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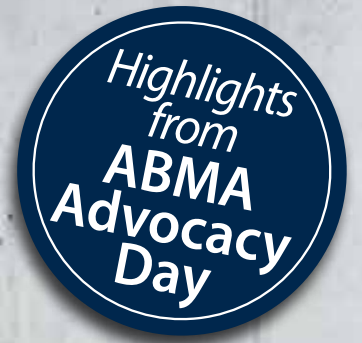
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MAY 2023

**NRLA**  
Northeastern Retail  
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### Lumber Co-operator Mission Statement:

Lumber Co-operator is committed to broadening awareness of critical issues shaping the lumber and building material industry. We promise to equip our readers with the necessary tools to compete in an ever-changing business environment.

Contact the *Lumber Co-operator* at 800-292-6752 or 518-286-1010.



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Rita Ferris, NRLA President

The NRLA is implementing an association management system, which is like a CRM (customer relationship management) for your business. The Board of Directors allocated substantial funds to this project to ensure that members can always reach us and easily access association benefits. It also allows State and Local associations to receive their money quicker and increases NRLA staff efficiency.

If you have registered for the LBM EXPO, IDEAS Show, or a State or Local event, you have already experienced our new platform. We initially encountered a few glitches, but these have been addressed, and the system is now producing the expected results. Your patience is very much appreciated in the transition of this process.

A new dues billing system is underway. Members can pay their annual dues online via ACH and receive a copy of the invoice and receipt. You can still pay via ACH (“direct deposit”) directly from your bank; however, your bank will not provide a receipt. The Board of Directors decided against taking credit cards as a method of dues payment because of the substantial fees it would incur.

NRLA has a new mailing address for individuals who prefer to pay with a standard bank check. Please input this information into your billing software:

*Northeastern Retail Lumber Association, c/o Neo Systems  
Attention: Arthur Gabel, 11107 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 100,  
Reston, Virginia 20190*

Switching topics, the American Building Materials Alliance (ABMA) held its Advocacy Day March 22 and 23. It was highly successful, with 60 attendees from 10 states. Over 50 congressional visits were held throughout this event.

As you know, ABMA also lobbies with the Construction Suppliers Association representing Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Oklahoma. Those states lean Republican, while the Northeastern states lean Democratic. Together, we have been successful in gaining bipartisan support for legislation. To follow are the immediate results of our lobbying:

**The Bonus Depreciation Act (HR 2406/S 1117)** would allow businesses to depreciate 100% of the cost of new equipment in the first year.

- We gained six co-sponsors in the house from our ABMA territory (two in New York, two in Pennsylvania, and one each in Oklahoma and Georgia).
- We are hearing from our contacts on Capitol Hill that we may have bipartisan support from Rep. John Larson (D-CT) who will be a Democratic co-lead in the House.
- We are continuing to lobby Senate sponsorship.

**Strengthen Supply Chains Through Truck Drivers Incentive Act (HR 2450)** provides tax incentives to attract more CDL drivers.

- We asked that the legislation be introduced – which was in the House (by a Virginia representative).
- ABMA provided bipartisan support on the bill’s introduction! Rep. Seth Magaziner (D) from Rhode Island signed on as a sponsor, and he committed to this in our meeting with him in Washington. Rep. Marcus Molinaro (R) from New York signed on as well.
- We are seeking a Senate sponsor.

**The SHIP IT ACT (HR 471)** also provides incentives to attract and retain CDL drivers.

- We gained bipartisan sponsors for this bill with a Republican from Alabama and a Democrat from Maine (Rep. Jared Cohen).
- We are seeking a Senate sponsor.

**Employer Directed Skills Act** will include industry-specific education included in the workforce development curriculum, which in turn will provide financial support to you to train your employees.

- We are anticipating a bill introduction by Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY). When it is introduced, we will seek a Senate sponsor.

In summary, ABMA has made great inroads for the beginning of the legislative session, but we need to keep pushing to gain more sponsors and then advance the bills through each committee, so please respond to action alerts when they come your way.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you,

*Rita*





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Nick Kuiken  
NRLA Chair, Kuiken Bros., Inc.

When you look at the LBM industry, I think we can all agree nobody really has a “secret sauce” that makes them better than their competitors; it all really starts with a firm grasp of the goals leadership has for your business and how you as a team execute them. Many well-run lumber businesses have several things in common, starting with the simple understanding of knowing why they’re in business and realizing that nothing happens without a team of good, dedicated individuals working together to make things happen behind the scenes—nothing good happens without good people! We all sell primarily the same products; it’s how you perform day to day that allows for operational success.

- Training is the foundation for lumberyard efficiency; it is the one building block you can’t do without. Creating a well-trained workforce—forklift drivers, sales personnel management, and everyone else—means training them on new products, working safety, and much more. Investing in your team helps ensure all areas of your business operation work cohesively together to achieve optimal success and superior customer service.
- Your hope is that customers come to your business for everything they need for their building projects, whether framing lumber, windows, interior trim packages, kitchens, or decking products. How you manage the logistics is critical to overall efficiency. Starting with inventory, being smart involves optimal stock accuracy and constant replenishment, keeping a neat and orderly workplace, and timely product delivery to customers, when they want it and how they want it.
- Recognize that the relationship you have with your customers is very important. As they say, the customer

always comes first. Having attentive, friendly staff from sales to operations is key. If your employees are happy with their jobs and working with you, that should become evident to your customer base. Ensure your lumberyard fosters a customer-friendly experience, and efficiency will soon follow! Define your customers, and everything will fall into place.

- Out-promote the competition. Marketing as an efficiency-focused communication to your customer demographic is a strategy that not only drives business, it drives the right kind of business, as you’ll ultimately cater to clientele that need and want your products.
- Use technology to its fullest; we all have experienced how Amazon has made doing business with them relatively easy. They have a deep inventory of what you want; as a consumer, you click on what you need, and it arrives effortlessly in a reasonable amount of time. Not to mention, they do a terrific job of updating you on the progress of your order and delivery status, including a picture of the product delivered to your doorstep. Many in our industry have begun to embrace technology where it can help operations and have taken steps to mirror the success of Amazon as it relates to delivery communication, follow-up, and using pictures to validate proof of delivery.

We all need to continue to look beyond where they are now and continue to be open-minded to additional technology solutions that enable customers to shop when and how they please. Know your plan and work your plan—execute for success.



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## FLAGSHIP

### 25 Years at the Top

*Flagship Forest Products Celebrates Its Silver Anniversary by Staying Focused on Its Customers*



*Customers come from far and wide to get Kayu brand hardwood decking.*

There's an old adage that the only sure things in life are death and taxes. For the sake of accuracy, we might add "a delivery from Flagship Forest Products" to that short list.

The specialty lumber distributor marked its 25th anniversary in April, and that kind of longevity doesn't happen by chance. It's the result of an unwavering focus on providing quality products—reliably, predictably, and unfailingly. "Flagship was founded as a specialty wholesale distributor with a narrow focus on high-grade lumber," explains President/CEO Mike McLaughlin. "From the very beginning, we understood the importance of carrying substantial inventory. The manager of a three-location lumberyard said our fill rate was the best by far of all his suppliers. This is the ultimate compliment for a distributor."

Indeed, that focus on reliably filling customers' needs with extensive inventory creates a virtuous cycle for Flagship, providing it with better access to top suppliers. "Because of our success and reputation, we have exclusive distribution agreements with some of the finest producers worldwide," McLaughlin notes. "Our competitive advantage and core competency in this space is unmatched."

For perspective, let's consider something else that happened in 1997: "Titanic" became the highest-grossing movie of all time. In the years since, three other movies have jumped ahead of it on the list. Flagship, on the other hand, retains its premier place in the lumber industry. "We stick to our knitting with a laser focus on vendor collaboration and customer service," McLaughlin says. "We exceed their expectations and deliver value so that we can't be ignored."



### LMC Launches Together Initiative to Engage and Increase the Number of Women in the Lumber Industry

In 2021, LMC launched an initiative dedicated to growing the number of women in the lumber and building materials industry. This initiative's mission is to not only encourage and inspire women but to bring all co-workers together in the spirit of equal partnership and professional growth within LMC, the dealer network, and the supplier community.

As part of the 2023 LMC Annual in Charlotte, women and men from across the LMC network of dealers and suppliers as well as LMC staff came together for two events to network and discuss the changes needed to not only encourage women into the industry but support them throughout their careers.

In 2021, women made up just 11% of workers in the wider construction industry. These figures have barely grown over the decades.

LMC kicked off the 2023 Together events with a panel of four leaders in our space and representatives from both the supplier and dealer communities.

The panelists discussed how they have progressed their career in this industry, leadership tactics, time management, and mentorship and addressed audience concerns such as the challenges faced in this industry around retention and recruitment of a younger diverse population.

To read more, go to <https://nrla.org/lmc-together>.



### MoistureShield Expands Distribution

MoistureShield is partnering with J.M. Thomas Forest Products to expand distribution of the manufacturer's full composite decking portfolio at all branch locations in Utah, Colorado, and Idaho.

To read the full story, go to <https://nrla.org/moistureshield-expansion>.





# FLAGSHIP

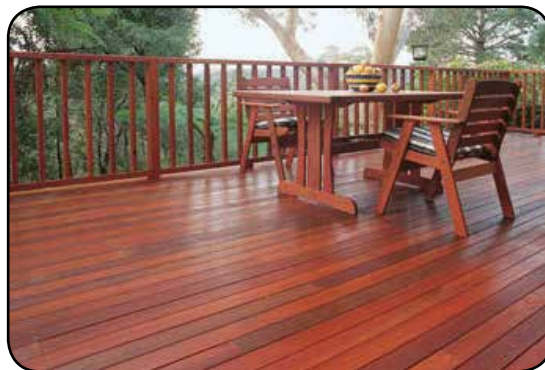
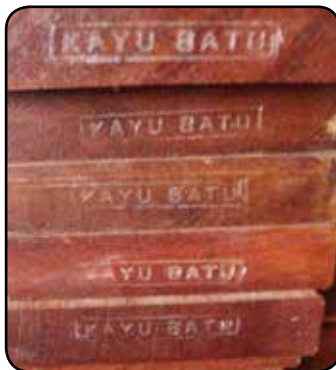
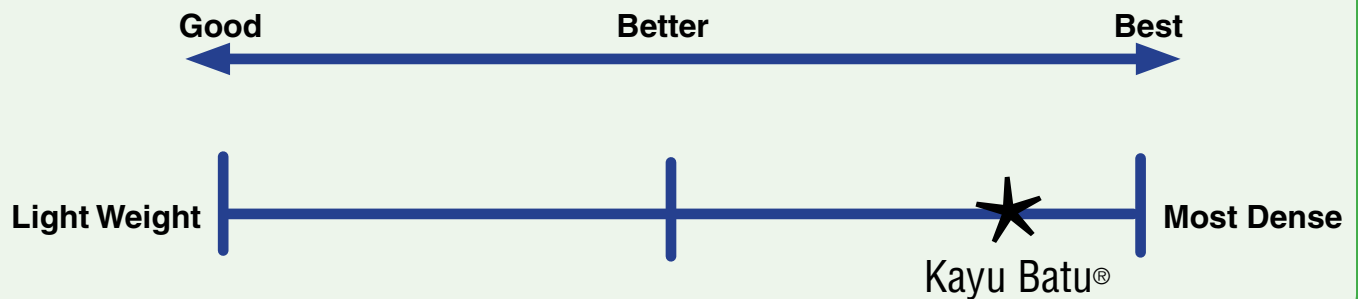
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## Huttig Building Products Is Now Woodgrain, Joining Woodgrain's Distribution Division

Woodgrain acquired Huttig Building Products in May 2022, and, effective now, the combined companies will be known as Woodgrain, with legacy Huttig locations joining Woodgrain's distribution division.

Customers can expect a continued commitment to offering a broad assortment of the most trusted specialty building materials across the company's combined locations. Woodgrain will also continue to enhance value-added services, including pre-hanging and pre-finishing doors, supported by Woodgrain's manufacturing expertise.

To read the full article, visit <https://nrla.org/huttig-now-woodgrain>.



## UFP-Edge adds Russin as Distribution Partner for Thermally Modified Wood Siding

UFP-Edge, a leading brand in wood siding, pattern, and trim, announced that its Thermally Modified Wood Collection siding line will be distributed by Russin, a leading distributor in the Northeastern U.S.

UFP-Edge Thermally Modified Wood Collection siding is made to last. Not only does it have great curb appeal, it's also more durable than typical wood siding because it resists rot. The innovative thermal modification process stabilizes the wood, making it less vulnerable to shrinking and seasonal expansion and contraction. The siding is available in natural or several prefinished color options.

To read the full article, visit <https://nrla.org/russin-thermally-mod-wood>.



## Manufacturers Reserve Supply Now Distributing American Pro Porch Flooring With Variegated Colors

Manufacturers Reserve Supply (MRS) is pleased to announce that it is now distributing American Pro Porch Flooring, the latest innovation in PVC porch flooring. The porch flooring market has been demanding colors that meet the latest trends and American Pro offers 6 beautiful colors, 3 solid colors and 3 variegated colors, making it the perfect addition to MRS's product portfolio.

To read the full article, visit <https://nrla.org/mrs-american-pro>.



## BlueLinX Expands Allura Distribution Partnership

BlueLinX Holdings Inc. (NYSE: BXC), a U.S. wholesale distributor of building products, and Allura USA, a manufacturer of fiber cement siding, announced the expansion of their distribution partnership. The expansion includes Allura's branded Spectrum prefinished siding, trim, and accessories as well as Allura's primed offerings in panels, trim, soffit, shake, and backerboard.

To read the full article, visit <https://nrla.org/bluelinx-allura>.



## Sherwood Lumber Unveils Game-Changing Distribution Center

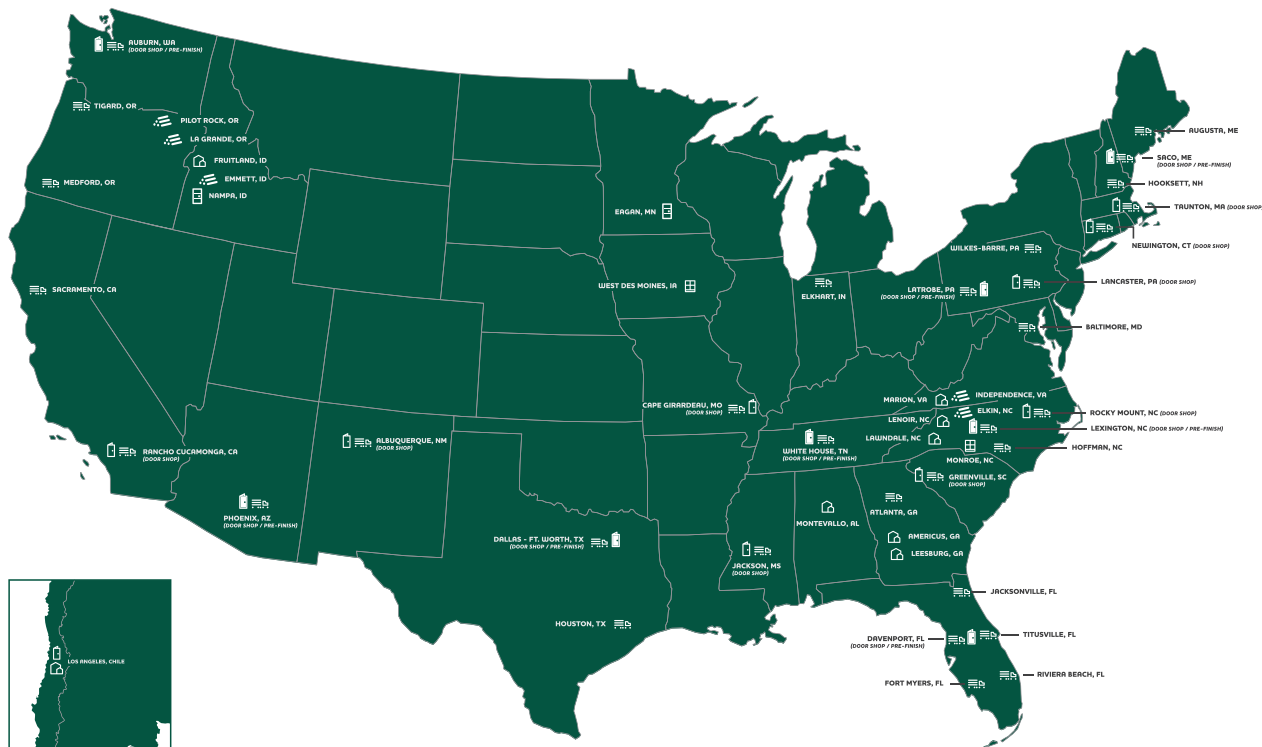
Sherwood Lumber has announced the opening of a new distribution center in Danville, Pa. This expansion enhances Sherwood's presence in the Mid-Atlantic markets and further strengthens its position as a formidable player in the region.

To read the full article, visit <https://nrla.org/sherwood-distribution-center>.



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\*All vendors and products not sold at every location. Please, check with your sales person for details.

# WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER.



## DMSi Software Acquires Millwork Development

DMSi Software has announced the acquisition of Millwork Development, a provider of e-catalog and configurator solutions. This extends DMSi's portfolio of industry-specific solutions that help dealers and distributors grow and innovate their businesses.

The acquisition includes the Millwork Development E-Catalog, a quote and configuration application specializing in complex configured items such as doors, windows, and stair parts.

To read the full article, visit <https://nrla.org/dmsi-millwork-dev>.



## Westlake Royal Building Products Launches PROS Perks Contractor Loyalty Program

Westlake Royal Building Products introduces Westlake Royal PROS Perks, a contractor loyalty program for new and existing customers. PROS Perks is a point-based program that will award customers with merchant gift cards and Visa Reward Cards as a thank-you for purchasing products within the robust selection of Westlake Royal Building Products brands.

To learn more, visit <https://nrla.org/westlake-pros-perks>.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Ronald Edward Jones**, 86, died on April 17 in Sauquoit, N.Y. Ronald worked for Lincoln-Davies, a company founded in 1872 by his great-grandfather. Ronald and his wife bought the company in 1970 and passed it down to their son Ed Jones in 2005. Ronald was a member of CNYRLDA.

**Joseph L. Iantosco**, 87, of Providence, R.I., passed away on April 15. Joe was the father of Joanne Carlino and father-in-law of Steven Carlino of Douglas Lumber of Smithfield, R.I.

**Victor S. Juskevicius**, 72, of Waterbury, Conn., passed away on April 14 with his loving wife by his side. Victor had worked as a purchasing agent at the former J.E. Smith Lumber Co., and as a buyer at Sanford and Hawley in Avon for many years.

**John M. Main**, 90, of Bethel, Conn., passed away on April 6. John served in the Air Force during the Korean War and came home to work at Senior Lumber Company

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### LC Wired

LC Wired is your portal to all LBM/association news and event information. Learn everything that's going on within the NRLA, its programs and services, as well as its State and Local affiliates, to help make the most of your membership. **Delivered every Tuesday at 2 p.m.**



### LC SupplySide

LC SupplySide offers NRLA's latest associate member news, new products, and personnel moves within the LBM market. **Delivered every other Thursday at 2 p.m.**

and then for many years at Barden Corporation. After his retirement from Barden, he worked in the yard at Ring's End for another almost 20 years. Main is survived by his four children.

**Mary Waters Shepley**, 91, of Bedford, Mass., passed away on March 19. Mother of NRLA Past Chair and MRLDA Past President Tony Shepley of Shepley Wood Products. She leaves her two sons; their wives, Lorraine Shepley and Martha Wakefield; two grandsons, "Niles" Henry Hayden Shepley and Charles "Cole" Richardson Shepley.

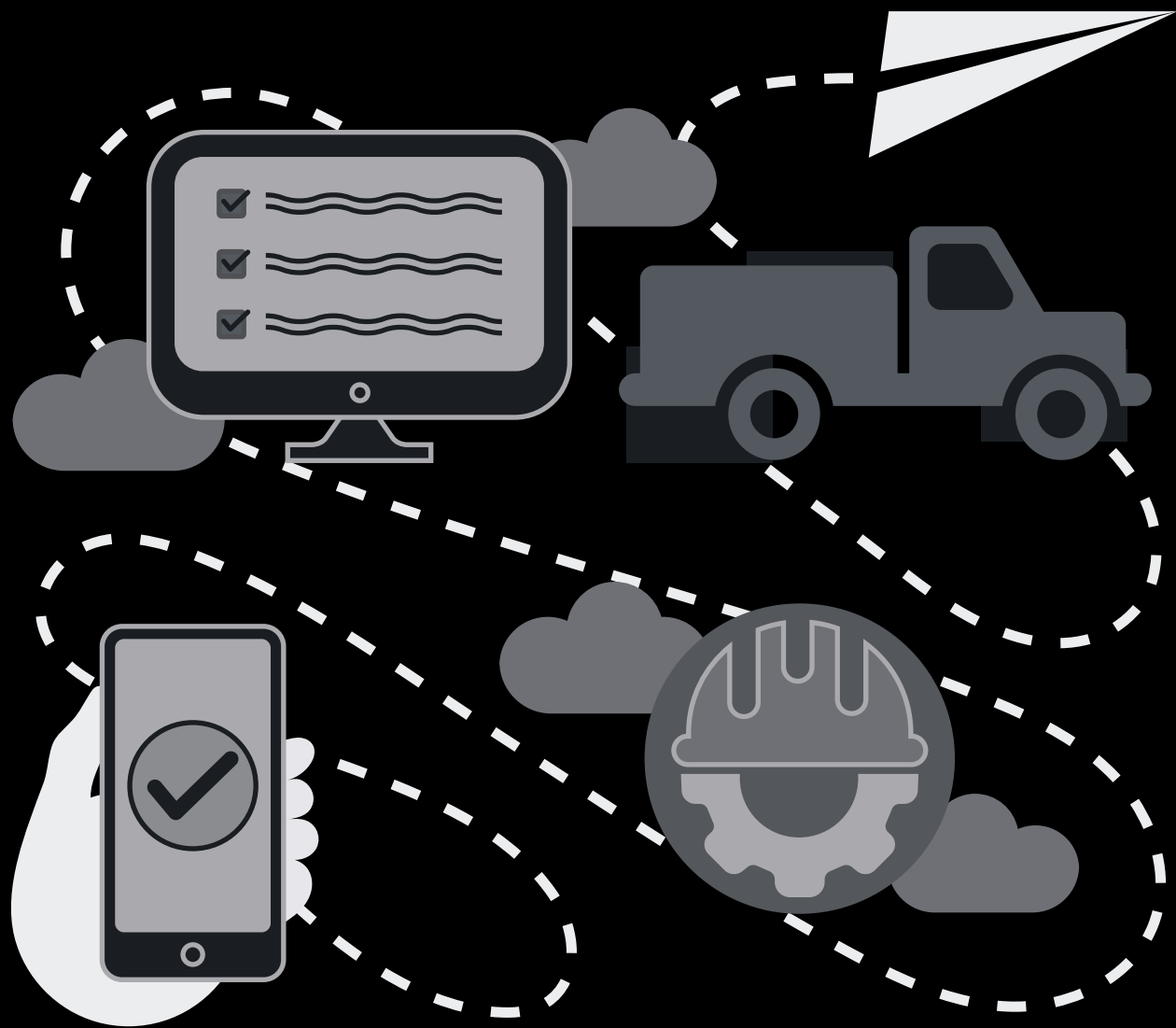
**Jean L. Tarca**, 98, of Branford, Conn., passed away on March 2, surrounded by her family. During her lifetime, Jean was an active member of many organizations where she made her home, including the Westerly YMCA, Quonochontaug Yacht Club, and Cheshire Senior Center. She is also the mother of MRLDA Past President Paul Tarca of Concord Building & Design. Tarca is survived by her four children.



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## ◀ CAMO Introduces CAMO Joist + Ledger Deck Tape

Made in the USA, the self-adhesive butyl tape creates a waterproof membrane to protect wood deck framing against moisture, which can lead to rot. It self-seals around fasteners, blocking the pathway of water into wood. Apply CAMO deck tape to the top of joists and ledger board, between joist hangers and ledger board, between rim joists and fascia, and between framing and joist hangers.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/camo-deck-tape>.

## ▶ Andersen Expands Home Improvement Portfolio with New 100 Series Flush Fin Window

The 100 Series Flush Fin product features an integrated fin that allows for easy installation of a unit over an existing aluminum window frame in stucco applications without disturbing the stucco exterior. With the exterior fin covering both the old frame and stucco, the window provides a clean exterior finish in addition to performance.

Learn more <https://nrla.org/100-series-flush-fin-window>.



## ▶ Simpson Strong-Tie's New Yield-Link Brace Connection and Resilient Building Systems

Simpson Strong-Tie is excited to introduce the YLBC as part of an array of innovative product and technology solutions designed to help the structural steel industry build stronger and work smarter.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/yield-link-brace>.



## SoftPlan Systems, Inc. Releases SoftPlan 2024

SoftPlan 2024 incorporates hundreds of new features to its 3D rendering capabilities that enhance the unique design experience SoftPlan has to offer. SoftPlan 2024 also expands SoftPlan's site creation tools by introducing a feature that allows SoftPlan to quickly import, scale, and rotate Google satellite images of sites and then fit them to the size of the workspace.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/softplan-2024>.



## FastenMaster Introduces MVP Multipurpose Wood Screw

MVP Multipurpose Wood Screw is designed for framing, interior remodeling, cabinetry, and more. MVP features FastenMaster's exclusive double-lead SureStart point for a fast start, and the TORX ttap drive system provides a stable, wobble-free installation. The fastener also features a durable ProjectLife Coating that delivers superior corrosion protection for the life of the project and a SureSink Head that countersinks into the wood without compromising clamping force.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/fastenmaster-wood-screw>.

## Westlake Royal Building Products Adds Board & Batten Profile to Cedar Renditions Aluminum Siding

The Cedar Renditions Board & Batten siding has a unique woodgrain look that can be used as an accent to enhance any exterior facade. The Board & Batten profile can also be a beautiful complement to the existing Cedar Renditions siding, together with the trim and accessories.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/royal-bp-board-batten-profile>.





## Belletetes Celebrates Its 125th Anniversary

Belletetes Inc., a family-owned and -operated lumber and building supply company, is celebrating its 125th anniversary in business. From humble beginnings in 1898 as a general store, Belletetes has grown into one of the largest lumber and building materials retailers in the Northeast, servicing New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, and southern Maine.

With nine locations across New Hampshire and Massachusetts, 320 dedicated employees, and a fleet of more than 70 delivery vehicles, the company believes in providing excellent customer service that creates long-lasting relationships. Belletetes aligns itself with vendor partners who provide industry-best brand products that its customers can depend on to perform.

Community outreach remains a top priority for Belletetes. The support the company provides to many nonprofits and organizations helps to positively impact the communities they serve. Belletetes also believes in supporting its employees who participate in local boards, service organizations, nonprofits, and other community programs.

As part of its 125th anniversary celebration, Belletetes is bringing back its We Build It Forward (WBIF) Community Outreach Program, a one-day event in which skilled and unskilled volunteers join Belletetes employees in providing home improvement services for a nominated household in their community. You can learn more about this program by visiting their website, [www.belletetes.com](http://www.belletetes.com).

“The foundations of our success can be summed up in a few catchphrases: being part of the community, forming meaningful relationships, and having caring, dedicated employees,” says President Mike Shea, great-grandson of founder Elie Belletete. “We are excited to celebrate this milestone, and we appreciate the opportunity to earn your business every day.”







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# GOES TO WASHINGTON

By Katherine Slye-Hernandez, PhD

**More than 60 American Building Materials Alliance (ABMA) members and staff traveled to Washington, D.C., in March to meet with their federal representatives and senators. It was a jam-packed, two-day event filled with fun, networking, and education.**



## **Preparation—March 22**

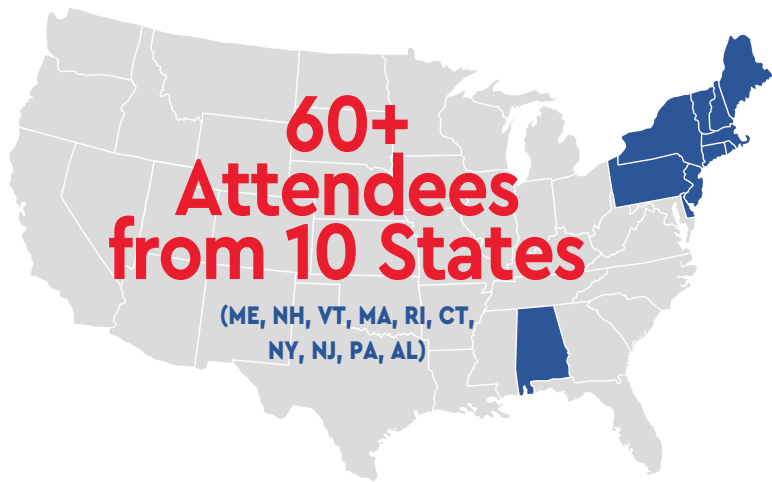
The event started early with an ABMA committee meeting followed by a briefing session. Attendees reviewed logistics for the Day on the Hill, including what to expect in the meetings and how they should go. They were provided with congressional biographies for each legislator they were meeting with, along with issue talking points. Staff also reviewed all of ABMA's priorities, so members were well versed for their meetings. ABMA members were very engaged in the briefing, sharing examples of how the Alliance's priorities would impact their businesses and employees.

The day concluded with a cocktail hour and dinner at the Lincoln restaurant, sponsored by Acadia Insurance and Eastern Insurance.



## **Day on the Hill—March 23**

The day started early with breakfast at the hotel. Everyone gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol for a group photo and then went on their way to their meetings for the day. Members met with about 50 congressional offices and met with at least a dozen legislators themselves. Some state delegations even got a spontaneous tour of the Capitol by a member of their legislator's staff.



**Here's what ABMA Advocacy Day attendees had to say:**

*"It is worth every minute to experience Washington, D.C., from the inside. Getting in front of the people we elected to get things done is powerful. I look forward to the next opportunity to lobby for things that impact our industry."*

*"A great way to be involved in the future of our industry as well as a voice for it."*

*"It is eye-opening to see how the machine works and how accessible the representative offices are."*

*"It is a privilege to live in a country where you can freely speak to elected officials about issues that affect your livelihood and quality of life. Every American citizen should visit our nation's capital and participate in the process of government. Change is incremental, so the voice needs to be consistent and heard."*

*"Advocacy Day is a great experience, and attendance makes a difference."*

*"It was great to have a representative take the time out of his day to sit with us and actually listen."*



The day concluded with a debrief where members and staff discussed how the meetings went and follow-up actions for staff regarding co-sponsorships and offices seeking more information.

When asked to share about their experience, ABMA members thought the legislators and staff were very attentive in the meetings, were prepared, and asked great questions. They saw the value in attending, and many said they were already looking forward to the 2024 event. **LC**





# Relationship Selling—

## What Value Do YOU Bring?

By Tom Zimmerman

**T**he LBM industry has been a phenomenal place to make a career. The best things about this industry are the people and the relationships that are formed along the way. Throughout my time in the industry, I have learned how relationships can open doors and that the memories of past experiences are long. As a result, many salespeople at all levels of the LBM marketplace (manufacturer, distributor, and dealer) consider themselves to be “relationship” oriented or claim they practice “relationship selling.”

While relationships are very important in the LBM industry, too many salespeople make a critical error when it comes to their relationships, which has a negative impact on their sales performance. Often, salespeople fail to understand what founded their relationship and why their client is doing business with them.



For over two decades, I have interviewed hundreds of candidates for sales roles, traveled with salespeople in varying capacities of the LBM channel, and evaluated too many sales rep and customer relationships to count. It is amazing that so many salespeople actually believe the customer buys from them because they have a “great relationship,” they get along well with their customers, and their customers, quote-unquote, “like me.”

When the salesperson genuinely believes that the customer is buying from them because of their special relationship, the salesperson misunderstands and underestimates the actual value that they bring to the customer. This causes them to miss key steps in the sales process. Call it ignorance, arrogance, or even complacency; either way, the result is the same. The salesperson places their effort on being liked or preserving the relationship and coddling the customer to make them feel comfortable.


Often, the formation of the relationship is the result of the salesperson creating tangible value, solving a problem, or helping the customer reach their goals. Business is not typically the result of the relationship.

When the salesperson places their emphasis on “protecting” the relationship, their focus isn’t on assessing the customer’s needs and understanding where value can be realized or even created. When a salesperson truly makes a sale, they have helped the customer recognize the need to make a change. In other words, the customer sees their situation improving by making a specific purchase rather than choosing a different product or not making a purchase at all.

Once real value is identified by a salesperson in the eyes of the customer, they are gearing up to make a sale, and in turn, the customer will recognize that the salesperson “understands my business” and is here to help them, which will enrich the relationship.

If a salesperson views the relationship as the primary driver for the customer, they are often mistaken about why their customers are buying from them and are likely at risk of losing business or operating at lower margins. On the flip side, when a salesperson recognizes that their role is to understand the customer’s business and identify or extract value opportunities for the customer, they will effectively raise the value of their relationship in the customer’s eyes.

If your relationship gets the customer to answer your phone call or have a meeting with you, they probably recognize that you have brought them value in the past and they are looking to see how you can help them. However, if your relationship gets you the proverbial “last look” on a bid or a project, it is likely someone else has created value for your client and you are about to lose the business or lower your price.

So, here you are, a salesperson in the LBM industry. You have relationships that you value with your customers. Here’s a test: Can you list two or three key reasons that each of your customers is buying from you that have to do with value you have created, problems you have helped the customer solve, or how you are aiding the customer in moving toward their goals? If you can’t, your business with the customer might be at risk. Think back on why the customer started doing business with you in the first place. Clearly, they saw a reason to buy from you over someone else; are you still delivering this value? 

**About the author:** Want more insights on how help your customers recognize your value? Or take your company’s performance to the next gear? Tom Zimmerman, principal of SHIFT Sales Training & Consulting, has helped many companies better position themselves as valued-added partners for their customers, which has resulted in increased revenues and customer loyalty.

“When the salesperson genuinely believes that the customer is buying from them because of their special relationship, the salesperson misunderstands and underestimates the actual value that they bring to the customer. This causes them to miss key steps in the sales process.”



# WHY REVIEWS ARE CRITICAL FOR RETAIL LUMBER DEALERS



By Elton Mayfield

**Y**ou've worked hard to build relationships with professional contractors in the building materials industry. Your word is your bond. You listen to your customers. Your customers know they can trust you to deliver the building materials they need to meet demand. So, you may wonder why building material manufacturers, specifically retail lumber dealers, need user reviews.

We don't have to remind you that the retail lumber industry has changed during the past 10 to 15 years. Your success is no longer dependent only on the marketing and distribution methods of yesteryear. Chances are most of your customers are online now—even if you aren't. As a retail lumber dealer, if you sell to a small contractor or home builder, then you have a responsibility to help that builder grow beyond just selling the product, because when that contractor wins, you win—and it all starts with reviews. Reviews build trust.

Online reviews can drive sales, increase revenues, and generate more outstanding reviews, which creates a positive review cycle where everyone benefits. Read on to see the reasons your contractor network development strategy should include helping your customers get reviews.



## Why Customer Reviews Are Important

### 1. Better Understanding of Customers

First, don't think of reviews as the only communication between a B2B seller and a potential buyer. Buyers may use their reviews as a way to communicate with the dealer about their building materials. Analyzing these reviews can reveal both overall satisfaction, which is a positive boost, and areas where you need to improve your product or service. User reviews also highlight where you and your customers can improve perceptions around your product and service. Perceptions are key, as customers' perceptions are their reality, and you can often address issues with just a personal conversation.

Tune into what customers are saying to keep abreast of changing expectations, goals, and needs. When you do this, you can make small, impactful changes to stay competitive instead of needing to invest in a major overhaul later.

### 2. Builds Credibility and Social Proof

Even if your lumber retail company has been around for a while, not everyone knows the person who knows the person. B2B and B2C buyers overwhelmingly trust authentic user reviews. (You know this, as you've probably done this yourself.) Genuine reviews can build instant credibility, even when buyers have just become aware of you, your products, and your services. When a dealer carries products that get top reviews, credibility and social proof with customers is built, people usually buy more in volume and frequency.

### 3. Word-of-Mouth Is the Most Powerful Form of Advertising

We don't have to remind you of word-of-mouth power. Who doesn't love a referral? But one user review can reach more people online than one referral. Eighty-four percent of people trust online reviews. Over 90% of B2B and B2C buyers check user ratings before buying. Again, you've probably done this yourself. Having no reviews is worse than having a few negative reviews, which seems to fly in the face of reason. Why would people trust a few poor reviews rather than all glowing reviews? It goes back to authenticity. Your customers naturally know that everyone can't be 100% happy all the time. Most people expect some negative reviews. A few bad reviews lend genuineness to the overall mix. (Not that you want to encourage bad reviews, but they happen.) Remember, it gives you an opportunity to address things you can fix with your products or services. If you're unsure how to begin getting reviews, start by asking satisfied customers.

### 4. Improves Search Engine Rankings

Reviews on Yelp, Trustpilot, Google My Business, and Facebook display prominently in search results, especially if you've invested in minimal local search engine optimization. Pages with a local city or keyword a person might be searching for rank higher in

local searches. Claiming your review pages on these sites gives your business instant visibility and a direct link to your website.

### 5. They're Here to Stay

Lumber retail dealer success hinges on user reviews. Your customers' success is your success. The importance of user reviews to both you and your customers isn't changing anytime soon. How or where we write reviews may change over a decade, but helping contractors get reviews is a critical part of your customer network development strategy and will continue to be so, no matter its form.




## User Reviews Affect the Dealer, Not Just the Customer

Reviews usually lead to higher profits, particularly for B2B companies. When your contractors get good reviews about your product, that reflects on them and your materials. As far as your own reviews go, contractors judge your credibility and ability to deliver what they need by looking at user reviews. These reviews improve search engine authority for the material's brand name too, so you attract more and bigger homebuilding and professional contractors to you. When your current or potential customers search for the goods you offer, your brand and business name appear in multiple places—across review sites. All of which spreads awareness.



## How You Can Encourage Reviews as a Retail Lumber Dealer

It's clear that user reviews are important for your customers and your materials company. Everyone's success along the building chain is your success. Given you're in this together, dedicate marketing dollars to build a review incentive program for customers. Create content on your website that revolves around marketing ideas for contractors to help them build their business and sell more of your product. Offer training and education on your products for all customers, so they can better understand how best to use your products and why they should choose you over other retail lumber dealers. At the very least, go the old-fashioned route your grandmother taught you and send a heartfelt thank-you to those who buy your products. A package of chocolate-chip cookies might accompany your thank-you and motivate a review. It's hard to refuse good products paired with plain ol' nice. 

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**About the author:** Elton Mayfield is the co-founder of ER Marketing, a B2B marketing agency with a special love for the building industry—quite possibly, because they've been building clients themselves. For more than 18 years, ER Marketing has been dedicated to improving the marketing channel for all things building.





## 5 Ways IT Admins Can Improve

# Pa\$5wOrd

## Management and Security

If you're an IT administrator, you know how difficult it is to get employees to create and remember strong, unique passwords for business accounts and technology. Often, users will fall into common habits like using short, easy-to-guess passwords or passwords they've already used in other accounts.

Users who do not follow password security best practices leave themselves and the company open to a data breach. To help employees create stronger passwords, protect company assets, and make things easier on themselves, IT admins should consider these five password management and security tips.



## 1. DESIGN A PASSWORD POLICY

By creating a detailed password policy that all employees must follow, you can limit access to and protect your company's resources. For example, you can require that users use long, complex passwords.

Employees will likely be familiar with this requirement, as many websites require a minimum character length, which is generally six characters long. However, longer is better. According to Scientific American, a 12-character password takes 62 trillion times longer to crack than a standard six-character one.

Also, don't allow users to include personal information in their passwords. While it's easier to remember dates of important life events, names of pets and children, birthplaces, and other words based on personal information, these clues are easy for hackers to find on social media and public records.



## 2. AVOID PASSWORD FATIGUE

Password rotation is a common practice in password management and security. By requiring employees to change passwords every few months, it would seem to help you stay one step ahead of potential hackers.

However, frequent password changes can lead to password fatigue, meaning that users are more likely to use simple passwords that aren't secure enough. Also, according to a survey conducted by the Ponemon Institute, 51% of people rotate the same five passwords across their work and personal accounts, leaving them and the company vulnerable to data breaches.



## 3. USE A PASSWORD MANAGER

Consider using a password manager to help you and other employees create strong passwords and store them securely. There are many password managers, but they're not all created equal. In fact, a recent data breach of LastPass has made some wary of using a cloud-based password manager. However, by using a program like JumpCloud, IT admins and users can feel secure about passwords and data safety.

JumpCloud uses a hybrid approach that uses a decentralized architecture that stores enterprise vaults locally on users' devices. It also syncs users' vaults to multiple devices with end-to-end encryption on the cloud, offering the best of both worlds. To learn more, visit [JumpCloud.com](https://jumpcloud.com).



## 4. CHECK A PASSWORD DICTIONARY


Many fraudsters use a password dictionary to crack account security by sheer brute force. When employees use dictionary words in their passwords, such as using three short words together, hackers can easily use an algorithm to try different combinations of words until they crack the code.

Have employees check their passwords against a password dictionary so they can avoid using common words, and refer them to sites such as [haveibeenpwned.com](https://haveibeenpwned.com). If they must use dictionary words, implement guidelines that require they use four or five dictionary words with a mix of other characters. For example, "cloud.novella-candlestick.backpack" is a strong password.



## 5. REQUIRE MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Many electronics and other technologies now require multi-factor authentication (MFA). Users may have MFA enabled on their phones, tablets, and computers, which require them to use their fingerprint, enter a code, or another secondary form of identification in addition to a password. When paired with a strong password, MFA makes it more difficult for the wrong person to access company data.

Password management and security doesn't have to be a headache or time-consuming. Using these five tips will save you time and help users become more invested in a company's security. 

*This article was provided by Brandpoint.*

### WHICH PASSWORD MANAGER SHOULD YOU USE?

Although there are many password managers readily accessible, picking the best one can be challenging if you want to ensure that your company is secure. We've done some research and put together a list of 2023's top mentions for you to take a closer look at.

**Bitwarden** ([www.bitwarden.com](https://www.bitwarden.com))

*Rated best free open-source password management. Can be used across unlimited devices and device types.*

**1Password** ([www.1password.com](https://www.1password.com))

*Rated best paid password manager for multiple platforms.*

**JumpCloud** ([www.jumpcloud.com](https://www.jumpcloud.com))

*Best to simplify and automate identity management.*

**Dashlane** ([www.dashlane.com](https://www.dashlane.com))

*Best for security-focused features and simple to use.*

*(References: CNET.com, PCMag.com, JumpCloud.com, and Forbes.com)*



**Lumber Safety:**

# MITIGATING RISKS

as the Market Evolves

By George Hawkins



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*“Many lumber business owners have experienced employee turnover in the past few years, creating a talent or skills gap as organizations struggle to replace and retain employees.”*

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**W**hile lumber and building material dealers continue to navigate risk exposures like cyber theft and distracted driving, they also have additional and growing risk exposures in the form of untrained staff and unfamiliar business partners as they wade through ongoing labor shortages and supply chain complications. In this environment, a renewed focus on safety and risk assessment can not only save your company from costly litigation, it will help to prevent injury and even save lives.

### **How the Risks Are Evolving**

Unfortunately, the risk exposures that today's business owners face go beyond the basics of more recent risks. Rather, these exposures can be classified as bet-the-business risks. Data from McKinsey & Company recently forecasted that at its current rate of growth, cyberattack damages will reach around \$10.5 trillion by 2025. As lumber companies continue to move much of their business online, without proper precautions, they could be exposing themselves to costly cyberattacks that could result in protracted business interruptions or even bankruptcy.

Similarly, fleet risks and driver safety continue to threaten business owners in our industry. At Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company (PLM), we have seen several insurance claims recently stemming from distracted driving, issues with loading and unloading company vehicles, and general unsafe driving practices. These risk exposures have been exacerbated both by the current state of the economy, most notably the industry's hiring troubles, as well as lack of training and focus on the use of mobile devices among drivers.

Many lumber business owners have experienced employee turnover in the past few years, creating a talent or skills gap as organizations struggle to replace and retain employees. For example, on the fleet side, some business owners have compromised and hired uncertified, untrained, and/or less experienced drivers. These drivers are often unprepared to transport products or load and unload safely, leading to an increase in accidents and losses. Where staffing and cyber risk intersect, employee turnover has made it more difficult to keep the whole team informed on cyber security best practices, inadvertently inviting potential cybercrime.

Finally, prolonged supply chain delays have taken their toll on lumber companies. The potential for business owners waiting one or two years to receive new parts or replacements for damaged equipment could cripple those organizations. At retail businesses, lack of inventory has been problematic. Lumber retailers have had difficulties finding inventory and have also struggled to help customers find the specific tools and products they need to meet their regular needs.

Regardless of the many challenges facing lumber and building material businesses, owners cannot bury their heads in the sand. Proactive risk mitigation tactics can prepare lumber and building material dealers for the risk exposures unique to our industry as well as today's emerging economic and societal risk exposures.

### A Focus on Risk Mitigation

Best practices for risk mitigation can be invaluable to keeping your business humming despite the growing and complex list of challenges it faces.


For example, on the fleet safety front, the use of telematics and cameras are critical solutions in helping business owners in identifying at-risk drivers, enforcing driver policies, and reducing the frequency and severity of accidents. Our clients who have implemented telematics have seen their loss ratios decline from 210% to 68% on average. Telematics has become a part of their business model and has worked wonders in limiting fleet losses.

Hiring a third party to manage cybersecurity is another smart investment for those businesses that have the means to do so. These firms can take a comprehensive look at the cyber exposures faced by lumber businesses and provide concrete measures to limit those exposures. At the same time, implementing regular cyber training and conducting regular cyber risk assessments are two valuable steps that can be taken to better protect your business.

Other common risk exposures for lumber businesses, as well as those exacerbated by the current economic situation and labor market, can be mitigated by incorporating the following best practices:

- **Training:** With increased staff turnover, monthly safety meetings and training sessions should be regular practice. Monthly meetings should cover timely issues and regular risk exposures across operations. All training should be documented, and management should regularly display company safety videos on screens across the facility.
- **Maintenance:** Maintenance issues and staff turnover are often two sides of the same coin. Regular maintenance across equipment needs to be a core part of the business, and training on those maintenance practices is important. The facility should be regularly cleaned, and all maintenance work should be documented so the business can track their safety efforts.
- **A formal safety program:** A formal safety program should outline all potential exposures, how to prevent an incident, and what to do in the event of an incident.
- **Fire safety:** Fire is a constant risk for lumber businesses. Flammable storage cabinets and firewalls are a good start to limiting the spread of fire and therefore protecting lives and property. Fire barriers between buildings and grass are also effective as are sprinkler protection and spark detection systems.

In addition to these best practices, finding the right insurance coverage is critical. In cases of any extreme risk to the business, having a business interruption policy can help protect your business in worst case scenarios. This type of policy can help business owners recover lost wages from downtime while operations are halted. Property and general liability coverages are essential because even a simple slip and fall can prove incredibly costly without the right coverage. To that end, we also recommend working with a specialty insurer who knows the lumber industry and can properly assess your facility.

While new challenges will always arise in the lumber industry, businesses can limit their exposures with a commitment to risk management. A strong risk mitigation plan and regular training and maintenance can make a difference in protecting staff and operations. 

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**About the author:** George Hawkins, Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company, is a senior loss control representative. He can be reached at [ghawkins@plmins.com](mailto:ghawkins@plmins.com) or by phone at 267-825-9138.



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# ALWAYS IN ITS ELEMENT.

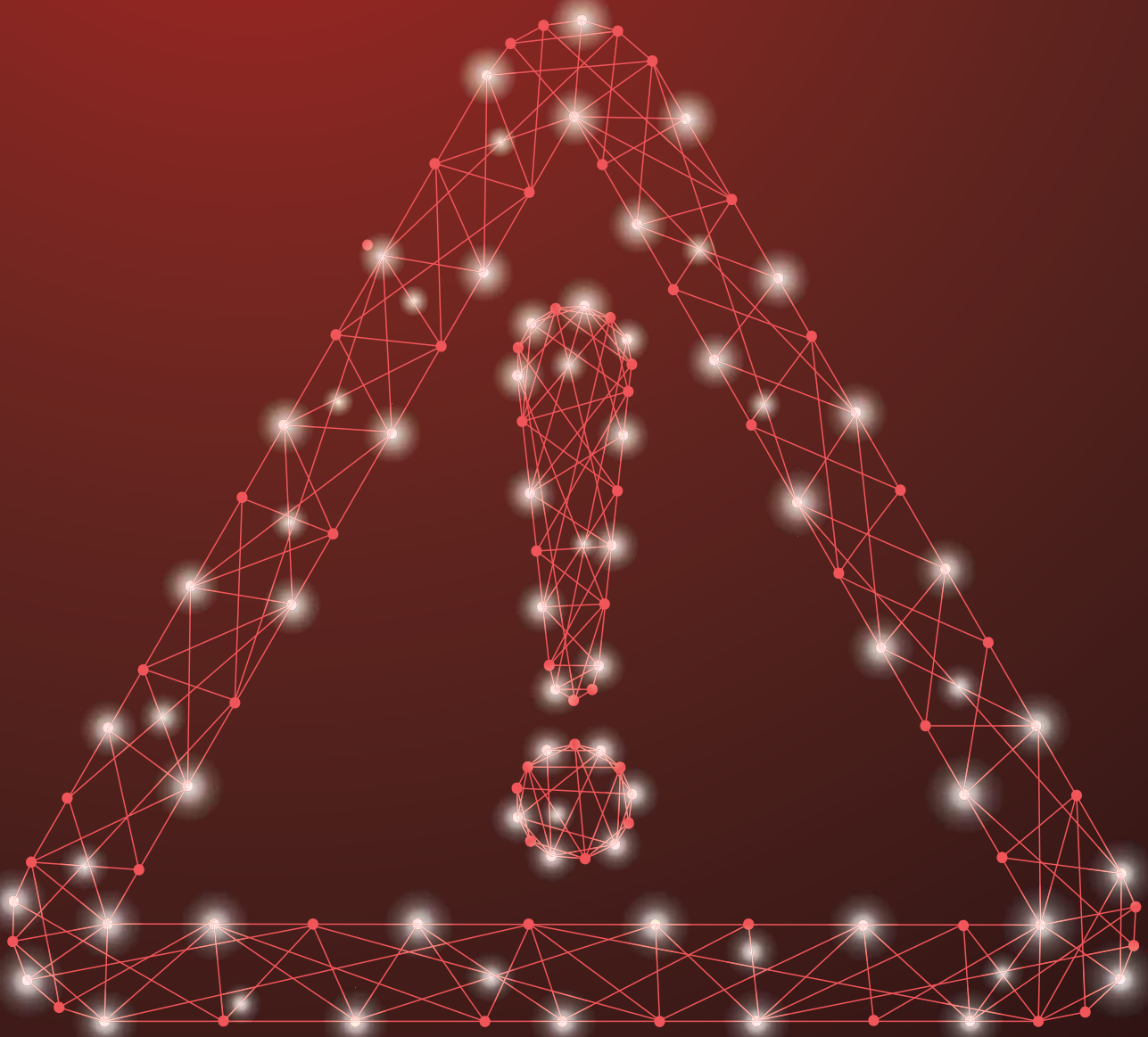


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For more details about Wolf Decking or any of our Outdoor Living products, contact your Wolf Sales Representative or go to [wolfhomeproducts.com](https://www.wolfhomeproducts.com).







# Safety on the Roads

By Ted Clark



While constantly focusing on safety in the workplace, it is easy to forget that the leading cause of death in industry doesn't occur at the worksite. Statistically, the leading cause of death in the workplace is auto accidents. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in 2021 there were 5,190 workplace fatalities, of which 1,982, 38%, were transportation-related incidents.

It seems every year a serious auto accident strikes close to home and reminds us of the significant hazards that we face just getting to and from work. This article is not likely to introduce any new ideas but instead stands to reinforce the importance of taking several simple steps to help increase your safety when traveling on roads and reduce your company's exposure to risk.



### Navigating Increased Traffic on Roads

Roads will see a significant increase in traffic during tourism seasons, which means increased exposure to an accident. Remaining alert and constantly adjusting your driving style for the conditions is critical to avoiding accidents. Following too closely, speeding, and being distracted are some major concerns, especially in high-traffic areas.



### Driver Fatigue

The CDC recommends a minimum of seven hours of quality sleep each night and estimates that 37% of workers do not get enough sleep. The hazards associated with fatigue are similar to being impaired by alcohol, including slower reaction times, poor decision-making, tunnel vision, drifting out of your lane, and even nodding off. This can be incredibly challenging to manage and requires that managers who interact with drivers be trained and aware of how to recognize fatigued drivers and be empowered to make the decision to not allow the employee to drive. Management should be aware and closely manage the overtime worked by drivers as well. If you utilize telematics in your vehicles, a "lane departure" warning is a key indicator of fatigued driving and should be reviewed and addressed.



### Drive for the Road and the Conditions

Every year, we hear about tragic accidents occurring on the roads that could have been avoided by slowing down and driving appropriately for the road conditions. Many of our roads will allow for high-speed travel in a straight line, but the concern should be the ability to navigate turns, dodge animals, and stop when needed. The fact is, you always need to be ready to stop or take evasive action. Because road conditions are constantly changing, drivers should always be

evaluating and altering the way they drive so they can stop when needed, navigate a turn, or dodge an animal that runs out in front of them.




### "Wear Your Seatbelt"

Every time I say this to a group, there is always someone who raises their hand and says that they know of an accident where the person was saved because they weren't wearing their seatbelt. My response to this is simple: "If you were going to buy a lottery ticket and they offered you the chance to increase your winning odds by 60% for free, would you take it? Of course you would!" The fact is, seatbelts are the single most effective way to prevent serious injury or death in an auto accident, and while they are not 100% effective, AAA estimates a 45% to 60% effectiveness rate. That is impressive.

The purpose of seatbelts is simple: to keep you in the vehicle, where you are much better protected from the impact. According to the CDC, more than half of the 22,441 fatalities resulting from auto accidents in 2015 involved a person who was unrestrained at the time of the accident. AAA did a study that showed proper seatbelt use in light trucks will reduce fatal injuries by 60% and moderate-to-critical injuries by 65%!

### Conclusion

I encourage you to take this information and review it with your employees. Remember that it's your name on the side of the truck, so you have a vested interest in how it is operated and the safety of the people in and around the vehicle. 

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# How Business Leaders Can **PREPARE FOR A POSSIBLE RECESSION** This Year

By John Simmons & Ben Walter

**N**o matter their size, location or industry, businesses across the country have been hit by inflation in the last year, forcing leaders to use a variety of creative strategies to combat rising costs. While these inflationary pressures show some signs of easing, business leaders' sentiment around recession expectations raises important questions for businesses on whether they're prepared for the next big economic challenge.

In the JPMorgan Chase 2023 Business Leaders Outlook survey, we uncovered just how widespread inflation's impact has been for business owners nationwide and how it and other pressures have contributed to a challenging business outlook. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of small (94%) and midsize (91%) businesses are experiencing pricing pressures that are affecting their bottom line, while the majority of small (61%) and midsize (65%) business leaders anticipate a recession some time in 2023.

The good news is that despite these expectations, most midsize (66%) and small business (72%) leaders remain upbeat about their own company's performance and are focused on growth, hiring plans, and other elements within their control. We are encouraged by the optimism and resilience of business leaders after a tough few years, and we know that time and again, their mettle has delivered the economy through lean times to propel our economy and communities forward.

As we talk with business leaders about the challenges ahead, there are three main approaches they should consider this year in their preparations for the next economic cycle:

## 1. Consider Non-Traditional Strategies to Combat Inflation

Small and midsize businesses have had to find ways to meet challenges brought by inflation. Traditional responses, such as raising prices on products and services, have been augmented by some non-traditional strategies. For example, nearly half of midsize businesses have made changes to their purchasing habits, including strategic stockpiling, and more than one-third have turned to automation.

Among small businesses, more than half have said honest and transparent communication with customers is a top tactic for coping with inflation. Because consumers still demonstrate a willingness to shop local, honesty and transparency can help strike the right tone to balance price increases with customer loyalty.

## 2. Invest in Prospective and Current Employees

The tight U.S. job market presents a challenge for small and midsize businesses; however, economic data show the worst may be behind them. More than half of small business leaders (55%) anticipate hiring full- and part-time staff and 50% of midsize business leaders expect to increase headcount in the next 12 months.

Employee retention and development—always important priorities for business owners—are emerging as even more important in the current economic environment. In fact, more than half (55%) of small business leaders cited retaining top



employees as a critical factor for business survival, especially because they operate with less slack from the start.

Likewise, nearly half (43%) of midsize businesses plan to invest in talent development by offering upskilling and training opportunities that increase productivity, improve the quality of work, and enhance problem-solving abilities. These programs are hugely important for small and midsize businesses looking to improve retention, limit turnover, boost morale, and attract new talent.

Business leaders are optimizing working capital to finance inventory and accounts receivable through supply chain finance, which helps them move to extended payment terms with suppliers, including the option to get paid earlier in their working capital cycle, and dynamic discounting, which enables owners to receive discounted prices in exchange for paying vendors early. They are also investing heavily in inventory management, reworking current debt, and securing working capital financing to maintain and even grow their balance sheets. **LC**

### 3. Optimize Working Capital

Working capital is a key indicator of small and midsize businesses' financial health, and maintaining it during times of economic volatility is important for long-term prospects. Despite a tough year, the majority of small (69%) and midsize (63%) businesses expect increased revenue and sales in the year ahead, making it important for them to have a corresponding capital plan.

**About the author:** John Simmons is head of middle market banking & specialized industries, JPMorgan Chase Commercial Banking, and Ben Walter is the CEO at Chase Business Banking. To learn more about how JPMorgan Chase is helping business leaders build for the future, view the full Business Leaders Outlook survey results for small and midsize businesses. This article was supplied by Brandpoint.



Storage Systems for LBM Dealers

- The Auto-Stak System
- Cantilever Rack Systems
- Metal Buildings
- Drive-Thru Systems
- Millwork Storage Systems
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*Prestige Mono stringer with 3-1/2"-thick white oak treads, glass balustrade, and Cooper white oak handrail.*

# Exploring Rising Stair Trends for 2023

By Dave Silvia

The staircase has long been considered an essential element in the design of the home. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in staircase designs that not only serve their functional purpose but also make a bold and personal design statement. Homeowners and designers are seeking to create a unique staircase with customized elements such as a newel post (pictured right) or treads and handrails of a particular wood species. Here are some of the latest trends in staircase designs we are seeing in the Northeast:

### Minimalistic Designs

The trend toward minimalistic designs in staircases is gaining momentum. The use of clean lines and simple shapes creates a sleek and modern look. As part of these designs, metal, cable rail, horizontal metal rods, powder-coated newels, and glass are all used with wood.

### Metal

Metal balusters are taking over for wood balusters, or a combination of metal and wood. The use of simple metal balusters in a staircase creates a clean, simple design that will achieve the very popular industrial or modern farmhouse look that many people desire in homes today. The metal can range from its simplest form to one that is very ornate, fitting any type of home design.

### Wood


Over the past several years, white oak has taken over red oak when it comes to treads, risers, rails, and other stair parts. Ten years ago, white oak was more affordable than red oak. Today, white oak is typically 125% more expensive than red oak. Maple treads and stair parts are beginning to make their way back due to their ability to be stained easily, especially with dark colors such as black.

### Glass

Glass provides a clean, minimalist, and modern look and is popular in contemporary homes and commercial buildings. Glass balustrades offer an unobstructed view of the surrounding space, creating a sense of openness.

### Floating Staircases

Mono stringer staircases use a simple beam that supports the entire staircase. This is also known as a floating stair because there are no visible support structures on the sides or under the stairs. Floating staircases are often paired with thicker, oversized wood treads that are 3-1/2"–4-1/2" thick.

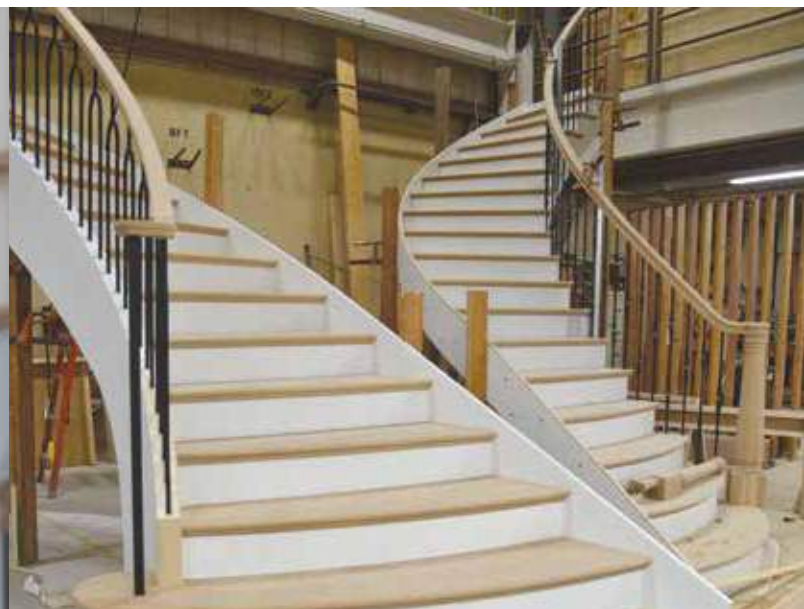
We asked Dave Cooper, who represents the Stairbuilders and Manufacturers Association (SMA) in the development of codes, standards, and related research and testing, how he felt about the latest trends in stairs and their relation to stair codes. "In terms of the stair industry, I see the trend with the greatest potential as the return to natural elements," he said. "The lower carbon footprint, weight, and cost alone will morph most midrise construction from steel and concrete to wood. It is well known that wood timbers perform better in fire and last longer than steel and concrete, providing additional time for egress. The demand for wood stairs, which are allowed in wood buildings, will affect every element in the supply chain, from standing timber to stair components." 

---

**About the author:** Dave Silvia of North Atlantic Corp. has 37 years of stair building experience, from hands-on construction to state-of-the-art manufacturing techniques. Throughout his career, he has been instrumental in the product development and design of many stair products at North Atlantic Corp. He enjoys meeting customers throughout New England and New York and making them feel comfortable with stair products, which can often be intimidating to many builders and dealers. Silvia is an active member of the Stairbuilders and Manufacturers Association (SMA). He has presented the preassembled stair AIA program to hundreds of architects and has thousands of views on "how to" stair videos on the Cooper Stairworks YouTube channel.



Custom tapered newel post with inset mouldings and custom cap.



Cooper Curved preassembled buttress-style stair with several bowed risers and white oak treads with House of Forgings balusters and Cooper Metro handrail.



Commercial Building Stair Safety:

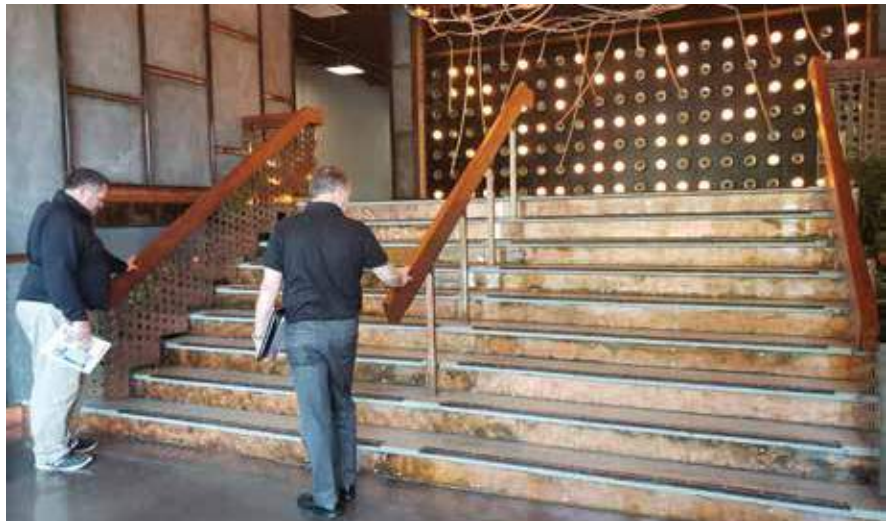
# MORE EFFECTIVELY **PREVENTING** *Slips and Falls* on High Traffic Stairs

By Bob Finkenaur

**I**ndependent retail lumber dealers sell to builders, contractors, architects, and consumers who depend on safe, reliable footing on any stairs located both inside and outside a structure or facility.

However, in commercial buildings across the country, the most common technique for preventing slip-and-fall accidents on stairs—the application of non-skid adhesive tapes or epoxy coatings embedded with aggregate—is often neither foolproof nor reliable. On high-traffic stairways, tapes can peel off (creating a trip hazard) and coatings abrade away quickly, leading to frequent reapplication every few months to maintain safety standards.

Now, a new category of durable high-tech epoxy is available as a solution to effectively ensure superior stair tread footing, safety, and visibility for years without re-application. This option dramatically reduces the need for maintenance and replacement even in heavily traveled areas and can be quickly and easily applied on stair treads by maintenance personnel.



## The Slip-and-Fall Epidemic

Slip-and-fall incidents are a leading cause of injury and a factor in many lawsuits and workers' compensation claims. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), "in general, falls and slips are responsible for 15% of all accidental deaths, the second-leading cause after motor vehicles, and account for 25% of all reported injury claims."

"It is very important to improve stair safety in high-traffic commercial buildings, particularly in New York State," says Gani Bajraktari, senior property manager at New York-based Bajraktari Realty Management Corp. "In [New York] state, the property owner is presumed responsible if anyone gets hurt on a property. So, a little bit of prevention goes a long way."

To dramatically improve building safety, enhancing the traction, feel, and visibility of stair treads is the most effective means of reducing slip-and-fall incidents and injuries.

## A Long-Term Safety Solution

Enhancing the traction of stair treads to improve safety is not a new concept. However, most options on the market are decidedly low-tech, such as applying non-skid adhesive tape or a coating with embedded aggregate to each tread.

Another solution for many commercial buildings is applying a non-skid tape embedded with aggregate. However, if the adhesive does not adhere well to the surface, it can peel off and become a trip hazard within a few months. The aggregate in the tape is only lightly embedded on the surface as well, and in high-traffic areas, it can quickly wear away.

"In my experience, non-skid tape comes off repeatedly. It is a temporary solution, so you are wasting your time, energy, and effort every time you reapply it," says Bajraktari.

Fortunately, Bajraktari discovered a more durable epoxy paste consisting of 100% solids that, once applied, can last for years in high-traffic areas. The product provides an extremely strong bond to a range of stair tread surfaces, with embedded aggregate to increase traction.

The product, available in black and safety yellow, delineates the edge of each stair tread. The epoxy paste can be used indoors or outdoors and exposed to chemicals, weather, and temperature extremes. The bond is so strong that a chisel or angle grinder is required to remove the stair tread line, an advantage in high-traffic areas.

According to Bajraktari, he first used the epoxy paste to improve the safety and footing of outdoor stairs in residential projects that could become slippery when wet. "It held up amazingly well to the sun's UV and outdoor weather. Seven years later, it still looks as good as the day we applied it."

To resolve an issue with broken vinyl treads at his commercial property, he removed all the treads, sanded the underlying concrete, and applied the product. The new treads improved safety and minimized the possibility of slip-and-fall incidents as well as potential liability.

"Instead of temporary applications, it is much more effective to solve the problem the first time with a product and be done with it. The footing is amazing, and you feel more secure going up and down the stairs," says Bajraktari.

He adds, "As far as durability, I expect the stair treads to last for at least 10 years or more in indoor applications."


The high-strength epoxy paste is designed for easy application to stair treads by even untrained personnel. In a kit, a 400-ml cartridge of material can produce 25 to 40 linear feet of 1-inch-wide tread. A special tool is then used to dispense and mix the material at the time of application in the correct ratio, eliminating the risk of human error.

The kit includes a patent-pending stencil system, so the 1-inch-wide tread lines remain clean, neat, and parallel. In addition to straight-line treads, instructions such as "Exit Here" or a corporate logo can be applied using the material and a stencil. "The kit provides everything you need. Just follow the instructions, and basically anyone can improve stair safety," says Bajraktari.

For added safety, the 100% epoxy tread line does not shrink, providing a superior tactile sensation that creates greater awareness of footing when climbing or descending stairs.

According to Bajraktari, the epoxy product not only improved safety and eliminated the need for frequent re-application but also had a more aesthetic look over time due to the lack of visible wear.

"The insurance company will undoubtedly raise its rates to cover its costs," says Bajraktari. He has found the approach surprisingly cost-effective in reducing maintenance, potential liability, and commercial insurance rates.

Commercial property managers have long sought to improve facility safety, but traditional methods of adding traction and visibility to stair treads are short lived and high maintenance. With advanced durable all-solid epoxy pastes that adhere to stair treads for years, managers now have an easy tool to improve long-term safety. 

---

***About the author:** Bob Finkenaur is the owner of the Form-A-Tread Company ([www.form-a-tread.com](http://www.form-a-tread.com)), a division of RGF Materials Company LLC, founded in 2015, certified by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) as a VOSB (Veteran Owned Small Business) with years of experience providing high-value formulated products and solutions to a wide variety of professional and consumer markets.*



# STAIR PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Photo Credit: Cleary Millwork



## Cleary Millwork

**Contact:** Dave Silvia **Email:** dsilvia@northatlanticcorp.com  
**Phone:** 508-235-4319 **Website:** www.clearymillwork.com

### What stair products do you sell?

Cleary Millwork sells Cooper preassembled stairs, custom stair parts, treads and risers, Fitts wood stair parts, House of Forgings iron stair parts, Prestige metal stair parts, spiral stairs, and attic stairs.

### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Manufactured in Somerset, Mass., the preassembled staircase has long been considered the most efficient method of stair building due to its advantages of fast, accurate installation and jobsite labor savings. Cooper Stairworks' stairs combine additional enhancements, adding still more advantages over site-built stairs and

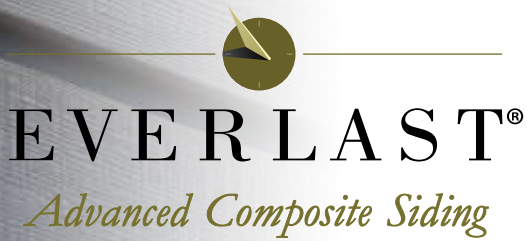


exceeding the quality expectations of the most discerning craftsman. Whether the need is for a simple and safe utility stair to the cellar, a rail system, or an aesthetic balance of curves from floor to balcony in a larger foyer, a Cooper preassembled stair will prove to be invaluable in any home or commercial building.

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### Novo Building Products - Empire Moulding and Millwork

**Contact:** Patrick Ross **Email:** [pross@novobp.com](mailto:pross@novobp.com)

**Website:** [www.ljsmith.com](http://www.ljsmith.com)



#### What stair products do you sell?

Comprehensive offering of interior stair parts to include wood and iron balusters, turned wood newels and box newels, handrails, handrail fittings, treads, and risers. We also offer modern horizontal infills to include sleek metal panels, stainless steel cable, and tube systems.

#### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

"Our Modern Linear Collection features a stainless steel cable system, black metal panel system, and black or stainless steel tube infills. There is no measuring, drilling, or cutting of the newels required. This system takes the complex and makes it simple: Marine-grade 316 stainless steel cable and hardware for interior or exterior use; sleek swageless cable fittings require no special tools for installation; wood and metal newels sized and predrilled saving hours and hours of installation time; black steel or 304 stainless hollow tube infill option available for interior applications; and solid box treads for a total industrial modern design.



### BROSCO

**Contact:** Tim Curran **Email:** [tcurran@broSCO.com](mailto:tcurran@broSCO.com)

**Phone:** 978-475-7100 **Website:** [www.broSCO.com](http://www.broSCO.com)



#### What stair products do you sell?

BROSCO offers a large assortment of quality stair products from Crown Heritage Stairparts, Young Manufacturing, ASI Folding Stairways, and BROSCO Premium Weaber Treads. We are consistently reviewing our inventory to offer the most popular species and styles. A wide range of species from red oak, beech, and primed to poplar and white oak along with iron is in stock. Stain-grade and primed box newels, treads, various fittings, and numerous collections round out the offering. In addition, we offer cable railing options for both the interior and exterior.

#### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

The Crown Heritage box newels are available in matching species and finishes compatible with most design collections. Adding a box newel to any design will create a crisp look and provide architectural style at an affordable price. The large selection of box newels are in stock at BROSCO.





Trus Joist Weyerhaeuser

**Contact:** Mark Collins **Email:** mark.collins@weyerhaeuser.com

**Website:** www.weyerhaeuser.com



**What stair products do you sell?**

Trus Joist TimberStrand LSL Stair Stringers.



**What is one product you'd like to highlight?**

TimberStrand LSL Stair Stringers allow you to leverage all the benefits of LSL to a stable and consistent end result. TimberStrand LSL is straight, free of knots, and resists twisting, shrinking, and bowing after installation. TimberStrand LSL Stair Stringers are the ideal solution for strong, stable, and quiet stairs. Reduce your need to shim, trim, and scribe. Enhance craftsmanship while minimizing labor costs. Improve your finish results and enjoy fewer callbacks. Learn more about TimberStrand LSL at wy.com/timberstrand.

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### Rex Lumber Company

**Email:** [information@rexlumber.com](mailto:information@rexlumber.com)

**Phone:** 800-343-0567 **Website:** [www.rexlumber.com](http://www.rexlumber.com)



#### What stair products do you sell?

Rex Lumber Company offers the whole range of stair products, from standard poplar, red oak, white oak treads, risers, and stringers, nosing, and handrail to high-end custom stair products that are available in any species. We can match custom profiles or provide stock profiles. We stock more than 60 tropical and domestic species. In addition to providing “unfinished” stair products, we have the capability of priming, sanding, or even applying custom finish to most of the stair parts we sell. Our team is available to meet with you and your workforce to set up customized stocking programs for your retail locations.

#### What is one product you’d like to highlight?

The ability to provide stock materials or match custom profiles.



### Woodgrain

**Contact:** Selene Byron **Email:** [sbyron@woodgrain.com](mailto:sbyron@woodgrain.com)

**Phone:** 401-489-5014 **Website:** [www.woodgrain.com](http://www.woodgrain.com)



#### What stair products do you sell?

Woodgrain stocks four species of stair treads in our three New England locations—clear pine, maple, and red and white oak. We offer both  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1-1/16" thicknesses, 10 1/2" and 11 1/2" widths, and lengths ranging from 36" to 60". Treads can come tongued and returned and primed stair risers are in stock, with or without the dado.

#### What is one product you’d like to highlight?

Quabbin Timber’s products are synonymous with quality, reliability, and service. All of Quabbin’s hardwood treads are clear for grade, with attention paid to delivering a well-matched-for-color product, time after time. Beyond the standard stocking program, Quabbin can produce custom treads to meet specific customer requests. If you require extra-thick treads for modern open stair or popular alternative species like rift and quartered white oak, Quabbin can produce on a job-by-job basis.



DAP Global Inc.

**Contact:** Mackenzie Saponaro **Email:** msaponaro@dap.com  
**Phone:** 410-980-4478 **Website:** www.dap.com



**SMART BOND.**

#### What stair products do you sell?

We manufacture and supply a full breadth of construction adhesives for a multitude of project needs. For every project you have, there's a DAP product to match!

#### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

SmartBond Subfloor is a high-strength polyurethane foam adhesive that is faster and easier to use than traditional cartridge adhesives. A single can of SmartBond provides eight times the coverage of traditional cartridge adhesives, so you can do more with less.

**SIMPSON**

**Strong-Tie**

Simpson Strong-Tie

**Contact:** Lance Roth **Email:** lroth@strongtie.com  
**Phone:** 925-560-9279 **Website:** www.strongtie.com



#### What stair products do you sell?

Adjustable stair-stringer connectors.

#### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

The LSC adjustable stair-stringer connector offers a versatile, concealed connection between the stair stringer and the carrying header or rim board while replacing costly framing. Field slopeable to all common stair stringer pitches, the LSC connector is suitable for either solid or notched stringers. Key features: Replaces additional framing and toe-nailing; installs flush with the top of the carrying member or lower on the face; interchangeable for left or right applications; LSCZ features a ZMAX coating with additional corrosion protection for interior and some exterior applications. LSCSS is made from stainless steel for higher exposure environments.

# WHAT DOOR STYLE Best Fits My PERSONALITY?

By Selene Byron

It is safe to say, historic architectural styles, in 2023, have blurred lines. The Modern Farmhouse has been the most popular design trend for years, despite rumors that it is fading. The transitional style is a convenient name for seemingly blending all architectural characteristics into one, and my new favorite is the Grand Millennial, aka “Granny Chic,” bringing Victorian to present-day trendy.

*How can we determine the door styles that best fit our personalities based on the style of our home?*

Let us have some fun and identify the top style trends of 2023 with corresponding colors and household elements, then we can unveil the doors to match our revealed style.



We must start with the **Modern Farmhouse**. Identified by a white exterior, black windows, board-and-batten siding, and a wood door. This style mixes the old and the new with contrasting elements: metal accents with a farmhouse sink, soft neutral fabrics with pops of color, and industrial-style lighting.

Colors: White, golden wheat, and granite with a hint of pale green or blue.

Doors:  $\frac{3}{4}$  lite mahogany-grain double door paired with a one-panel Shaker door on barn door hardware, and five-panel equal double doors.

For the adventurer who travels the world collecting keepsakes to display or for those who are drawn to multi-cultures, **Mediterranean Luxe** invites you to bring the exotic into your home. Interior elements include terra cotta, mixed tiles, wrought iron, and colored glass accents, while the outside features hues that mimic the earth.

Colors: Jewel-toned fuchsias, yellows, and turquoise with gold accents.

Doors: Two-panel Roman interiors painted a bold hue. Arched mahogany-grain double doors with a bifold door system leading out to the patio.



*“When picking a new interior or exterior door for yourself, but especially when guiding your customers, have them look within.”*



**Mid-Century Modern** pairs clean lines, practical elements, and texture with a '60s and '70s vibe; envision a modernized Mad Men. Curved wooden chairs with a glass coffee table, a leather couch, exposed brick, and a color-pop accent pillow.

Colors: Retro burnt orange, nasturtium yellow, dusty beige, avocado green, and a chocolate brown.

Doors: Build your own front door with pre-finished colors and geometric windows. Choose a modern door with a routed retro design or let the room's design elements speak for themselves with a simply stated five-lite interior door.

The **Minimalistic/Traditional** styles are like fraternal twins: different in personality but similar in values and characteristics. Typically, an older home has a warm interior and a relaxed design. A classic exterior mixed with wood, stone, and metal elements.

Colors: Light woodgrains, tumbleweed, pale pink, and Arctic blue with a complementing neutral palette in muted hues.

Doors: Minimalistic Shaker-style three-panel or one-panel interiors paired with the traditional Craftsman exterior. Choose between one, two, three, four, six, or 12 lite.




*If you want to have fun, take this quiz!*

**WHICH DOOR STYLE BEST FITS MY PERSONALITY?**

<https://take.quiz-maker.com/QQ0WCQN1>



Last but not least, a timeless classic, the **Art Deco** architectural glam—bold, shiny, and eye-catching! Pair brightly colored walls with contrasting patterned wallpaper, arched entryways with geometric glass, mosaic windows with velvet, silk, brass, and anything else that should not work together does in this style.

Colors: Navy, black, gold, green, soft creams, and patterns.

Doors: Geometric patterned, router-carved interior doors paired with glamorous exterior doors featuring patterned glass.

There are SO MANY colors, styles, designs, and hardware choices to lead you to the style you prefer for your home. When picking a new interior or exterior door for yourself, but especially when guiding your customers, have them look within, look at their style of dress, and take pictures of their home, and I'll bet you can narrow down their door preferences to one of these five architectural categories. 📸

In May 2022, Woodgrain acquired Huttig Building Products, and the combined companies are known as Woodgrain, with legacy Huttig locations joining Woodgrain's distribution division. Woodgrain is family-owned and one of the leading millwork operations in the world, with locations throughout the United States and Chile. With 69 years of quality craftsmanship and service, Woodgrain is a leading producer of mouldings, doors, and windows, as well as a premier distributor of specialty building products. Woodgrain, Inc. is headquartered in Fruitland, Idaho, with six divisions and over 45 manufacturing and warehouse facilities in the United States and South America. For more information, visit [www.woodgrain.com](http://www.woodgrain.com).



# DOOR PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Photo Credit: BROSCO



## BROSCO

**Contact:** Tim Curran **Email:** tcurran@broSCO.com  
**Phone:** 978-475-7100 **Website:** www.broSCO.com

### What door products do you sell?

BROSCO offers interior and exterior doors from traditional to contemporary designs. The growing popular trend of interior Primed Flat Panel and the new Raised Panel doors are in stock. Additionally, we stock Jeld-Wen molded doors and pine doors from Rogue Valley. The exterior offering has a wide selection of wood, fiberglass, and steel doors. The Simpson wood door selection includes Nantucket and WaterBarrier doors to fit any project's need. The Jeld-Wen fiberglass collection offers Smooth Pro and Design Pro along with the premium Architectural Collection with NVD technology. Prefinishing for fiberglass and interior primed and moulded doors are available.

### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

The Jeld-Wen fiberglass door collection has the designs and styles needed for all projects. From the rustic charm of a Farmhouse to the relaxed vibe of a Coastal cottage or refreshed look on an updated traditional to a simply modern design, Jeld-Wen fiberglass provides a quality door for any project. The numerous options include the latest trends of flat panels, textured glass, SDL bars, an expanded 8'-0" offering, direct glaze doors, or sleek low-profile Zeel light frame. The many designs from the popular Craftsman style with SDL to a ¾ light with decorative glass creates curb appeal!

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**BWI Distribution by Masonite**

**Contact:** Doug Helmacy **Email:** dhelmacy@bwi-distribution.com  
**Phone:** 908-500-3464 **Website:** www.bwi-distribution.com



**What door products do you sell?**

BWI is a distributor of Masonite interior, exterior, and door systems, including solid wood, fiberglass, steel, hollow core, solid core, and smart exterior doors.



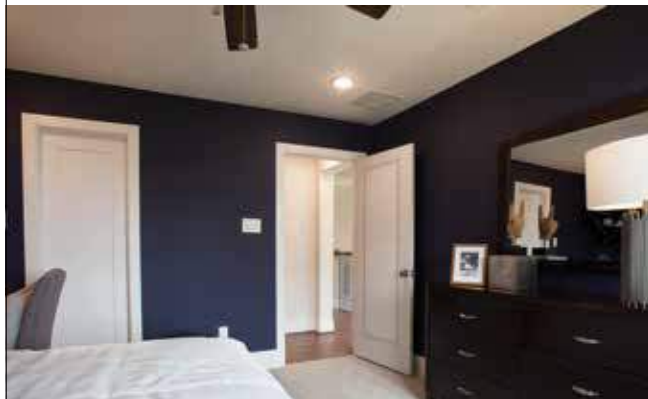
**What is one product you'd like to highlight?**

The Masonite Performance Door System is 64% better at keeping air and water out than the leading competitor, resulting in superior energy efficiency and performance. Check out our eMerge Promo through June 30 to learn more about this door system.



**Woodgrain**

**Contact:** Selene Byron  
**Phone:** 401-489-5014 **Website:** www.woodgrain.com



**What door products do you sell?**

Woodgrain is one of the leading millwork operations in the world as well as the market leader in door distribution in the Northeast, offering Therma-Tru Exterior Doors, Masonite Interior Doors, Woodgrain Stile and Rail Doors, Standard Patio Doors, and Larson Storm Doors.



**What is one product you'd like to highlight?**

Woodgrain's Primed Door Collection embodies beauty, strength, and durability. Utilizing the highest manufacturing standards, Woodgrain offers a wide variety of interior doors, ranging from sleek modern to elegant classics like this primed one-panel door with Ovolo sticking.





## Andersen

**Contact:** James Degnan  
**Email:** James.Degnan@andersencorp.com  
**Phone:** 844-623-0796 **Website:** www.andersenwindows.com



### What door products do you sell?

Bring us your ideas, inspirations, and budget, and we'll match you with the perfect solution for your project. Whether your project is residential or commercial, new construction or replacement, Andersen doors are available in the sizes, styles, and quality materials you want. Bring modern designs to life with options like dark colors, dramatic sizes, narrow profiles, and sleek hardware. Andersen offers a vast portfolio of patio doors, storm doors, entry doors, and big doors, including Liftslide, MultiGlide, folding, and pivot options.

### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

A-Series gliding and hinged patio doors are now available with modern styling to meet popular design trends. A-Series contemporary patio doors now feature a narrower bottom rail at 4.5", making it the same height as the head and bottom rails. With equal sightlines around the entire door and a narrower profile, these new offerings provide more expansive views. A-Series contemporary doors feature flush-mounted hardware, squared-off glass stops, and grilles with profiles up to 3 1/2" to complete the modern look so many homeowners are seeking to create today.



## Boise Cascade®

## Boise Cascade Company

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 Chip Wood–Greenland, NH  
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**Phone:** Westfield 877-462-6473; Greenland 800-962-9961  
**Website:** www.bc.com/distribution



### What door products do you sell?

GCP Vycor Plus and Vycor Pro Flashing Tapes, ZIP System Flashing Tape & Stretch Tape, and Klear Trim Boards.

### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

ZIP System Stretch Tape is made of a high-performance composite acrylic; the tape conforms to challenging applications and locks out moisture even over mismatched surfaces. Quickly flash tricky areas without piecing tape segments together. ZIP System stretch tape uniquely stretches in all directions to easily fit sills, curves, and corners with a single piece. It's repositionable, and it can be pulled up and reapplied for hassle-free installation. ZIP System stretch tape is ideal for even the toughest applications, including curved windows and wall penetrations.



O'Connor  
& Associates

O'Connor & Associates, Ltd.

**Contact:** Crystal Johnson **Email:** crystal@oca-ltd.com  
**Phone:** 774-205-5064 **Website:** www.oca-ltd.com



#### What door products do you sell?

Architectural Concepts Door Collection with Eclisse Sliding Pocket Door Systems: Two unique products that warrant a good look. Check out their websites at [www.archconceptsllc.com](http://www.archconceptsllc.com) and [www.eclisse.us/en-us/](http://www.eclisse.us/en-us/). You can see all OCA products at [www.oca-ltd.com](http://www.oca-ltd.com).



#### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

OCA introduces the Architectural Concepts Door Collection in conjunction with Eclisse Sliding Pocket Door Systems. The AC Door Collection is made from MDF, providing a smooth and durable finish. Their doors are made with a structural wood edge that provides a complete glue bond, without gaps. AC Door utilizes a proprietary high-end exterior millwork primer on all their doors. AC Door can make doors to fit any project, including pocket doors that can be used with the Eclisse Sliding Pocket Door System. Eclisse has reinvented the pocket door system, keeping the contractor in mind with easier installation and a 12-year warranty.



R. A. Graham Co.

**Contact:** Amy Rushford **Email:** AmyR@ragraham.com  
**Phone:** 800-333-3933 **Website:** www.ragraham.com



#### What door products do you sell?

R. A. Graham has all your residential and commercial hardware needs from basic baseboard door stops to concealed exit devices and closers.

#### What is one product you'd like to highlight?

The fresh new Emtex Select program is rapidly expanding as it gains popularity for the increased level of customization. Mix and match finishes or keep it simple. And now with cabinet knobs and pulls along with bath hardware available in this series, everyone can outfit their whole home with the perfect, personalized look throughout every space. The style possibilities are endless. Assembled and packed in the USA, Emtex lead times have gotten back to about 10 days, with free shipping on all orders with standard three-day UPS shipping. Faster options are available at an upcharge.



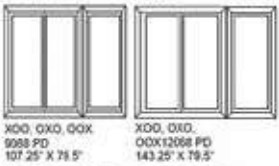
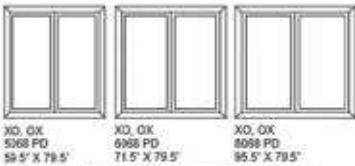
National Vinyl LLC

**Contact:** Scott Channell  
**Email:** schannell@nvpwindows.com  
**Phone:** 413-420-0548 **Website:** www.nationalvinyl.com



**What door products do you sell?**  
 Sliding patio and French-style doors.

**Sizes & Operation**



X - OPERATING PANEL    O - FIXED PANEL  
 NOTE: 3 panel doors consist of a door with mullied sidelites.  
 All door operations are viewed outside looking in.



**What is one product you'd like to highlight?**  
 Our feature-rich EnduraView patio door system is built with you and your builder in mind. With features such as multiple color, glass, and grid options, each EnduraView Patio Door can be specifically made for each customer's specific tastes and needs. Its rigid design provides years of easy use and great comfort. Easy to install and add the ability to change handing in the field, the EnduraView is a perfect answer for all your customers.



DAP Global Inc.

**Contact:** Mackenzie Saponaro **Email:** msaponaro@dap.com  
**Phone:** 410-980-4478 **Website:** www.dap.com



**What door products do you sell?**  
 AMP (Advanced Modified Polymer) all weather window, door, and siding sealant provides a 100% weatherproof and waterproof seal with the ability to be applied on wet and damp surfaces. It has a fast 30-minute paint and rain ready time, and is specially formulated to meet ASTM C920, Class 35 for exterior and interior use. It is proven wet surface application, 0-140 extreme temperature use, stays flexible, is UV resistant, and comes in crystal clear and white.



**What is one product you'd like to highlight?**  
 AMP (Advanced Modified Polymer) all-weather window, door, and siding sealant.





Holden Humphrey Co.

**Contact:** Lance Humphrey  
**Email:** lance@holdenhumphrey.com  
**Phone:** (800) 777-1053  
**Website:** www.holdenhumphrey.com



**What door products do you sell?**

Holden Humphrey is proud to stock Henry products, including flashings and sealants that support door and window installation.



**What is one product you'd like to highlight?**

Henry Blueskin Butyl Flash.

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# How to Screen for Fit During the Interview

By Rikka Brandon



**A**ssessing whether a candidate is a good fit is an essential piece of the interview process. A key consideration that must be taken into account is the job candidate’s personality and core values. Does it match that of the culture you are emphasizing at your company?

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR HOW TO SCREEN FOR FIT DURING THE INTERVIEW.

### CULTURE IS KEY

It's entirely possible that a job candidate possesses every skill and talent your company is seeking, but still may not "fit in" with the rest of your staff. Placing a square peg in a round hole is not a good idea when hiring new employees to join your established workforce. So, here are some ways to get to know the person you are interviewing — instead of just evaluating what they can do.

#### Ask personality-based interview questions:

- Explain your company's core values to your candidate. Then ask how they would personally demonstrate a commitment to each one.
- Illustrate the culture you have created at your company and ask how they feel about it.
- What kind of manager gets the best results from them?
- What defines you as a person?
- What stresses you out?
- What types of non-work activities do you enjoy?

### GETTING TO KNOW THE REAL PERSON

You can even go a step further as some progressive companies have done. Ask out-of-the-box questions such as:

- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What's the strangest thing you've ever done?
- What's your favorite movie?

The goal here is to judge the reaction of your candidates. In this day and age and with so much personal interaction

in the workplace with customers, colleagues, vendors and more, you need employees who can "roll with punches." Employees need to be able to "play well with others," while representing your company as well-balanced dynamic people themselves.

Plus you want to get to know the real person by getting beyond their practiced responses. In other words, asking unexpected questions will force your candidates to reveal their true personalities, rather than giving you cliché answers to questions they might already have rehearsed before ever setting foot in the building.

Many companies ask the above questions at a follow up interview; after an introductory meeting has determined the candidate possesses the requisite skills and knowledge to perform the job. But sometimes multiple interviews are simply not feasible. Either way, by digging into the personality of your candidate, you can judge whether or not the person will be happy working for you in the long run. You'll also gain insight as to whether the rest of your staff will enjoy working with the potential candidate. And, that information goes a long way toward long-term employee retention — both for new and current employees!

### CLEAR COMPANY VALUES

Be sure to have a clearly established set of company values. Know your company culture. And, don't be shy about getting to know your job candidates. Propelling your company forward with the right people starts with a great interview.

As you know, the building materials industry is experiencing a talent shortage. Attracting the best and the brightest people to your company takes a constant and focused effort—an effort every company must make to survive today! So, be sure to use the interview process as a way to further sell your company. Ensure every interviewee leaves with a clear understanding of everything your company has to offer. That's your first priority.

### IDENTIFY YOUR BEST CANDIDATES

The next step is to use the interview process to identify your best candidates within your ever-increasing applicant pool. Determine who really wants to work for you. Then determine which of those people possesses the personality traits to mesh well with the rest of your workforce.

Whether you have developed a system of multiple interviews to thoroughly screen your candidates, or you only have time to conduct one hiring meeting, the above tips and techniques will help you identify the very best job applicants for your company. Master the interview from your side and your company will benefit from the addition of great new employees, as well as increased employee retention. And that can only make your company more successful! **LC**

***About the author:** Rikka Brandon is a nationally recognized LBM recruiting and hiring expert, and bestselling author. She helps building products business owners and leaders solve their recruiting and retention challenges with strategy, best practices, and access to experts. Whether you're looking for in-house training and coaching for your team or an expert to provide consulting, you can learn more about working with Rikka at [BuildingGurus.com/NRLA](http://BuildingGurus.com/NRLA).*

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT?**

Then be sure to keep an eye out for the next issue of the LC, which will feature articles on this subject.





Lessons Learned:

## “Cro-Magnon Man”

By Mike McDole

At a time when the industry can't seem to find anything to talk about other than a lack of employees and supply issues, it's kind of nice to know that some things don't change.

Rob is one of them. Every dealer says their builders are conservative, but the owner of Cro-Magnon Construction is truly a throwback to a bygone era. First of all, Rob is a spec builder, a niche that is virtually nonexistent in the Northeast.

Moreover, he does business the old-fashioned way. Rob designs his houses, employs his own crews, and stick-frames everything—yeah, even the roof—on site. He's so far behind the times that he still insists on using plywood sheathing, which is practically unheard of in our area.

Conventional wisdom says that he's a blueprint for financial suicide, but Rob is doing fine. One of the reasons he's doing fine is that he makes money the old-fashioned way—by taking it out of his supplier's hide.

Don't get me wrong, Rob's a good customer. In fact, he's a high-volume customer who buys from us across multiple product categories and pays his bills on time. Which makes him a

magnet for loss-leader quotes from our competitors. The good news is Rob doesn't make us match every low-ball price he sees. The bad news is that we have to be within 3%.

But Sam, Rob's salesperson, was determined to bring the margins up on the commodities. He covered Rob's jobsites like a cheap suit, hounded our operations staff to make sure his service was impeccable, and hammered Rob with efficiency ideas and presented new products. Rob loved all of it, but it didn't motivate him to pay us an extra dime on the commodities he bought.

One day Sam came to me and proposed that we offer Rob roof trusses and pre-cut I-joists at “introductory prices” that were close to what he was paying for sticks. “Once Rob sees the labor savings, we'll be able to raise our margins going forward. I guarantee it.”

“Let me get this straight,” I said. “You're talking about selling these products below our costs. What makes you think Rob will pay more later?”

“He's cheap, but he's not stupid,” replied Sam. “Trust me on this one.”

I hate it when salespeople say that! But I agreed to go along. On Rob's

next job, Sam proposed roof trusses and a pre-cut I-joist floor system. Sam admitted—actually, emphasized—is more accurate—that we were willing to lose money on the first project to prove that he'd save money overall.

Reluctantly, Rob agreed. As it turned out, he was delighted with the results. So were we. Our margins are still no better on the sticks with Rob, but we were able to get our normal margins on the roof trusses and I-joists, which increased the overall margin on Rob's account.

From then on out, Rob used roof trusses, pre-cut I-joist floor systems, and even started to get other products from us. Not only did Rob's volume go up, but so did his gross margin dollars. As a result, Sam's commission increased also.

Anyone who says builders are conservative is right—but only when it comes to the bottom line. **LG**

**About the author:** Mike McDole has 40+ years' experience on the firing line for pro dealers of the LBM industry and is the principal of Firing-Line LBM Consulting. He's also partners with Greg Brooks of Executive Council on Construction Supply and his Learning Management System. Mike can be reached at 774-372-1367 or mike@firinglinelbm.com.

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# EBMDA Bury the Hatchet Networking Event



Members and guests of the Eastern Building Material Dealers Association (EBMDA) and the New Jersey Building Materials Dealers Association (NJBMDA) enjoyed a night of camaraderie at the Bury the Hatchet event after the EBMDA board's first-quarter meeting in February. The EBMDA has chosen this unique approach for its meetings, where dealers and associate members are treated to axe master guidance, food, and beverages.

Seventy competitors began a serious competition after being reminded to concentrate on the targets in front of them rather than anyone in the audience. While everyone was having a spirited time, it was clear from the beginning that only one would receive the "2023 Golden Hatchet" and full bragging rights.

When the targets had been fully pounded by the throwers, only one competitor would rise to the top. Tom Keller of GR Mitchell proudly accepted his award from EBMDA Past Chair Brent Hankins with a huge grin on his face. Keller offered this challenge: "Who is person enough to attempt to wrest this golden axe from my hands to dominate in 2024?"

Special gratitude and appreciation were given to event sponsor Wolf Home Products for its continued support and to EBMDA member Eric Tucker of Beatty Lumber for supplying the refreshments. EBMDA Chair Tom Keller offered additional gratitude to all of the other event sponsors: Philadelphia Reserve Supply Company (PRSCO), REEB Millwork, and Workforce Retirement Group of Raymond James. 





# VRLDA Bright Futures Job Fair Makes Huge Strides




*1. Student tells VRLDA President Jeremy Baker, of **rk MILES**, and the audience about his experience for the day. 2. Vermont Department of Labor Commissioner Mike Harrington (R) attended the legislative breakfast and stayed the entire day. Shown with Katherine Slye-Hernandez, NRLA legislative director, and Jeremy Baker. 3. VRLDA Bright Futures Chair Claudia Homan, Bethel Mills, gives closing comments. 4. Group shot of legislative breakfast attendees.*

The Vermont Retail Lumber Dealers Association (VRLDA) held its second annual “Building Bright Futures” workforce recruitment fair on March 20 at Vermont Technical College (VTC) in Randolph Center. VRLDA revamped the format, creating an even more exciting day for students, teachers, schools, state officials, and members while promoting our industry. One hundred and seventy students and 220 people in total attended the event.

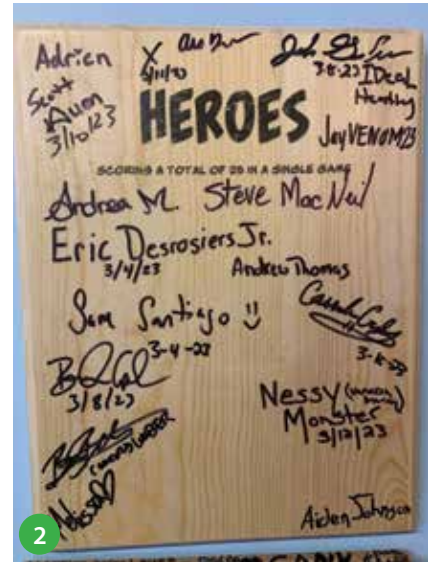
High schools from across the state bused in students and began the day with a tour of the VTC campus. In tandem, VRLDA held a separate breakfast meeting with state legislators and Department of Labor Commissioner Mike Harrington to discuss our recruitment needs and the opportunities for young people in our industry.

Following the campus tour and legislative breakfast, students were split into groups and rotated among myriad demo areas throughout the campus. Students saw firsthand a cross section of opportunities, including sales, kitchen design and architectural functions, boom truck operation, and everything in between. It was a strong representation of the vast opportunities in our industry.

Concluding the fair, the students ate lunch while hearing closing comments further welcoming them into the LBM industry from VRLDA President Jeremy Baker and VRLDA Job Fair Chair Claudia Homan. “It was wonderful to see students totally engaged and participating in meaningful discussions about their futures,” said Homan. The students’ cheers at the end of the day were an indication that the fair went well! 



# 2nd Annual MRLDA Shamrock Showdown



Ben Doyle-Pita, Concord Building & Design, threw a perfect round en route to winning the 2nd Annual Shamrock Showdown axe-throwing contest in dominating fashion. He dispatched runner-up Tim Coderre, Howe Lumber, in the finals to claim the championship of the double-elimination singles tournament.

The event was held on March 15 at Half Axe in the Apex Entertainment Center in Marlborough, Mass. Special thanks to food sponsor Hood Distribution and prize sponsor Boise Cascade! **LC**

1. Ben Doyle-Pita (right), Concord Building & Design, claimed the 2nd Annual Shamrock Showdown title by vanquishing Tim Coderre (left), Howe Lumber, in the championship round.

2. Ben Doyle-Pita's signature enshrined on Half Axe's "Hero" board for his perfect score of 25 in a single game. (lower-left hand corner).





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# Nick Plourde

**Location:** Caribou, ME

**Position:** Assistant Manager • S.W. Collins Co.



## HOW DID YOU BEGIN YOUR CAREER IN THE LBM INDUSTRY?

I didn't know what I wanted to do after high school, so I applied at the local lumberyard. I started out ringing up customers and stocking shelves.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR POSITION?

Mainly, I am active on the sales counter, helping contractors and homeowners with their various home projects, as well as assisting and training other pioneers (sales associates). I also help out across the company, from purchasing to deliveries and process improvement.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE IN YOUR CAREER?

Given the difficulty of finding knowledgeable staff, it is challenging to fulfill all my responsibilities with a smaller team. However, it is helping us learn to be more efficient and streamline our processes.


## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED SINCE WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

Since I started out completely green, I have learned way more than I can list. Mostly, I have learned to work as a team.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANYONE NEW TO THE INDUSTRY?

I say it to any new employee that we hire, "Try not to be overwhelmed by all the new information." The LBM industry is constantly evolving, so despite being in the business for 15 years, I am still learning every day.

## WHAT ARE YOUR PASSIONS OUTSIDE OF THE OFFICE?

Outside of the office, I enjoy spending time with my wife and kids. I am also very active in my church community. 





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