullback in construction of massive multi-billion dollar petrochemical plants along the Gulf Coast. That industry had flourished as oil prices sky-rocketed and a plethora of cheap natural gas became available in the United States. The ABI tends to track broad trends in construction activity and typically does not capture large sector-specific shifts.

The ABI can be a useful tool for understanding the breadth of improvement in overall construction spending as well as for different regions and sectors. Given few public data sources on nonresidential construction activity and the fact that construction spending data are released by the U.S. Department of Commerce with a relatively large lag (a little over one full month), the ABI provides an early indication of growth in this sector. The report is generally regarded as a minor economic report and does not move the financial markets like the more established Institute for Supply Management (ISM) surveys. We find that the ABI is best analyzed in the context of other indicators and look for shifts in momentum in the index over time for signs that construction activity is set to accelerate or decelerate. The ABI is clearly most valuable as an early indicator of recovery in the construction sector but also may help identify a reacceleration in construction following a mid-cycle slowdown.

We will be looking to the ABI to see if core commercial construction is gaining momentum. This past year has seen most of the survey data, including consumer confidence, small business confidence, the Institute for Supply Management and National Association of Homebuilders, strengthen considerably, suggesting that the improvement in the economy is broadening and gaining momentum. Construction activity is still low relative to its typical size as a share of the overall economy. Significant efforts have been made to reduce business regulations over the past few months and the prospect of some easing in post-Financial Crisis financial regulations has increased recently. We would expect commercial construction activity to accelerate over the coming year and will be looking to the ABI for some confirming evidence of this improvement.

Figure 7

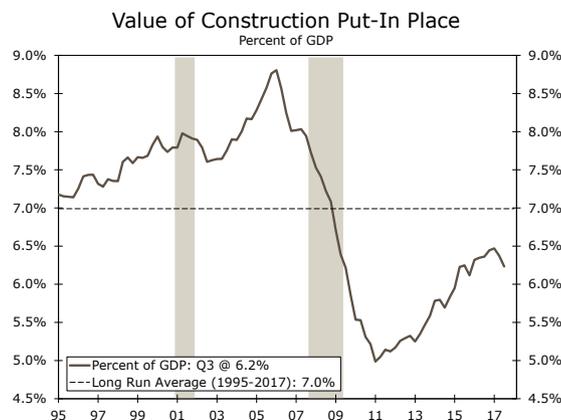
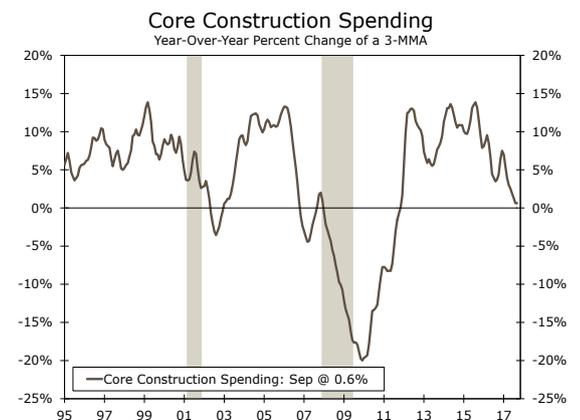


Figure 8



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce and Wells Fargo Securities

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