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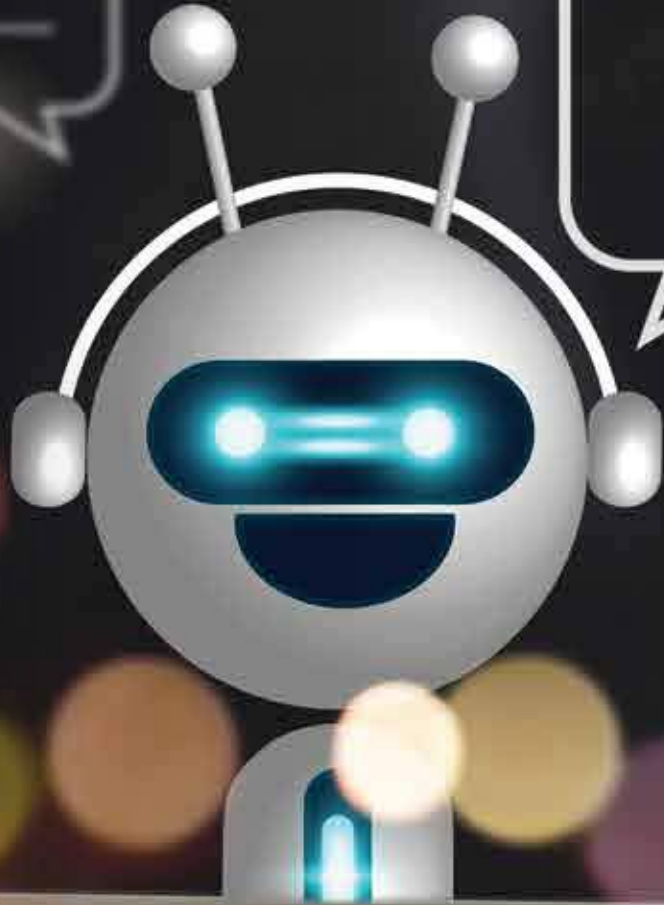
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TECH TODAY

NAVIGATING TECHNOLOGY
IN MODERN
BUSINESS OPERATIONS

MARCH 2024

NRLA
Northeastern Retail
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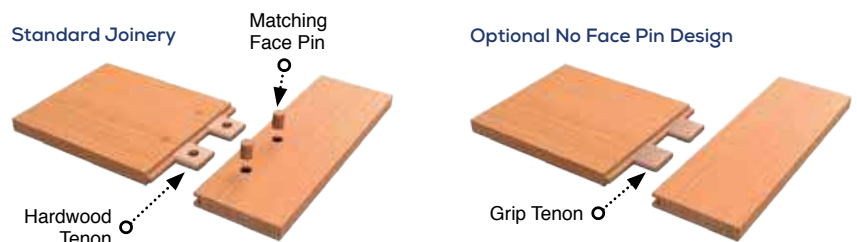
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Lumber Co-operator Mission Statement:

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.

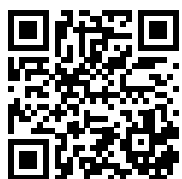


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Ron Labbe, *Owner - Naples Lumber & Supply*



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Rita Ferris
NRLA President

It is with great enthusiasm that I invite you to be a part of a transformative event: the American Building Materials Alliance (ABMA) Second Annual Advocacy Day.

Scheduled to unfold in Washington, D.C., from April 29 to May 1, this Advocacy Day is not merely an event; it's a unique opportunity to shape the future of our industry.

The legislative topics we're promoting are on the verge of being considered by Congress, making this one of the most important advocacy events we've ever held. As NRLA representatives, your presence and voice have the potential to significantly shape the future of our business.

Our legislative priorities are:

1. Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024
2. Credit Card Competition Act
3. Legislation to Address the Shortage of Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Drivers

We will also emphasize the need for workforce development support for the trades. It's vital for our congressional leaders to grasp the importance of investing in the future of our industry to meet housing demands.

During our first Advocacy Day in 2023, we witnessed the power of collective action. Thanks to your participation, the aforementioned issues were introduced and advanced in Congress. Now, in 2024, our goal is to turn these bills into laws that will benefit not only our industry but also the communities we serve.

The ABMA, established in 2021, represents LBM dealers and associated businesses across 16 states. ABMA works tirelessly to shape policies that improve our industry's business environment through our Legislative Committee led by Chair Joe Cecarelli of Hood Distribution, Director of Government Affairs Francis Palasieski, Government Affairs Coordinator Nicolina Schonfarber, and Lobbyist Pat Rita of Orion Strategies.

Your participation in Advocacy Day is a unique opportunity to directly engage with members of Congress. To register for this transformative event, please visit <https://members.nrla.org/ABMA-Advocacy-Day-2024>.

I hope to see you in Washington where we can help create a strong and resilient future for our industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rita".



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Doug Ford
NRLA Chair, Curtis Lumber Company

Technology is our friend, right?

As I prepared to write this article, I went back to a time in 1977 when I started my unplanned journey into this industry. It was a much simpler time, although if you had asked me then, I probably would have disagreed with you. But being freshly out of high school and just starting college, everything seemed overly complicated and overwhelming. Being new to the LBM industry, I found myself way outside my comfort zone. I needed money, and this was the only job available, so I stayed the course. Thinking back, the only connection I had to the lumber business was helping my grandfather with firewood, and that did little to prepare me.

Today, as I sit here and reflect on the differences between then and now, I'm amazed at how much technology has changed our jobs, regardless of the position. The drivers benefit from GPS and truck-mounted forklifts; our cashiers use UPC codes for look-ups; and there are cameras everywhere. However, with all of these remarkable changes, I still must ask the question: Has it gotten any easier to do our jobs, and ultimately, is technology our friend?

Arguably, the invention of the cell phone, instant messaging, and email have had the most profound impact on our job functions. Every morning before I'm out of bed, I start my day by checking my cell phone for any urgent messages prior to preparing for the trip into the office. Once there, the first couple of hours are devoted to the multiple emails that have found their way to my inbox. Some are junk, some are for awareness, and many require a follow-up or a

response. This process repeats itself multiple times a day or whenever I can grab a few minutes. The sheer volume of email and other forms of communication has dramatically changed our industry. When I started my career, communication was limited to dial-up phones, the U.S. mail, or having face-to-face conversations. Your day typically started when the doors were unlocked and ended at the close of business. Road salesmen used pay phones to place orders and, out of necessity, spent the bulk of their time on the road in between jobsites and ended their day in the office relaying messages with support staff.

We can look at all jobs within our industry and quickly see the technological changes our industry has benefited from, and there are many. I used cell phones as one example, but you can easily look at every job function or operation within our businesses and see how drastically different and more efficient we are today. Unfortunately, that does not mean our jobs have gotten any easier—quite the opposite. The volume of information we handle and the pace at which we operate are astonishing and getting faster and more complex every day. We work in a great industry filled with special people from around the world, and because of technology, we can interact with them as if they were in the same room. So yes, technology is our friend; it's how we choose to use it that matters most.

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Corbin Rinehart
 NYLE President, WindsorONE

Greetings from the NYLE team! It has been an exciting start to 2024, and, as we look toward spring and warmer temperatures, many of the retail lumberyards and associate members expect a normal pickup in pace. As things heat up, there are many companies that will turn to newly implemented technologies and strategies to hopefully increase efficiencies and operate as smoothly as possible through the busy months.

Recently, NYLE executed our annual Winter Outing at Loon Mountain in New Hampshire. The event was a great success, with over 35 attendees for our second year in a row. After the NYLE board meeting on Thursday, the group was met with a speaker panel of LBM industry leaders who discussed topics of outlook for 2024, including how to better prepare yourself as a young associate in the industry and some navigating new technologies in our businesses. Thursday evening was filled with good conversations and networking with NYLE members, both new and old. On Friday, attendees took advantage of the great skiing and snowboarding that Loon Mountain Resort has to offer.

Another resource to think about as we enter the “busy season” is associate member involvement in your retail businesses. Take this as a reminder that while many of these associate members are out there promoting their products, they can also be a valuable resource to you and your customers. Identify those associate partners who are willing to give up their time and energy with your team and

with your customer base. This value-added selling can help your teams succeed and increase business and partnerships across the board.

In my business relationships, the topic of creating the family feel of LBM is something discussed quite often. If we can connect the five major players in any LBM sale, our businesses can increase efficiency and the customer experience and, in turn, develop long-term, repeatable business. Those five players are the retail lumberyard, distributor, manufacturer, builder/contractor, and architect. The more often these five assets are fully connected and on the same page, the better the business result for everyone. Keep this in mind this spring as you move forward and increase the value of your business relationships.

NYLE would also like to take this time to remind and invite everyone to our annual Spring Leadership Conference with a focus on talent acquisition, marketing, and organizational development. Kristen Pucci of KRAE Consulting will be the conference’s keynote speaker in 2024. Kristen’s focus is on developing training, marketing, recruiting, and event planning in the architectural, engineering, and construction communities, and she is sure to be a dynamic speaker. The event will be held at the Marriott in Newport, R.I., from April 10-12, and we hope to see many of you there!

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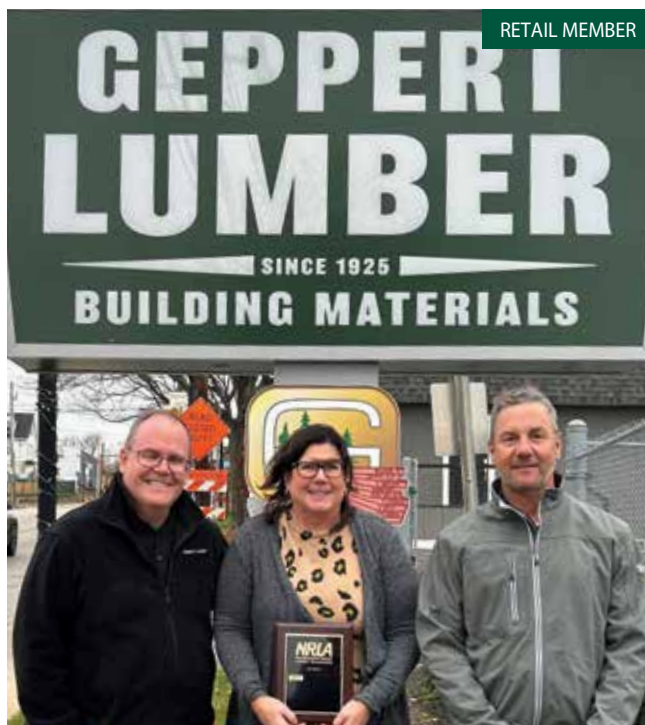


Nuttle Lumber Rehoboth Beach, DE

Located in Rehoboth Beach, Del., Nuttle Lumber has served the Delmarva Peninsula since 1930. The organization recently joined the NRLA and Eastern Building Material Dealers Association (EBMDA).

Jamie Neal, the vice president of Nuttle Lumber, found himself standing at a crucial crossroads in his career. Despite dedicating significant time and effort to refining his skills and expertise in the lumber industry, Neal sensed a void—a yearning for community and a platform to collaborate with peers who shared his passion. This realization prompted him to turn to the EBMDA.

“The education programs, trade shows, and networking opportunities that are offered by the EBMDA will give me and my staff an avenue for professional growth and collaboration,” explained Neal. “We appreciate having education specific to our industry available to develop our staff and give them more opportunities within our organization.”



Geppert Lumber Abington, PA

Geppert Lumber, located in Abington, Pa., has joined the Eastern Building Material Dealers Association (EBMDA). Family owned and run by siblings Elizabeth, James, and Paul, who represent the third generation of the business, Geppert Lumber has been in operation since 1925 serving Bucks and Montgomery counties as well as the Greater Philadelphia area.

Elizabeth “Liz” Geppert is excited to join the EBMDA. “Our industry is evolving, and we have had to adapt to meet our clients’ needs. We recognize that our industry peers also have met the same challenges we have. We look forward to the opportunity to network with our peers in the EBMDA. We also feel that the programs and education available through the EBMDA will be a great resource for us,” she explained.

Tom Keller, EBMDA chair, welcomes the Geppert team to the association. “The EBMDA works to represent, train, and lead independent retail lumber and building material dealers in our region. Our association is rapidly growing. Geppert Lumber has been in business close to 100 years, and that generational experience will be an incredible asset to our members.”



RETAIL MEMBER

Piscitello's Home Center Easton, PA

The NRLA and Eastern Building Material Dealers Association (EBMDA) welcome new member Piscitello's Home Center, located in the heart of Easton, Pa.

Owned by Dave and Lisa Culver, Piscitello's Home Center has been a pillar of reliability, providing top-notch building materials, hardware, and exceptional customer service for years. Their decision to join signals a strategic step toward fostering stronger connections within the industry while staying at the forefront of industry developments.

With their wealth of experience and a customer-centric approach, Doug and Lisa express their excitement at this new venture. They are looking forward to networking with other business owners in the industry and tapping into the many resources and education opportunities the EBMDA and NRLA make available to their members.

"Having resources to train ourselves and our staff that are specific to the retail lumber industry is invaluable," explained Dave Culver. "We will take advantage of them as well as the networking and trade shows."

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



Aegis Lumber & Building Materials Insurance Program Harrisburg, PA

Website: www.AegisLBM.com **Phone:** 310-780-1897

Products: Insurance underwriting firm writing all lines of coverage for lumber and building material dealers and secondary forest products companies.



Covibro Structural Wood Components Inc. Châteauguay, Québec

Website: www.covibro.com/en **Phone:** 514-368-9296

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Paradigm Middleton, WI

Website: www.myparadigm.com **Phone:** (608) 664-9292

Products: Technology platform serving customers in both new construction and renovation markets by increasing sales and operational efficiencies. Paradigm customers include renovation contractors, dealers, lumberyards, distributors, retailers, and manufacturers.

Weyerhaeuser

Weyerhaeuser Announces Partnership to Support Workforce Development

Weyerhaeuser Company announced a national partnership with Be Pro Be Proud, an initiative led by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and the Associated Industries of Arkansas (ASCC/AIA) to raise awareness among middle- and high-school students for career paths in the skilled workforce, including opportunities in forestry and the forest products industry.

Through the partnership, Weyerhaeuser will support Be Pro Be Proud's educational outreach and recruiting activities, which include tours, mobile workshops, and learning modules designed to give students both virtual and hands-on experiences with careers in skilled trades, as well as annual "Draft Days" that match high-school seniors with prospective employers for job interviews.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/weyerhaeuser-wfd-partnership>.

Parksite

Parksite Expands Partnership with Tando Composites

Parksite has expanded its partnership with Tando Composites to distribute the TandoStone product line and the Beach House Shake product lines within their Florida distribution markets. In addition, Parksite will also carry Beach House Shake in their Maryland and North Carolina markets. The expansion will include the full line of TandoStone, which is designed to complement a wide range of other siding materials, including fiber cement, vinyl, and stucco along with Tando's Beach House Shake, the authentic composite shingle. Both Tando Composite brands are engineered with state-of-the-art KAPGUARD with Kynar coating to provide lasting beauty and color protection for 20+ years.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/parksite-partnership-with-tando>.

IN MEMORIAM

Francis Michael Quinn Jr., 90, Scituate, Mass., passed away on Saturday, February 17. Frank worked at the Lamb and Ritchie Company for more than 65 years and was the New Hampshire Retail Lumber Association's (NHRLA) Lumber Person of the Year in 2011.



RILBMDA Hosts Facility Tour at National Vinyl

Members of the Rhode Island Lumber and Building Materials Dealers Association (RILBMDA) toured the production facility of National Vinyl, LLC in Chicopee, Mass., on January 23. This was the second installment of the popular new RILBMDA facility tour series. The next tour will be scheduled for the fall.

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Learn more: <https://nrla.org/sst-debuts-building-solutions>



◀ MoistureShield Launches InstaDeck and New Railing Offerings

MoistureShield, a signature brand of Oldcastle APG, announces the launch of InstaDeck, an outdoor flooring system comprised of heavy-duty plastic tiles that easily snap together to create a foundation for a freestanding, ground-level deck. InstaDeck tiles can be assembled using minimal tools on any level flat surface, including grass, concrete, existing patio surfaces, and gravel.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/moistureshield-instadeck>

FastenMaster Introduces the New FrameFAST ▶

The TORX ttap Drive systems' new design empowers pros with the choice of using a standard impact driver or the award-winning FrameFAST tool. FrameFAST replaces many commonly used hurricane ties, installing 5X faster without the need for compressors, nailers, and hoses. The new fastener is certified for continuous load path applications, including securing roof trusses, wall studs, and plates, in addition to attaching deck joists to carrying beams.

Learn more: <https://nrla.org/fastenmaster-new-framefast>





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Page Lumber, Millwork, & Building Supplies CELEBRATES 100th ANNIVERSARY

Page Lumber, Millwork, & Building Supplies, originally known as H. G. Page & Sons, is excited to announce its 100th anniversary, marking a century of service and quality in the building supplies industry. Since its inception in 1924, with Henry G. Page Sr.'s purchase of a Sears & Roebuck concrete block machine, Page Lumber has been providing high-quality building materials and playing a key role in the development of the Hudson Valley and surrounding area.

Reflecting on this significant milestone, Mark Whitney, CEO of Page Lumber, commented, "As we celebrate a century of service, our evolution is a story of resilience, innovation, and unwavering dedication to the customers we serve. Page Lumber continues to be a thriving family business, with the grandchildren of Henry Page Sr., representing the third generation, actively involved on the board of directors. Here's to another hundred years of excellence and growth, guided by the legacy and values of the Page family."

Beginning as a modest operation on Manchester Road in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Page Lumber has undergone remarkable growth, from producing cement blocks to offering a wide range of products, including roofing and insulation, and becoming a well-stocked lumberyard. The Poughkeepsie

store, where it stands today, opened in the 1970s on the property where Henry Page Sr. was born. The Page family, with Henry Jr., John, and Bill, who recall their childhood days unloading rail cars, have been pivotal to this growth, and they continued to build upon this legacy. Along with the third generation, their deep commitment has not only propelled the business forward but also reinforced their dedication to serving and enhancing local communities.

Page Lumber's 100th anniversary not only marks a commitment to growth and innovation but also a moment to express deep gratitude to the customers who have been integral to our history. From its humble beginnings, the company has grown into a leader in the building industry, a journey made possible by the foundation of trust established through Henry G. Page Sr.'s handshake agreements. The community's stories, like those of grandparents building homes with Page materials, highlight this enduring legacy. As Page Lumber continues to be the trusted choice for builders and DIY enthusiasts, we remain dedicated to customer success, community growth, and honoring the values that have guided us through a century. **LG**

For the complete history of Page Lumber, please visit www.hgpage.com/100-years.



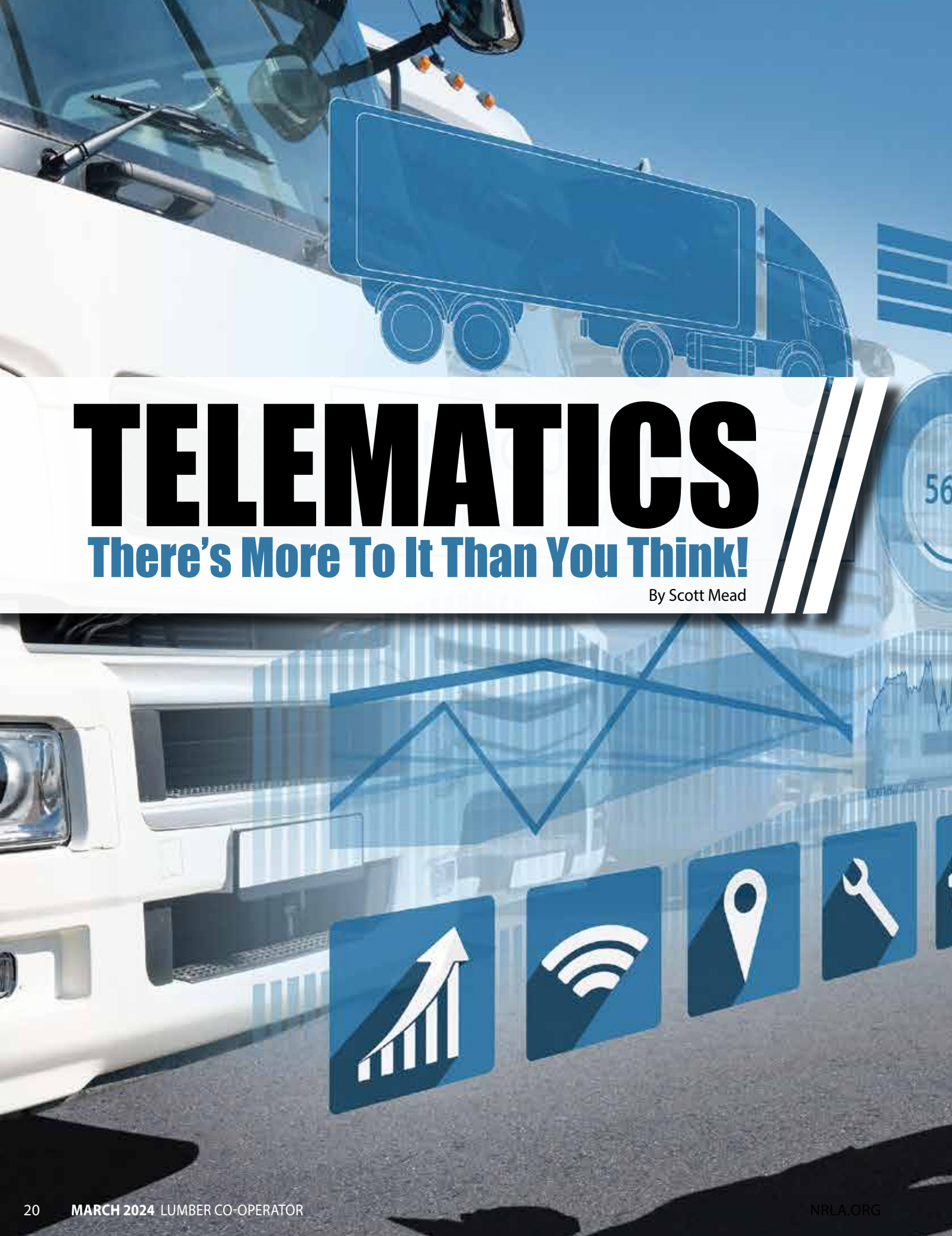
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TELEMATICS

There's More To It Than You Think!

By Scott Mead





When many of us think of employee safety, our minds shift toward incidents that occur in the workplace. It's easy to forget that the main exposure for fatal incidents for workers does not occur at the workplace, but when they are behind the wheel of a vehicle.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, transportation losses continue to be the primary cause of fatal events for workers, with 37.7% (2,066 fatal injuries) of all occupational fatalities in 2022 arising from transportation incidents. This appears to be a trend moving in the wrong direction, with the number of fatal incidents for workers increasing from 1,982 in 2021 to 2,066 in 2022.

With the statistics indicating more fatal injuries to workers over the past several years and a significant percentage of those incidents arising from transportation losses, it leads to the discussion on some of the measures that employers can take to improve their fleet safety and driver management to prevent such losses.

Over the past several years, we've seen some significant developments in fleet technology systems that have been implemented by many fleets to improve fleet safety, such as telematics and camera systems. With the demonstrated safety benefits of these systems, they are now frequently being required by insurance carriers as a condition of coverage.

"According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, transportation losses continue to be the primary cause of fatal events for workers, with 37.7% (2,066 fatal injuries) of all occupational fatalities in 2022 arising from transportation incidents."

The benefits of telematics systems from a safety standpoint are well established. For example, alerts on aggressive driving behaviors such as speeding, harsh braking, and other unsafe practices (which can cause or contribute to an accident) can be logged and provided to management to review with the driver to provide coaching or training to correct the behavior to prevent future losses.

Despite the significant safety benefits of fleet technology systems from a safety and driver monitoring and coaching standpoint, there does continue to be some hesitation from fleet managers, company ownership, or management due to the costs of such systems.

There are a variety of other benefits that should also be considered when weighing the cost/benefit of investing in a fleet technology system, including but not limited to:

Improving Fleet Management/Cost Reduction: Some fleet technology providers offer systems that assist in optimizing fleet management, reducing fuel consumption, improving route efficiency, and enhancing overall operational efficiency by utilizing the data collected from telematics systems.

Remote Diagnostics and Maintenance: Telematics systems can monitor the health of vehicles in real time and provide information to management on engine performance and other critical components to ensure service and repair work are completed in a timely fashion to avoid potentially costly downtime for vehicles.

Vehicle Inspections/DVIRs: Systems can include electronic forms for drivers to complete and log their pre- and post-trip inspections. No more paper forms or chasing drivers for the completed form; receive a notification to ensure that the driver completed that pre-trip inspection before they are out on the road, as well as be able to review any findings in the inspection to ensure service or repair work is completed when needed.

GPS/Location Services: Systems can be equipped with capabilities for GPS/real-time tracking of vehicles, so you always know their location. This provides benefits from a service or logistics standpoint as well as a safety standpoint. Locating a vehicle in real-time can be critical for driver safety, with potential accidents in rural areas that may not be witnessed by co-workers or other vehicles due to the remote location of the accident.

Geo-Fencing: Some telematics systems offer a geo-fencing feature that creates virtual boundaries around specific areas, triggering an alert in the system when a driver takes a vehicle outside of the specified area or into a prohibited area. Such

systems can be used to create barriers around logging sites to reduce the likelihood of alleged illegal logging operations or timber trespass claims by ensuring such operations stay in a designated area.

Some providers now offer satellite-based telematics systems, which allow these systems to continue to operate in even the most rural areas; in the past, many systems relied on cell phone signals for data transmittal.

Equipment Tracking: The location services offered by some providers are available not only on fleet vehicles and trailers but may also be utilized on mobile equipment for tracking and real-time location detail, potentially assisting in locating and recovering stolen items.

Compliance Management: Telematics systems can assist in maintaining regulatory compliance by monitoring factors such as hours of service (HOS) for drivers, ensuring that they comply with legal and regulatory requirements, and avoiding potential fines or penalties.

Accident Investigation: Telematics systems can often be used to assist in the investigation and potential defense of claims by utilizing data, such as vehicle location, speed, and driver actions, preceding the incident. A camera connected to a telematics system can also provide significant benefits from an accident investigation standpoint, providing video footage of the loss.

Insurance Benefits: Some insurance carriers require telematics systems for prospective clients; others may offer discounts, credits, or preferred pricing for fleets that are equipped with fleet technology systems. If your company has not embraced fleet technology, the premiums you pay for those policies may reflect it!

The safety benefits of a fleet telematics system, as well as the potential operational and cost-saving benefits of these systems, should all be taken into consideration when deciding whether a telematics system would be a good fit for your fleet.

While there is a cost to implementing telematics systems, we've seen some reductions in costs for these systems and services over the past several years. With more providers in the industry and improved technologies and services, the cost of these systems may not be as much as you think! 📺

Scott Mead is a loss control technical specialist for Acadia Insurance. Acadia is pleased to share this material for the benefit of its customers. Please note, however, that nothing herein should be construed as either legal advice or the provision of professional consulting services. This material is for informational purposes only, and while reasonable care has been utilized in compiling this information, no warranty or representation is made as to its accuracy or completeness. Recipients of this material must utilize their own judgment in implementing sound risk management practices and procedures.



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Selecting an ERP:

A Spotlight on a Crucial Consideration

By Mark Stewart



“Usability refers to how easy and convenient a software is to use based on its design and accessibility. When software processes are intuitive, it speeds up the training of new employees and your customer service.”

Incorporating technology into your business is essential for keeping up with customer demand. When selecting enterprise resource planning (ERP) software to handle your business processes, such as accounting and order management, many people focus on functionality. This is important to find the right fit for your business. However, another major factor to be considered in the selection process is usability.

Usability refers to how easy and convenient a software is to use based on its design and accessibility. When software processes are intuitive, it speeds up the training of new employees and your customer service.

One of the common challenges we've heard from many of our customers is navigating the labor shortage. When business starts to ramp up, it becomes even more important that transactions are done quickly and orders are filled on time. Managers may need more staff or seasonal employees to keep the business running as usual. When new employees are still in training, this can slow down the transaction process and put stress on staff to keep up with demand.

Here are three ways to evaluate the usability of a new ERP:

1. CUSTOMIZATION.


The ability to control users' dashboards and hide buttons they don't need helps reduce the opportunity for errors. It also protects your data, so you can make it visible only as needed. If someone at the counter is only handling transactions, hiding other screens, like purchasing and dispatch, reduces confusion and will simplify the learning process.

2. THE LOOK AND FEEL OF THE VARIOUS SCREENS.

Do all the screens use the same layout and navigation path? If there's a common look and feel across all screens and modules, employees can use the software more easily. (Example: If you can successfully navigate one tab for point of sale, then you can navigate another tab for inventory.) The use of colors and fonts can communicate information at a glance. For example, color-coded fields provide quick visibility to inventory that is low in stock or items listed as credit. Images and graphics provide tremendous value. A bonus if you can see pictures of the inventory you are looking for! This greatly decreases opportunities for error by allowing new employees to reference a picture and verify that the correct inventory is picked.

3. EASE OF ADMINISTRATION.

Onboarding new employees means your system administrator will need to set up new users. A quick setup and login process will save a lot of time for both the management and the entire organization when accessing the system every day. And a simple process for an administrator to change user permissions allows for flexibility when employees change roles or need to fill in for a short-staffed sales counter. Also, web-based software that can be accessed from anywhere, on any device, makes the login process simple and easy for new or seasonal employees.

With ERP software that can be easily managed and navigated, your new employees will have a smooth training process. Your staff can begin working sooner and process orders quickly, providing quality service for customers. 

Mark Stewart is the director of business development for Frameworks at DMSi, a software company for the building materials industry. He has more than 20 years of experience in the building materials industry, including 12 years of field experience in operations. Mark can be reached at 402-330-6620.

AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION IN MARKETING

By Elton Mayfield

In the zip-paced world of marketing, one of the most transformative advancements of late has been the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance personalization strategies. AI-powered personalization in marketing represents a sea change in how brands engage with their audiences, offering tailored experiences that not only captivate consumers but also drive conversion rates and brand loyalty. In this post, we're going to take a look at the dynamic landscape of AI-powered personalization in marketing and consider the key components, benefits, challenges, and future of this radical, but promising, approach.

UNDERSTANDING AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION

AI-powered personalization refers to the application of artificial intelligence and machine-learning algorithms to analyze vast amounts of data and deliver tailored content, recommendations, and experiences to individual users. It encompasses a wide range of marketing activities, from personalized product recommendations on ecommerce websites to targeted email campaigns and customized content recommendations on social media platforms.

At its core, AI-powered personalization aims to create a one-to-one marketing experience, making customers feel understood and valued. (We're not immune to this, even when we know it's happening. When something as elementary as an email with our first names integrated into the copy—punctuated properly, of course—drops into our inboxes, we are on board to read it.)

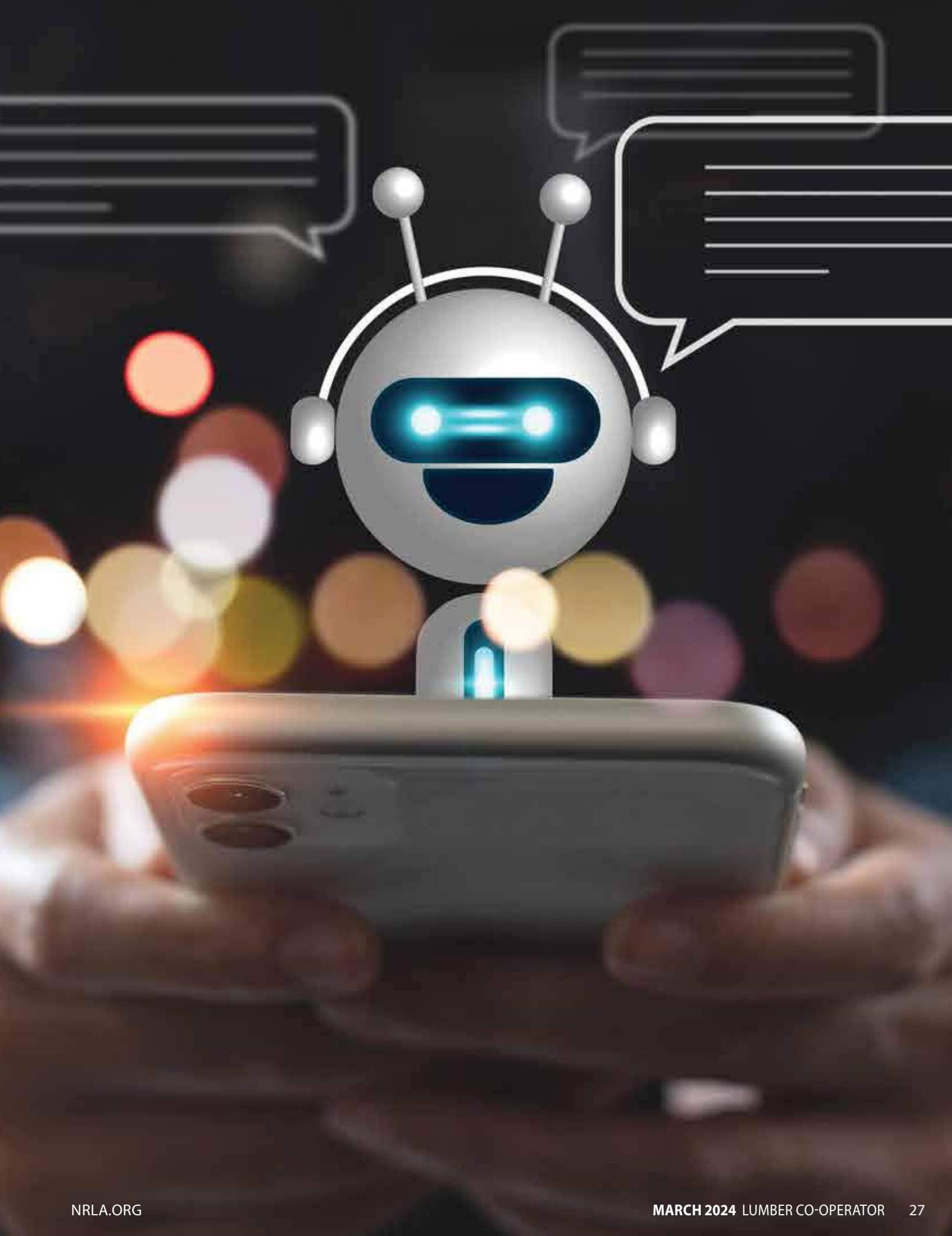
Personalization has power—with or without AI, according to McKinsey's research.

"Our research found that companies that excel at personalization generate 40% more revenue from those activities than average players," reported McKinsey in 2021 during the pandemic. "Across U.S. industries, shifting to top-quartile performance in personalization would generate over \$1 trillion in value. Players who are leaders in personalization achieve outcomes by tailoring offerings and outreach to the right individual at the right moment with the right experiences."

AI's ability to punch up personalization has only added urgency to the marketing landscape. But what are the specifics?

KEY COMPONENTS OF AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION

1. Data Collection and Analysis: The foundation of AI-powered personalization lies in collecting and analyzing user data. This data can include demographics, browsing history, purchase behavior, social media interactions, and



other information. Advanced AI algorithms process this data to gain insights into individual preferences and behaviors.

- 2. Segmentation:** Once the data is collected and analyzed, AI algorithms segment users into distinct groups based on similarities in their behavior and preferences. These segments form the basis for creating personalized marketing strategies.
- 3. Recommendation Engines:** Recommendation engines are AI algorithms that suggest products, services, or content to users based on their past behavior and the behavior of users in the same segment. These engines are widely used in ecommerce and streaming services to increase sales and engagement—and they work.

“In data-driven markets, the most effective competitors reliably offer the most effective advice. When predictive analytics are repackaged and repurposed as recommendations, they transform how people perceive, experience, and exercise choice. The most powerful—and empowering—engines of commerce are recommendation engines,” according to MIT’s Sloan Review. Top of form “Recommendation engines have been essential to the success of digital platforms like Alibaba, Amazon, Netflix, and Spotify, according to their founders and CEOs. For companies such as these, recommendation engines aren’t merely marketing or sales tools but drivers of insight, innovation, and engagement. Superior recommendations measurably build superior loyalty and growth; they amplify customer lifetime value. Computing compelling recommendations profitably reshapes human behavior.”

Recommendation engines represent a global alteration in how choices can be personalized, packaged, presented, experienced, and understood. But that change—those choice architectures—needs to be better understood, according to the MIT Technology Review. Because they frame people’s futures.

- 4. Dynamic Content Generation:** AI can create dynamic content that adapts to the individual user’s preferences and context. This includes personalized email subject lines, website content, and social media advertisements. By harnessing the power of data analytics and automation, marketers can create highly personalized and relevant content that resonates with their target audience.

One key advantage of dynamic content generation is its ability to boost engagement and conversion rates. When users encounter content that speaks directly to their interests and needs, they are more likely to interact with it and take desired actions, such as making a purchase or filling out a form.

Dynamic content also allows marketers to adapt to changing market conditions swiftly. They can A/B test various content variations and instantly implement the most effective ones. This flexibility ensures that marketing efforts remain agile and responsive to evolving consumer preferences.

Incorporating dynamic content into email marketing, website experiences, and advertising campaigns can result in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. By delivering tailored content at the right moment, brands can build stronger connections with their audience and—ideally—drive growth.

- 5. Predictive Analytics:** AI can predict future customer behavior, such as which products a customer is likely to purchase or when they might churn. This enables proactive marketing strategies.

BENEFITS OF AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION

The adoption of AI-powered personalization in marketing offers several significant benefits, including:

- 1. Improved Customer Engagement:** Personalized experiences resonate with customers on a deeper level, increasing engagement and interaction with brands.
- 2. Higher Conversion Rates:** Recommendations based on individual preferences lead to higher conversion rates, as customers are more likely to make purchases that align with their interests.

“Personalization can lead to higher conversion rates because it makes the customer feel valued and understood. When a customer feels that a business is catering to their specific needs and preferences, they are more likely to trust the brand and make a purchase,” according to the software platform MarketTailor. “Personalization can lead to increased customer engagement and loyalty, as customers are more likely to return to a website that offers a personalized experience.”
- 3. Enhanced Customer Retention:** Personalization fosters loyalty by making customers feel valued, which leads to higher retention rates and increased customer lifetime value.
- 4. Efficient Marketing Spend:** AI helps optimize marketing spend by delivering content and offers to the most receptive audience segments, reducing wasted resources.
- 5. Real-time Adaptation:** AI-powered systems can adapt in real-time to changes in customer behavior, ensuring that marketing messages remain relevant.

But choice overload may be at the heart of why personalization does all these things so well.

“Choice overload is often leading to no choice being made, with the average 2023 documented online shopping cart abandonment at a rate of 69.99%, according to the Baymard Institute. Without AI-powered recommendation engines, navigating this sea of choices is an arduous task, and for the business, there is tremendous revenue potential in being able to close just a small percent of those abandoned carts,” according to Forbes.

In its article “The Power of AI—Five Techniques to Personalize Your Ecommerce Experience,” Adobe demonstrates a handful of ways AI can help marketers in the ecommerce sector make a successful connection between AI and revenue building, including how to use AI to identify and create valuable segments, how to deliver product recommendations, and how to use AI to create personalized content.

According to Adobe, “76% of personalization leaders intelligently automate the assembly of modular content, and 69% of personalization leaders use artificial intelligence and machine learning to create photorealistic images.”

CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While AI-powered personalization offers numerous benefits, it also comes with challenges and ethical considerations.

1. Data Privacy

Collecting and storing personal data raises concerns about privacy and security. Brands must be transparent about data usage and comply with data protection regulations like GDPR.

2. Bias and Fairness

AI algorithms can inadvertently perpetuate biases present in the training data, leading to unfair or discriminatory recommendations. Ongoing monitoring and mitigation efforts are essential to address this issue.

3. Customer Trust

If customers feel that their data is being misused or that their privacy is not respected, it can erode trust and harm the brand’s reputation.

4. Algorithm Transparency

The inner workings of AI algorithms are often complex and opaque, making it challenging to explain how recommendations are generated. This lack of transparency can be a barrier to adoption.

PERSONALIZATION CAN LEAD TO HIGHER CONVERSION RATES BECAUSE IT MAKES THE CUSTOMER FEEL VALUED AND UNDERSTOOD.

THE FUTURE OF AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION

The future of AI-powered personalization in marketing is exciting and holds vast potential as its ability to hyper-personalize will continue to move closer to delivering truly one-to-one marketing experiences.

Advances in voice and visual recognition will enable AI to personalize interactions based on user tone, sentiment, and visual cues. (Maybe as well as your spouse!) Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) will provide new avenues for personalized marketing experiences, allowing customers to interact with products and services in immersive ways. Blockchain technology may play a role in enhancing data security and transparency, which will address some of the privacy concerns around using AI.

And we’re really looking to brands being willing to prioritize ethical considerations in AI-powered personalization, which will ensure fairness, transparency, and respect for user privacy.

If you’re already sold on how AI-powered personalization can benefit the marketing at your company, even given ethical concerns, but need more information on what platforms and tools to use to generate this AI magic, consider HubSpot’s guide to AI tools for marketers. Yes, HubSpot does plug HubSpot, but it’s not wrong about its recommendations. If you’d like another source, Influencer Marketing Hub also offers an easy-to-understand overview.

AI-powered personalization has revolutionized the marketing landscape, offering brands a powerful tool to engage customers on a personalized level. By harnessing the capabilities of AI, marketers can deliver tailored experiences that drive engagement, conversion, and loyalty. But as this technology evolves, it is crucial to address challenges related to data privacy, bias, and transparency while upholding ethical standards.

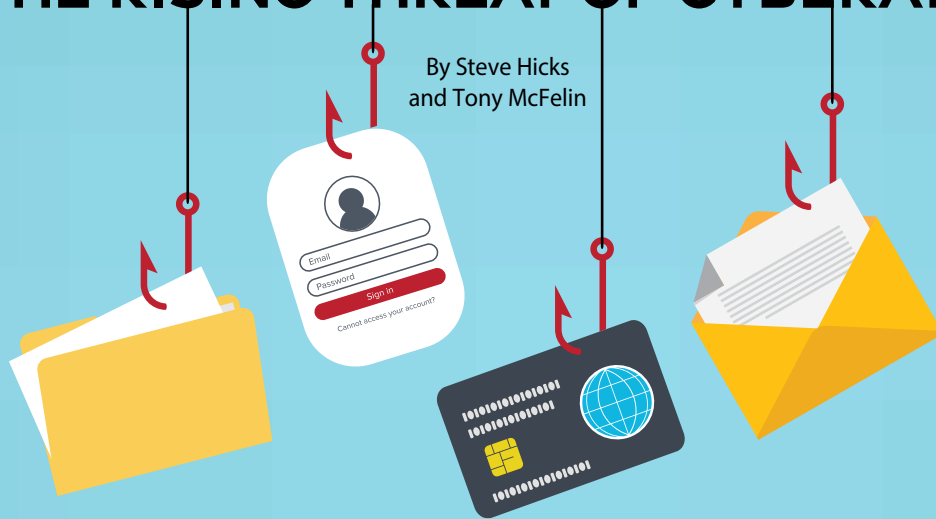
The future promises even more stimulating possibilities as AI continues to transform the way brands connect with their audiences, making marketing more personalized and relevant than ever before. We’re looking forward to being part of it. **LE**

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.

RECOGNIZING RISK:

READYING YOUR BUSINESS FOR THE RISING THREAT OF CYBERATTACKS

By Steve Hicks
and Tony McFelin



By now, business owners in the lumber and building material industry likely understand what a cyberattack is and acknowledge their business could be at risk, but do they understand the extent of damage that can be done and the impact it could have on their business, employees, customers, and even their community?



For a quick glimpse into the level of devastation a cyberattack can cause a business in this industry, one just has to look at the recent experience of a Pennsylvania cabinetry manufacturer. The company was forced to temporarily lay off 500 workers in its small community after a virus took hold of its computer system. Operations were shut down for three weeks, and leadership paid \$250,000 to correct the problem and add additional security measures.

Unfortunately, cyberattacks have ballooned in recent years. According to the Identity Theft Resource Organization, 73% of small business owners said they experienced a data breach or cyberattack in 2023. This figure is up from 43% in 2022 and 58% in 2021. Cyber insurance was reported to be the primary resource for recovery funds by 33% of respondents. Other victims made up for the losses with cash reserves, existing lines of credit, loans, and downsizing measures, among other things.

Cybercrime is a mounting problem impacting any business, and it is not going away. Business owners who understand their risks and take adequate steps to protect their systems from cyberattacks will be best positioned to avoid a costly business interruption and/or hefty financial loss.

TYPES OF CYBER THREATS FACING LUMBER AND BUILDING MATERIAL BUSINESSES

The fact that individuals and business owners are getting better at protecting themselves or their businesses from cyber risks is working against them in a way. With fewer opportunities to hack vulnerable systems, the criminals are now requesting higher ransom payments when they do manage to break in.

While lumber and building material business owners may not see their businesses at high risk because they don't have the data a financial institution does, for example, any business owner runs the risk of endangering sensitive information related to the business, its finances, or merger plans, as well as sensitive information impacting its customers and staff, without proper cyber safety practices in place.

The most common cyber claims we are seeing across the lumber industry involve **misdirected payments**. This type of fraud occurs when money or a product is sent to a fraudulent destination by criminals using fake emails or other forms of communication. Other types of cyber risk facing lumber and building material businesses include:

- **Data Exfiltration:** When cybercriminals hack into a company's system and steal data, requesting a ransom to delete the data.
- **Double Extortion:** A method combining ransomware and extortionware techniques. Instead of the cybercriminals


simply holding data needed for operations for ransom, they threaten to sell it to bad actors over the dark web.

- **Business Email Compromise:** This often involves a vendor whose data system has been compromised. In this situation, the cybercriminal might change the details of the vendor's bank account and send fraudulent invoices, so the payment goes to the thieves.
- **Password Stuffing:** Refers to the criminal act of using breached passwords to gain access to unrelated assets. This can be particularly problematic when individuals use the same password for multiple log-ins.

BEST PRACTICES TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM OF A CYBERATTACK

While cybercriminals may be getting more creative to access computer systems and steal valuable data, cybersecurity experts continue to identify new risk mitigation practices. Below is a list of several best practices for lumber and building material business owners and operators to consider:

- Practice good password safety. Do not reuse or share passwords. Consider implementing a password management system.
- Consider layering multi-factor authentication on top of passwords to protect data.
- Conduct quarterly cyber awareness sessions for any staff members who have a company email to help employees stay current on the latest trends in cybercrime and understand how to identify suspicious activity.
- Consider phish testing, which involves leadership simulating a criminal phishing email to track the company's cyber awareness training progress and identify staff members who may need additional training.
- Separate back-office computer systems from operations systems used for equipment, etc., so that human resources, financial, and other sensitive data are not physically in the same location.
- Keep security software updated.

Finally, consult your insurer to better understand your needs and options for cyber coverage. Be sure to ask questions around data compromise response expenses, computer attacks, data compromise liability, network security liability, misdirected payments, and cyber extortion. Understanding your risk and knowing the resources and tactics available to help you prevent losses will help ensure your business is prepared for the future. 

Steve Hicks, AVP – Underwriting, and Tony McFelin, chief information security officer for Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company and Managing Consultant, Netrix Global.



TECHNOLOGY PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Photo Credit: DMSi



DMSi

Contact: Jordan Lynch **Email:** jlynch@dmsi.com
Phone: 402-330-6620 **Website:** www.dmsi.com

What technology products do you sell?

DMSi offers tailored software solutions for the building materials industry. Their Frameworks ERP is specifically designed for LBM dealers and manages all aspects of their operations, including purchasing, receiving, point of sale, and accounting. Their Agility ERP features production scheduling, robust inventory control with advanced date logic, and a full back-office solution. Additionally, DMSi’s CRM assists with monitoring account activity, analyzing sales pipelines, identifying new opportunities, and managing territories.

DMSi Frameworks

What is one product you’d like to highlight?

DMSi Frameworks is a web-based ERP solution that caters specifically to LBM dealers. It provides an all-in-one business management solution, including retail POS, contractor sales, purchasing, inventory control, accounting, and reporting features. It can be accessed from any web browser, including Chrome and Microsoft Edge, without the need for additional software. The program is also optimized for mobile use on smartphones and tablets. With easy data access, businesses can efficiently track multi-job projects and provide exceptional customer service through the streamlined point-of-sale and user-friendly interface.

PARTICIPANTS

Boise Cascade Company.....	39
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ECI Software Solutions

Contact: Joe Ozalas **Email:** jozalas@ecisolutions.com
Phone: 443-564-9589
Website: www.ecisolutions.com/industries/building-supply



What service products do you sell?

ECI provides industry-leading, cloud-based business management software for the lumber and building supply industry. Our mission is to help SMBs compete and grow by providing industry expertise and purpose-built solutions that make doing business easier.



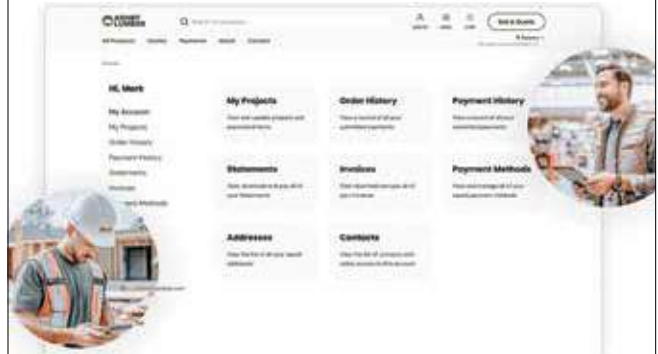
What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Spruce business management software is easy-to-use and transforms operations so you can grow. The software is cloud-based and completely integrated, from purchasing through delivery, to help streamline processes and reduce costly errors. Access your data from anywhere to make decisions based on facts, not guesses, that improve your bottom line; integrate with key vendors to seamlessly re-stock when inventory levels are low; instantly update warehouse inventory counts as items sell; eliminate time-consuming, paper-heavy processes; and access advanced reporting and dashboards with just a few clicks.



TOOLBX

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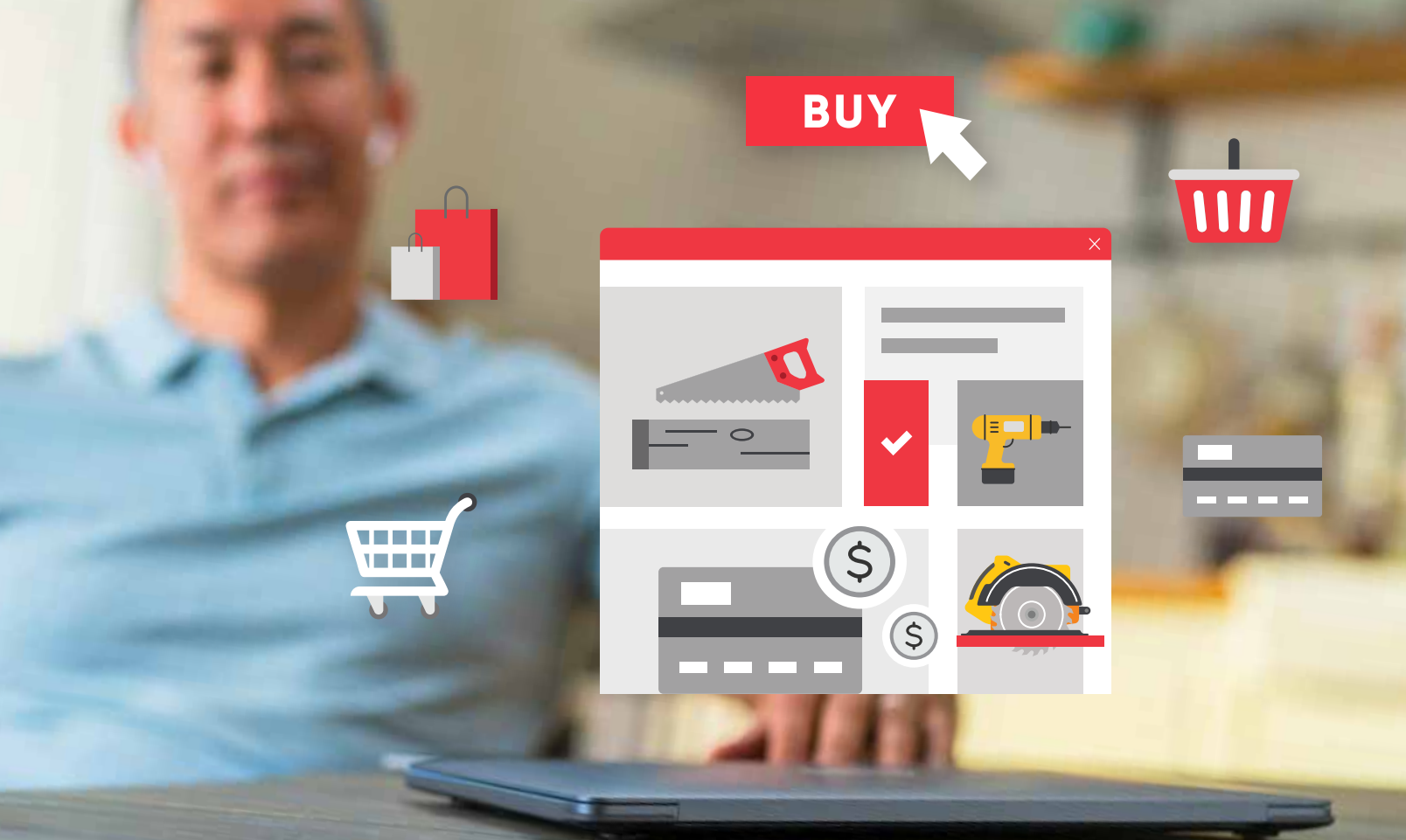
What technology products do you sell?

TOOLBX is a comprehensive LBM e-commerce platform, empowering lumber and building supply dealers to enhance productivity and customer loyalty. The platform encompasses a comprehensive set of features, including online ordering, payment processing, customer messaging, quote creation, and account management, all accessible through an intuitive storefront and customer portal. TOOLBX's vision is to offer a complete suite of digital tools that transform the way lumber and building supply dealers engage with customers online. Committed to practical and impactful solutions, TOOLBX aims to redefine online customer service and establish new industry standards.



What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Our Customer Portal empowers independent lumber and building supply dealers to provide their pros with unparalleled self-service capabilities, leading to an increase in customer loyalty and satisfaction. With our ERP-integrated customer portal, dealers can enable their customers to instantly view order, payment, and invoice history online; check their account balance in real-time; download and pay invoices and statements; allow multi-user access with role permissions; accept credit card and ACH payments; and order online with their tiered pricing.



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Intact iQ

Contact: Sebastian Leonardi
Email: sebastian.leonardi@intactsoftware.com
Phone: 860-264-4111 ext. 121
Website: www.intactsoftware.com



What technology products do you sell?

Intact is an award-winning, internationally recognized provider of ERP software. For more than 30 years, we've specialized in the design and implementation of ERP for the lumber and building materials industry—LBM is in our DNA. Our LBM sector expertise, commitment to excellence, and dedication to clients underscore the reason we enjoy a client retention rate over 99%. Intact iQ: ERP (enterprise resource planning), business management system, POS, CRM, SCM, BI, inventory management, financial management, warehouse management, and trade counter.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Intact iQ is our "Perfect Fit" ERP software solution specifically engineered for the LBM sector to drive growth, increase revenue, and reduce costs through process efficiency and automation. "Perfect Fit" by design redefines customization and flexibility. Delivering a single end-to-end solution that empowers your company with industry-specific functionality, built-in financials, and dashboard reporting to deliver a 360-degree view of your enterprise. Unique customization options, seamless integration capabilities, robust POS, and embedded BI enable you to effectively manage, optimize, and scale your operation. Built for cloud, desktop, and mobile with anywhere-anytime access. Easily scale as you grow with complete business control.



Simpson Strong-Tie

Contact: Jackie Flemming **Email:** jflemming@strongtie.com
Phone: 972-439-3223
Website: www.strongtie.com/solutions/software/lbm



What technology products do you sell?

Software solutions that provide assistance to lumberyards, including our EWP Studio Software, Outdoor Living Solutions Software, and Pipeline LBM Estimate Management Solution.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?



Pipeline LBM is a web-based construction estimating solution for lumberyards that transforms takeoff quantities into data to drive your business. Standardize your estimating logic, automate customer and location preferences, and streamline your estimating process with Pipeline LBM to produce accurate, detailed, and consistent bills of materials (BOM) for every job. Features centralize your estimating logic to produce consistent and accurate bills of materials; create customized rules, calculations, and customer preferences to automate workflows for even shorter turnaround times; and remove the need to manually key in a bill of materials into select back-office systems with import-ready exports.



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Value-driven Solutions

LBM is in our DNA

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What technology products do you sell?

With more than three decades of development, SoftPlan home design software offers a unique and industry-leading solution for residential design. SoftPlan is easy to learn and use, and the interface makes it simple to integrate data with current systems and share designs with both collaborators and clients. With SoftPlan, you can quickly create drawings and add them to a project model that automatically generates optimized material calculations and cutlist reports. Currently in its 21st version, SoftPlan continues to drive the residential design software market by offering the most powerful CAD package for building professionals.

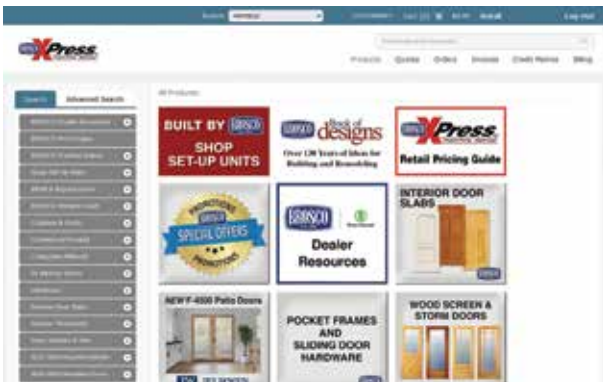
What is one product you'd like to highlight?

SoftPlan 2024 introduces hundreds of new features and improvements that further enhance the unparalleled design experience SoftPlan is known for. SoftPlan 2024 provides the tools you need to quickly create complete, detailed drawings with accurate material lists that are calculated as you design. This version also includes drastically improved path tracing for producing photorealistic 3D images and animations of house exteriors and interiors. The new web3d feature allows SoftPlan subscribers to publish 3D models directly to the web to be viewed by anyone the user wishes. A free trial version of SoftPlan 2024 is available by visiting www.softplan.com.



BROSCO

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Boise Cascade Company

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Email: danmorgado@bc.com, chipwood@bc.com
Phone: Westfield 877-462-6473, Greenland 800-962-9961
Website: www.bc.com/bmd-ecatalog



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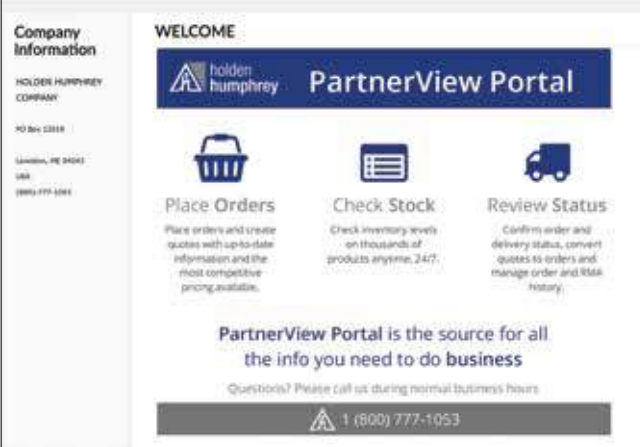
What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Boise Cascade's electronic catalog lets you view our entire product line and submit quotes and orders 24/7 from your desktop or mobile device. You can get current pricing, print PODs, request a PK or literature, and watch product videos. We've recently added a new feature to our e-catalog, our Education Portal, which will allow you to participate in product knowledge sessions whenever and wherever it's convenient for you. Sign up or log in at <https://ecatalog.bc.com>.



Holden Humphrey Co.

Contact: Lance Humphrey
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Paladin Data Corporation

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Email: sales@paladinpos.com **Phone:** 800-725-2346
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What technology products do you sell?

Paladin Data Corporation provides independent hardware and LBM dealers with a framework for retail success and best practices to make their stores run better. The true point of difference with Paladin Point of Sale is the outstanding, U.S.-based customer support and commitment to helping users hone in on the business metrics that matter to optimize their inventory investment and save time doing it. It all adds up to better business management, customer acquisition and retention, and an enhanced shopper experience.

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In the coming year, Paladin customers can anticipate a major expansion to the PaladinNights offerings, as well as exciting enhancements to the PaladinCloud document storage, mobile applications, B2B customer portal, RF gun functionality, and its integration with electronic shelf tags. Plus, the ability for independent retailers to implement their own NPS system to better understand and manage the dynamics that contribute to their customer success.

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MATERIAL TAKEOFFS: Necessary Evil or Powerful Sales Tool?

By Dave Smith

Over recent years, the construction industry has evolved at a rapid pace. Projects have become much more complicated and technical. Thirty years ago, entire developments were shipped and built with very little thought into what materials would be required. Units of dimensional lumber and plywood were delivered and used as needed. There were very few choices as far as sheathing, and engineered lumber products were rarely used. Joist hangers and hurricane ties were about the only hardware needed.

Subcontractors would provide takeoffs to their builders as part of their services. Material overages were returned or used up on the next project. Shortages were shipped on “fill-in” deliveries and considered part of the cost of doing business.

Today, things are quite different. Most floor, wall, and roof systems are engineered, and the materials provided must be precise. There are now many product choices. For example, several types, thicknesses, and sizes of sheathing may be used on the same project to meet complicated energy, shear, and fire ratings. Many types of hardware are required for today’s wind and seismic-conscious codes and can be quite expensive. Energy-efficient systems are complex and require specific materials that are compatible with each other to avoid moisture and mold issues.

In addition, plans for projects typically fail to provide enough information to produce accurate material lists, even for bids, much less orders. Architects and engineers alike use their own “obscure” legends and descriptions that must be interpreted. Plans have conflicting and inaccurate details and information. Products specified are often inconsistent and incompatible with each other, and rarely do structural plans match the architectural plans they were produced from.

All these issues and many more create a situation where bids and budgets are easily underestimated, costing builders and suppliers

a great deal of money. The cost of expediting “fill-in” orders and replacing products ordered in error is much more expensive today.

It’s very rare to find a subcontractor or builder that has the expertise and product knowledge to produce accurate takeoffs. Most depend on their suppliers to accurately bid on materials for their projects.

Providing material takeoffs can be the difference between bidding on a material list supplied by a competitor, requiring you to have the lowest price, or building a strong relationship with your customer. When a supplier’s takeoffs are accurate, timely, and point out all the product issues that may need to be addressed on a project, it creates relationship-building opportunities for your sales team to meet with customers post-bid for product advice and recommendations.

Takeoffs, in addition to being a strong sales tool, can reduce costs by eliminating “fill-in” orders, credits, and back charges, and usually more than pay for themselves when professionally executed.

The reality is that most builders recognize the value of accurate takeoffs in today’s market, and many are willing to pay for that service, converting takeoffs from an expense to a profit center. Below are some options for lumberyards and suppliers to provide this service and achieve the desired results:

SALESPeOPLE. Homes and buildings are infinitely more complicated than in the past. With the plethora of product choices available (sheathings, fire-rated assemblies, engineered lumber products, insulating and vapor barrier systems, etc.), it is extremely important that an estimator be versed in not only quantity calculations but product compatibility and availability. Expecting your sales team to provide this service is not always realistic. Few salespeople have the technical expertise required, and if they do, the time spent providing takeoffs severely limits

the sales-related tasks (prospecting, following up, site visits, etc.) that are required to achieve their sales goals. They may be apprehensive about targeting larger or more complicated projects that they do not feel comfortable taking off, further reducing sales.

IN-HOUSE ESTIMATING STAFF. Lumberyards and building supply companies are proficient at purchasing, warehousing, and delivering products. Knowing how to read and interpret complicated plans to provide a competent material takeoff is usually not high on the list of skills possessed by yard managers, salespeople, or sales support staff.

Hiring an estimator with the proper experience and qualifications will require a reasonable base salary, benefits, vacation and sick time, and accounting expenses. You will also need to invest in computers and a software system, as well as training (assuming there is someone at your company already knowledgeable enough to provide that training). The days of investing in a large-format printer and using digitizers and scales to manually do takeoffs are over. Many times, the cost of just printing larger projects could be more than the entire takeoff. The extra time spent by the estimators trying to do a takeoff the old-fashioned way would be cost prohibitive, increase lead times, and substantially raise the cost per project.

Add all that up and divide by the number of takeoffs each estimator will be able to produce in a year to determine how many estimators you need and your cost per project.

OUTSOURCING. In many cases, it may be less expensive and more efficient to outsource this task. When considering a takeoff service provider, it's important to verify some information.

How long have they been in business?

A service provider should be able to show years of pertinent experience as well as satisfied references that can be contacted.

How are the takeoffs formatted?

The takeoffs should be formatted specifically for lumber/building material suppliers. The information a contractor needs to bid on a project is not detailed enough. The takeoffs should be easily entered directly into your POS system and should be broken down by loads that can be pulled and delivered. Overall, LF/SF quantities are useless for a supplier.

Who are the estimators? Who is the contact person?

Project takeoffs almost always need to have notes and comments to be reviewed and verified by the customer. When questions arise, there needs to be a contact person to competently discuss the specific project in question and provide intelligent answers in a timely fashion.

How much will a takeoff cost? This can be a complicated question. A takeoff for a slab-on-grade 1,500-square-foot rancher should not be the same price as a 5,000+-square-foot multi-story home. If takeoff pricing is too complicated to understand (subscriptions that don't clearly call out what a takeoff unit is, how it will be charged and tracked, and when the subscription is used up, for example), then make sure it is clearly explained. You should be able to get a cost for any given project.

Beware of low pricing. Saving \$200 on a large project takeoff is useless if the takeoff is not accurate, and the bid is blown, or you must do expensive rework. You will likely lose that much profit on the first fill-in order you ship or experience billing disputes, credits, returns, and other issues.

Takeoffs should be viewed not as a necessary evil but as a valuable tool that will help your bottom line by increasing sales and making your entire company more profitable through increased margins, decreased delivery costs, and more accurate sales and cost projections. **LG**

Dave Smith is the founder and president of Delavue Management and Consulting Services. The firm has been in business since 2007 and provides material takeoffs and consulting services for lumberyards and building material suppliers nationwide. He can be reached at 856-362-7992 or dave@delavuellc.com.

The advertisement features the Delavue Management logo at the top, with the tagline 'MATERIAL TAKE OFF SERVICE'. Below the logo, a dark blue banner contains the headline: 'ALLOW YOUR SALES TEAM TO PROSPECT, QUOTE AND SELL MORE MATERIAL.' Underneath the banner, four circular icons represent key benefits: 'Enhance Customer Satisfaction' (thumbs up), 'Enhanced Precision' (ruler and pencil), 'Increase Productivity' (gears), and 'Reduce Unplanned Costs' (dollar sign with downward arrow). At the bottom left, it asks 'HAVE A PROJECT IN MIND?' and at the bottom right, it provides contact information: '856-362-7992', 'dave@delavuellc.com', and 'www.delavuellc.com'.

Is Your Back Office SLOWING You Down?

By Yaser Masoudnia

“Managing an LBM business is already a full-time job. You don’t want to have to be in the banking business as well.”



Did you know your current financial infrastructure may be creating bottlenecks that are holding back your business?

In the LBM industry, a significant portion of a business’s revenue, often as high as 90%, is processed through credit accounts. While these credit accounts give customers more flexible options for payment and increase their purchasing power, they are also often offered on a handshake alone and manually processed at the end of the month.

While this approach can increase sales and customer loyalty, it also increases the workload on your staff, increases your risk of not getting paid, slows down the timing of payments, and diminishes your cash flow. Why? Most payments are received via checks, and mostly via regular mail. Because of this, days sales outstanding (DSO) are regularly running at 75 days or more, which means less money in your company’s cash box at any given point in time.



It's tempting to think this is a result of sloppy accounting by the companies that owe you, but this isn't always your customers' fault! On your customers' side, many companies lack the back-office personnel to process accounts payable on time. According to one survey of contractors, they're spending 56 hours per month managing their payments, and 57% of their projects are delayed due to late payments. With these factors, your customers could be operating at up to 130 DSO.

These A/R and A/P challenges combine to total a reported cost of \$273 billion in slow payments for the industry.

Outsourced trade credit is a financing tool that allows LBM companies to sell materials to their pro customers on credit rather than requiring payment upfront. This creates an increase in cash flow on both sides of the equation and, when combined with an easy-to-use payment portal, helps speed up the entire financial system for both the supplier, retailer, and builder. Customers can acquire the materials they need now and pay back in 30, 60, 90, or even 120 days, depending on the terms of their trade credit agreement.

An example: A large builder is in the early stages of building a multifamily unit, and he needs lumber now. Unfortunately, he is operating on a progress payment basis, so he doesn't currently have sufficient funds to sink into materials to complete this build. Your LBM company, however, is able to offer him lumber now via trade credit, receive funds immediately from your financing partner, and allow the builder to pay back in 120 days—just enough time for him to complete his build, receive full payment, and pay everyone back.


Your LBM business is therefore able to land these kinds of larger customers without increasing your own risk, all while simultaneously reducing your DSO to one day and, ultimately, saving time.

By outsourcing your trade credit, you'll be benefiting your customers by giving them financial flexibility and simultaneously increasing your customer base to include

larger and more established customers. This will help you stay ahead of the competition. Offering trade credit also incentivizes customers to pay on time so they can get financing for their subsequent projects. You'll also build trust with your customers, with greater financial flexibility, ensuring that they become repeat customers.

Managing an LBM business is already a full-time job. You don't want to have to be in the banking business as well. From managing underwriting to collections to ensuring timely payment, a trade credit program is best suited to a third-party expert. By outsourcing trade credit, companies can reduce their administrative burden and free up their staff to focus on other important areas. In most cases, outsourcing trade credit not only reduces your risk and improves your cash flow, but it ultimately improves your bottom line as it costs a lot less to outsource rather than run it in-house.

Even better, your company could offer up to 120-day extended trade credit terms to your customers without increasing your DSO or risk to your business. Not only that, but LBM retailers in particular can use outsourced trade credit lines themselves to acquire the materials from manufacturers or distributors, allowing for flexibility throughout the supply chain.

If you're looking to take your business to the next level, trade credit is an excellent way to increase your cash flow while gaining a competitive advantage over your competitors and ensuring timely payments. This financial flexibility on both sides of the equation will be all the more important in years to come, whether we face a slowdown in construction materials demand or grapple with another construction boom. Either way, you'll be ready. 

Yaser Masoudnia is the CEO and co-founder at BlueTape, a trade credit and payment tool for the construction industry. He can be reached at yaser@bluetape.com.

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT: A Game Changer for Hardware Retail

By Brian Blevins



For lumberyards and hardware retailers, an effective inventory management system can transform their business. As a retailer that sells to professional contractors, as well as consumers, your customers depend on you for the right tools and equipment they need to get their work done.

It's your responsibility—and your opportunity—to meet these expectations efficiently.

Inventory management has always been a vital aspect of retail, but its importance has grown exponentially in recent years. The ability to track and control stock levels is not just about reducing carrying costs; it's also about responding to customer needs and market demands.

In the fast-paced world of hardware retail, this agility is paramount. Retailers who can quickly adapt to changing market trends and customer preferences gain a significant edge over their competitors.

In this article, I'll provide a look at the different ways lumberyards and hardware retailers manage their inventory, the benefits of using the right software tools, and what to look for when selecting inventory management software.

SYSTEMS VARY

Traditionally, retailers have employed a wide variety of "systems" to manage their inventory, ranging from simple manual tracking to sophisticated software platforms. Some retailers might still use basic methods like legal pads or spreadsheets, while others have adopted electronic data interchange (EDI) systems.

Each method has its pros and cons, but the key is finding what works best for your specific business needs. For instance, while manual methods might seem simpler, they often lead to errors and inefficiencies. In contrast, automated systems can streamline operations but require a certain level of technical proficiency.

The advent of inventory management software has revolutionized the way retailers stock and sell their hardware products. These tools go far beyond ordering and managing inventory. They provide invaluable insights into what products to stock, how to price them, how to most effectively allocate shelf space, and even understanding market trends.

They offer real-time data and analytics, enabling retailers to make more informed decisions. With these systems, retailers can anticipate market needs, understand customer buying patterns, and adjust their inventory accordingly. This leads to increased sales, improved customer satisfaction, and enhanced operational efficiency.

BENEFITS OF INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Data-Driven Decisions

A smart inventory management system provides data that help retailers understand which products are in demand, how seasonal trends affect sales, and where there might be gaps in the market. This information is crucial for making informed decisions about stock levels, pricing, and promotions.

Efficient Stock Management

Inventory management software can automate the process of ordering and restocking products, ensuring that popular items are always available while reducing the risk of overstocking those in less demand.

Enhanced Customer Experience

By having the right products available at the right time, retailers can significantly improve the shopping experience for their customers. This is especially important for professional contractors who rely on timely deliveries and consistent supply.

Today's inventory management systems extend beyond basic stock control. They seamlessly integrate with other business systems, provide predictive analytics for future trend analysis, and offer mobile management solutions. These advanced features provide a comprehensive, real-time view of the business, facilitating better decision-making.



A smart inventory management software system, helps lumberyards and hardware retailers increase turns, improve profitability, and make data-informed decisions about the products they stock.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR


Selecting the right inventory management software is a critical decision. The ideal system should be user-friendly, scalable to your business size, and adaptable to changing market conditions. It should also integrate seamlessly with your existing processes and provide the level of data analysis you need.

Choosing the right partner to implement and maintain your inventory management system is as important as the system itself. The ideal partner should understand your industry's unique challenges, offer tailored solutions, and provide ongoing support and training.

Effective inventory management extends beyond the realm of basic business operations; it acts as a catalyst for growth and innovation in the hardware retail sector. Embracing advanced

inventory management software and forging a partnership with a knowledgeable provider positions retailers at the forefront of the industry.

This approach guarantees not only meeting but exceeding customer expectations with effectiveness and efficiency, thereby ensuring sustained business success.

With the integration of advanced software and technology, coupled with a dedication to ongoing development and staff training, hardware retailers are well-positioned to surpass the expectations of their professional contractor customers, leading to a trajectory of sustained growth and enhanced customer loyalty. 

Brian Blevins is senior director of analytics and ecommerce for PrimeSource Building Products. He can be reached at blevinsb@primesourcebpb.com.

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS BENEFITS: NRLA's Workers' Compensation Insurance Safety Group #531

By Steve Bell



To compete in the ever-changing and competitive landscape of the lumber and building materials industry, it requires a low-cost, reliable, and comprehensive workers' compensation insurance solution. In keeping with the NRLA's mission of providing members with valuable programs and services, the NRLA created a workers' compensation insurance safety group program for its members in 1990. With more than 34 years of history, this fully insured program, known as Safety Group #531, operates on a non-profit basis, providing low upfront costs while delivering financial returns through dividends. Since its inception, Safety Group #531 has returned over \$26.8 million in cash dividends to its membership.

“Since its inception, Safety Group #531 has returned over \$26.8 million in cash dividends to its membership.”

What Is a Workers’ Compensation Safety Group?

Safety groups were established in New York state to serve the business community. Safety groups are a collection of businesses that are in the same trade or industry that group together to reduce their workers’ compensation costs. This grouping enables the members of a safety group to spread the risk of loss from the individual policyholder to all members of the group. These fully insured, not-for-profit programs combine members’ annual workers’ compensation premiums and then deduct the costs of claims and administrative charges. Any money left over after accounting for these expenses is available for payment of a dividend. To reduce the cost of workers’ compensation insurance, safety group managers encourage members to institute measures to prevent accidents and make the workplace as safe as possible.

Who Is Eligible for Workers’ Compensation Safety Group #531?

All NRLA members with primary business operations in New York state are potentially eligible for Safety Group #531. In business, occasional losses are inevitable. To ensure the success of the program, it is imperative that group members as a whole achieve good loss results. Although eligibility extends to all members with primary operations in New York state, qualification is based on historical loss trends, underscoring the significance of a steadfast dedication to safety practices.

Recognizing the diverse footprint of businesses in the lumber and building material industry, the program can extend workers’ compensation insurance coverage to other states. This coverage enables members to manage their workers’ compensation insurance through a single invoice, simplifying the complexities associated with overseeing coverage in multiple states.

How Does Membership in Safety Group #531 Benefit Lumber and Building Material Dealers?


Joining Safety Group #531 presents lumber and building material dealers with a host of compelling advantages. Members enjoy an advance discount of up to 30% on their workers’ compensation insurance costs. In addition, any underwriting profits that the group earns are available to pay dividends. The dividend for the most recent year was 25% of premium. The combination of these dividends and discounts makes the program almost unbeatable in the marketplace. The benefits of membership are more than just financial; the group also provides access to expert safety, claim, and underwriting expertise.

How Is Workers’ Compensation Safety Group #531 Managed?

Group #531 is managed and overseen by a committee of its members in collaboration with the Northeastern Retail Lumber Association (NRLA). To manage the program, they engaged Lovell Safety Management Co., LLC. Lovell Safety Management Co., LLC has been the market leader in managing workers’ compensation safety groups since 1936. As safety group manager, Lovell provides comprehensive services to ensure the program’s success.

Lovell’s team of experts provides loss prevention services to control losses, claims management services to mitigate the cost of claims, and underwriting services to ensure each member is priced at the lowest possible cost. These services produce underwriting profits that are returned to members through upfront discounts and dividend payments.

SUMMARY:

The strategic partnership between the Northeastern Retail Lumber Association and Lovell Safety Management Co., LLC serves as a testament to NRLA’s commitment to providing unparalleled benefits for members of the association. The combination of the NRLA and Lovell’s respective expertise ensures that members can navigate the complexities of workers’ compensation insurance and the lumber and building materials industry with confidence. 

Steve Bell is the vice president of underwriting and sales at Lovell Safety Management Co. He can be reached at sbell@lovellsafety.com or 212-709-8832. To learn more about Safety Group #531, please contact your regional NRLA representative or Lovell directly at 800-556-8355.

How to Leverage AI in Your Hiring Process

By Rikka Brandon



Nearly every industry is abuzz about artificial intelligence (AI), and ours is no exception. Though AI is not likely to take our jobs (at least not anytime soon), many people are finding ways to leverage AI capabilities to make their jobs more efficient.

This is particularly helpful for repetitive tasks or tasks that are outside our typical roles. Which is why AI is starting to creep into HR and hiring practices. In many cases, you can write out a few notes and plug them into a tool like ChatGPT to get a formal writeup; from there, you'll likely need to do some massaging to make it sound like your company (and not a robot) as well as remedy anything that doesn't fit with your offerings.

Here are a few ways that AI makes sense for these applications:

Crafting job descriptions: Because job descriptions tend to be repetitive, and because there is a lot of overlap between similar roles in different industries, starting your job description in AI and then refining it can be a big time saver. (Note that job descriptions are not the same as job ads, which are harder to do in AI because there isn't as much on the internet to pull from.)

Interview questions: Coming up with interview questions is often managers' biggest stumbling block. You can use your job description to ask ChatGPT to develop questions. For example, "Come up with 10 behavioral interview questions using this job description for a forklift driver."

New-hire/onboarding checklist: When a new hire walks in on their first day, you should have already prepared by having

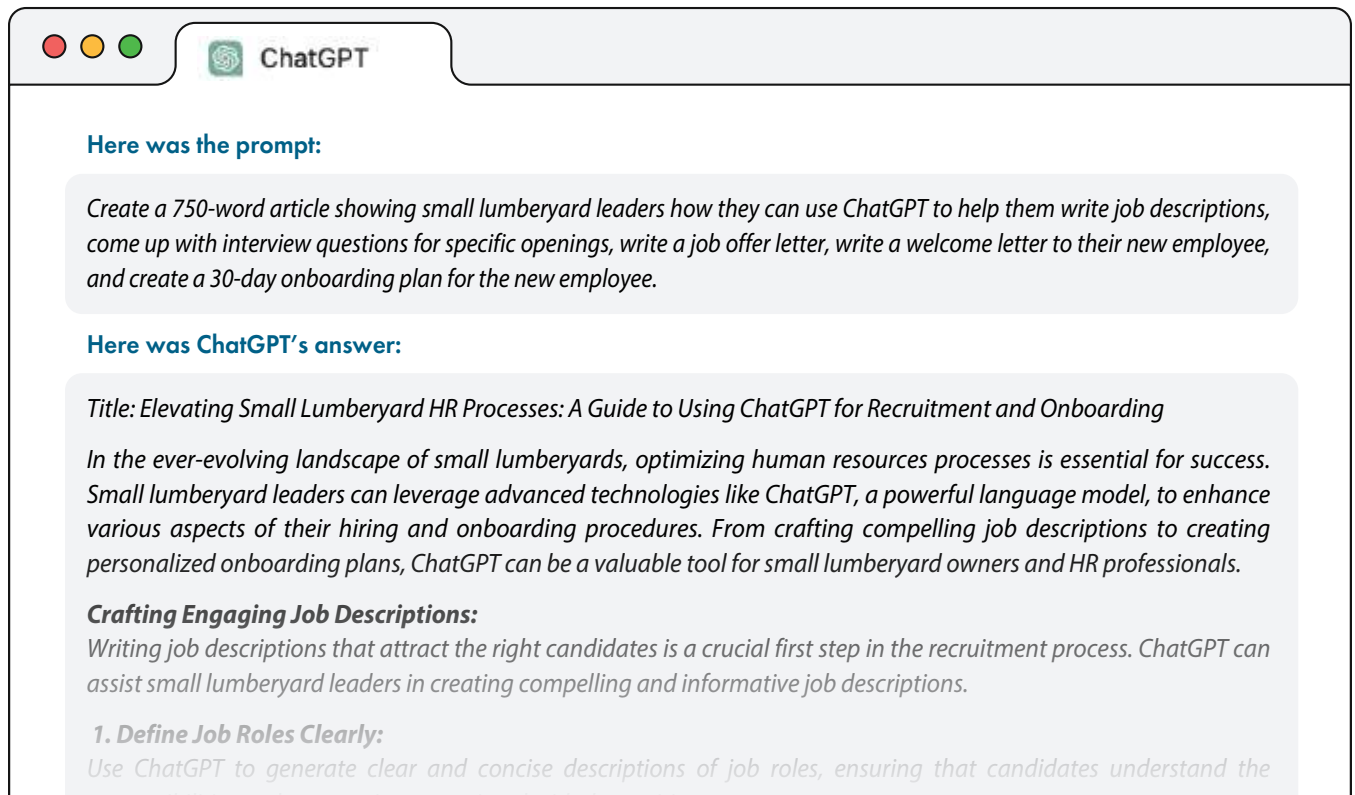
their designated equipment and tools (desk, computer, business cards, etc.), training plan, etc. ready to go. AI can help you create a checklist for each role.

Performance plan: If you have an employee with poor performance, you can use ChatGPT to help with the first draft of a 90-day plan. It will need to be tailored for the person, but it may provide a good first pass to help you get started.

AI in Action

These are just a few of the ways I envision AI helping to support hiring tasks, particularly for managers for whom HR is a secondary task. As the technology improves, don't be afraid to experiment to see if it can add some efficiencies and data into your practice.

To show you AI in action, I asked ChatGPT to write this article for me. Below is a sampling of the results, after three tries refining my prompts/direction:



The screenshot shows a chat window with the ChatGPT logo in the top left. The prompt is: "Create a 750-word article showing small lumberyard leaders how they can use ChatGPT to help them write job descriptions, come up with interview questions for specific openings, write a job offer letter, write a welcome letter to their new employee, and create a 30-day onboarding plan for the new employee." The response includes a title, an introductory paragraph, a section on crafting engaging job descriptions, and the start of a numbered list.

Here was the prompt:

Create a 750-word article showing small lumberyard leaders how they can use ChatGPT to help them write job descriptions, come up with interview questions for specific openings, write a job offer letter, write a welcome letter to their new employee, and create a 30-day onboarding plan for the new employee.

Here was ChatGPT's answer:

Title: Elevating Small Lumberyard HR Processes: A Guide to Using ChatGPT for Recruitment and Onboarding

In the ever-evolving landscape of small lumberyards, optimizing human resources processes is essential for success. Small lumberyard leaders can leverage advanced technologies like ChatGPT, a powerful language model, to enhance various aspects of their hiring and onboarding procedures. From crafting compelling job descriptions to creating personalized onboarding plans, ChatGPT can be a valuable tool for small lumberyard owners and HR professionals.


Crafting Engaging Job Descriptions:

Writing job descriptions that attract the right candidates is a crucial first step in the recruitment process. ChatGPT can assist small lumberyard leaders in creating compelling and informative job descriptions.

1. Define Job Roles Clearly:

Use ChatGPT to generate clear and concise descriptions of job roles, ensuring that candidates understand the

ChatGPT is not perfect—but as a first draft when you're staring at a piece of paper with just a few notes on it, it's a good start. From here, I would then edit and refine to make sure it feels like my brand/voice, ensure everything is factually correct for my use/company, and add anything it missed.

So, what do you think? Ready to give it a try? 

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.

BENEFITS OF UTILIZING NRLA'S LBM Service Providers

By Melissa Stankovich



Independent retailers in the lumber and building materials (LBM) industry are continually faced with challenges as they strive to improve customer retention and satisfaction, business operations and efficiency, and overall profitability. For years, retail lumber dealers have tapped into the resources of NRLA's associate member companies to access the latest and greatest building materials and products. But the support doesn't stop there. There is a host of associate member service providers who offer a wide variety of business solutions in other specialized areas that can be of great benefit to retail lumber dealers.

As the industry continues to evolve, embracing strategic partnerships can be of great help for businesses in areas where they may lack expertise. Service providers offer a diverse range of skill sets to empower businesses to enhance their day-to-day operations, access specialized insights and knowledge, and stay abreast of industry trends, giving businesses more time to spend on their core competencies, such as customer service and product knowledge.

Areas in which service providers can offer their expertise include:

- Inventory management systems
- Supply chain management and logistics
- Material takeoffs and estimating
- Ecommerce platforms
- Point-of-sale systems
- Talent retention and acquisition
- Strategic marketing and planning
- Employee benefits
- Succession planning
- and more!

Benefits of utilizing service providers include:

- Optimizing and implementing advanced technologies
- Enhancing customer experiences
- Accessing industry expertise and insights
- Gaining specialized skills and knowledge
- Keeping up with current business trends and operations

On the adjacent page lies a complete list of NRLA associate members, including manufacturers, wholesalers, and service providers. On the following pages, you will find the Service Provider Product Showcase. Here you will discover a handful of NRLA associate members who provide some of the services mentioned above, along with an overview of their offerings. [L](#)

NRLA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

LBM MANUFACTURERS, WHOLESALERS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

MANUFACTURERS

Advanced Building Products
Andersen
Atlantis Rail Systems
B.B.&S. Treated Lumber
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Benjamin Obdyke Inc.
CabTec
CertainTeed LLC
CORUS Fastening
Covibro Structural Wood
Components Inc.
DAP Global Inc.
Digger Specialties, Inc.
DOORMERICA
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and Entrance Systems
KVAL, Inc.
LP Building Solutions
Maine Wood Treaters, Inc.
Marvin
Marvin Enfield
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OMG, Inc. DBA FastenMaster
PDJ Components, Inc.
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PrimeSource Building Products, Inc.
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Robbins Lumber Co., Inc.
Simpson Door Co.
Simpson Strong-Tie, Inc.
Soprema
SummerSpace
Therma-Tru Corporation

UFP Retail Solutions
Upstate Door, Inc.
Vista Railing Systems
Weaver, Inc.
Westlake Royal Building Products
Windsor Mill
Woodgrain

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Myriad Sales & Consulting
Newbury Sales Group
Northeast Marketing Associates, LLC
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Pro Mark
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CT Darnell Construction -
Sunbelt Rack
Delavue Management
Design Storage & Handling
DMSi
Equipment Depot Northeast, Inc.
Federated Insurance
Hews Company LLC
Impact 180 Consulting Group
Intact iQ
Krauter Auto-Stak
Marquis Sales & Marketing
MBI GluckShaw(Martin, Bontempo,
Matacera, Bertlett, Inc.)
Nuvo Technologies, Inc. (DBA Nuvo)
Paladin Data Corp.
Paradigm
Payment Processing Consultants, Inc.

Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual
Insurance Companies
Petrocelli Marketing Group
Ponderosa Software
Poulos Advisors
RR Donnelley
RSM US LLP
Sturm Corp. DBA Cranes 101
Cranes Aerial Truck Service
The Rowley Agency
USI Insurance Services, LLC
W.D. Matthews Machinery Co.
Wipfli
WorkSafeWorkSmart.com, LLC
Yesler Solutions, Inc.
Yesware Solutions, Inc.

WHOLESALERS

American Lumber Co.
Atlantic Forest Products
Atlantic Plywood Corp.
Bateman Bros. Lumber Co., Inc.
Beau-Trusses
Beland Forest Products Ltd.
Bennett Supply of NY
Bestway Enterprises
BlueLinx
Boise Cascade
BOSCUS
Britton Lumber Company LLC
BROSCO
Cameron Ashley Building Products
Capital Forest Products, Inc.
Cleary Millwork
Coastal Forest Products, Inc.
Combilift USA, LLC
Cooperative Reserve Supply, Inc.
Culpeper Wood Preservers
Cushman Lumber Co., Inc.
Dakeryn Industries, Ltd.
Denison-Cannon Co.
DiPrizio Pine Sales
Do It Best Corp.
DURATION Moulding & Millwork
Eastern Engineered Wood Products
Elof Hansson USA Inc.
Emery Jensen Distribution
Fairway Wholesale Distribution, LLC
Flagship Forest Products
FLW International Inc.
Frenco Building Products
Garden State Lumber Products
Garmar Industries Inc.
General Woodcraft Inc.
Genesee Reserve Supply Co.
Gillies & Prittie, Inc.
Goodfellow, Inc.
Hancock Lumber Co.
Holbrook Lumber Co.
Holden Humphrey, Inc.
Hood Distribution - McQuesten Group
J&S Supply Corp.
Johnson Lumber Company, LLC
Keiver-Willard Lumber Corp.
Lamb & Ritchie
Langevin Forest Products, Inc.
LBM Advantage
LMC
Low-E Northeast Distribution
Madison Wood Preservers, Inc.
Manufacturers Reserve Supply
Mariotti Building Products Inc.
Metrie
Millwork Design by Oxford
North Counties Supply Co., Inc.
Northeast Lumber Sales, Inc.
Nutmeg Forest Products, Inc.
Paint Sundries Solutions
Parksite
Philadelphia Reserve Supply Co.
Portland Stone Ware Co., Inc.
Princeton Forest Products, Inc.
R.A. Graham Co., Inc.
Rafferty Wholesale
Reeb Millwork Corp.
Rex Lumber Co.
Russin
Sakrete/Oldcastle
Screw Products, Inc.
Seacoast Mills, Inc.
Seven D Wholesale
Sherwood Lumber
Starborn Industries, Inc.
Taiga Building Products Ltd.
TimberHP by GO Lab
Timber Trading Group
Top Notch Distributors
True Value Company
U2 Fasteners
US Lumber
V. Zappala & Co., Inc.
Vermont Wholesale Building Prod., Inc.
Warren Trask
Weyerhaeuser
Wholesale Building Specialties
Wolf Home Products
Worldwide Door Components, Inc.



SERVICE PROVIDER PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Photo Credit: Delavue Management LLC



Delavue Management LLC

Contact: Dave Smith **Email:** dave@delavuellc.com
Phone: 856-362-7992 **Website:** www.delavuellc.com



What service products do you sell?

We provide material takeoffs exclusively for the lumber and building supply industry. Phases include lumber and EWP. Siding exterior/millwork, roofing and accessories, drywall, insulation, and metal framing. Window interior and exterior door schedules, interior trim packages.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Our takeoffs are formatted to be quickly entered into your POS system and are broken down by the load so you can pull and ship directly from our list. All issues and areas of concern are clearly noted to avoid expensive mistakes and fill in orders prior to ordering.

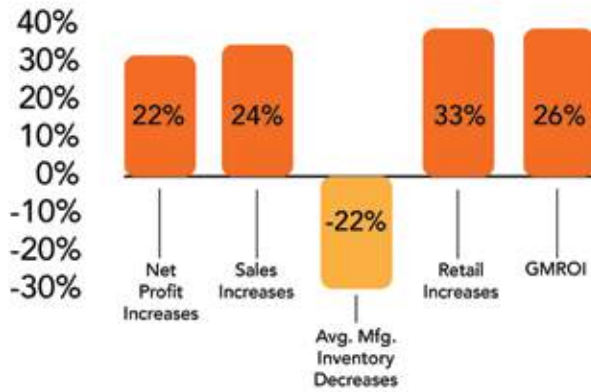
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Conifer Hill Advisors LLC.....	56
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Impact 180 Consulting Group

Contact: Jack Leary **Email:** leary.jack@impact180group.com
Phone: 216-408-9306
Website: www.impact180consultinggroup.com

Average Business Impact



What service products do you sell?

Our services are designed to fit real-world LBM business challenges in the areas of: operations, marketing, merchandising, purchasing, profit optimization, and talent acquisition. When you're investing in your business, it's good to know you are working with a team that has actually done it before! "We Speak Lumberyard!"



What is one product you'd like to highlight?

FREE IDEAS! Contact us for a 1-hour, no-obligation call with our partners to discuss your business needs. Whether your business needs small tweaks or a 180-degree turnaround, our team of experts can make a positive impact! We guarantee it!

USI Insurance Services

Contact: David Hogan **Email:** david.hogan@usi.com
Phone: 518-861-2406 **Website:** www.usi.com

The USI Approach to Wellness

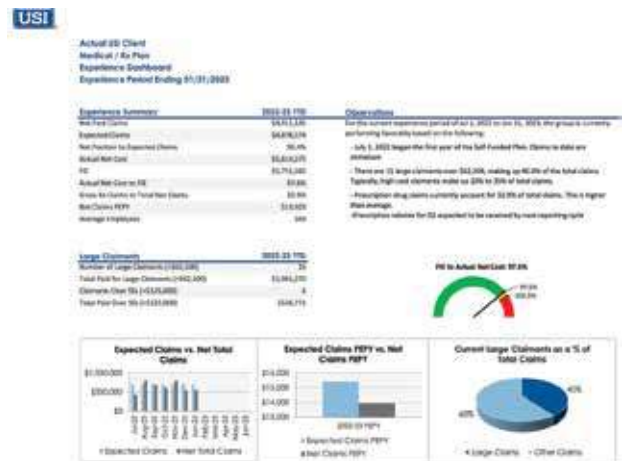
USI Population Health Consultants assist employers in designing an effective Employee Physician Engagement strategy.

Designing a comprehensive wellness strategy is a multi-step process. USI Population Health Management Consultants provide support with:

- Contribution strategy**
 - Manage financial impact of incentive programs
 - Align incentive program with company culture to ensure meaningful participation
- Compliance considerations**
 - Ensure compliance with numerous ACA, ERISA and DOL regulations regarding incentivized wellness programs
- Wellness vendor selection and implementation**
 - Align goals, objectives and budget with appropriate vendor
- Comprehensive targeted communications strategy**
 - Appropriate notice and disclosure
 - Multiple media deployment/delivery

What service products do you sell?

As an NRLA endorsed vendor, USI partners with employers to help them navigate and strategize around their employee benefit programs. Group medical, dental, vision, life, disability, voluntary benefits, benefits technology and administration, and more are all available as part of our solutions.



What is one product you'd like to highlight?

USI provides benchmarking, which will allow you to compare your benefits program (plan design, cost, cost-share, and more) to employers of similar size locally, and regionally, and within your industry. This empowers USI clients to make informed decisions about every dollar spent on benefits.



WorkSafeWorkSmart.com, LLC

Contact: Jeff Tweten **Email:** jefft@worksafeworksmart.com
Phone: 469-708-9797 **Website:** www.lumberbuddy.com



What service products do you sell?

WorkSafeWorkSmart.com is a multiline company that helps boost lumberyard profitability and safety. We help maximize existing resources through more efficient systems, optimized layouts, and targeted training. Our team implements tools, like the Lumber Buddy Portable Workstation, to empower your workforce to work more efficiently. We also offer safer, more efficient strapping systems as well as other products and services. Leading yards in all 50 states have trusted us to help create safer, more productive environments for their workers and customers. Multiply your manpower, maximize efficiency, and build success with help from WorkSafeWorkSmart.com.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Our Lumber Buddy Portable Workstations are offered in many configurations to meet the needs of professional dealers and distribution centers. Our Lumber Buddy Pro and ProX series are the perfect choice for general unit production, working with lumber and panel products. Our Lumber Buddy Half Packer and Deck Builder series increases efficiency in building units of composite decking and siding products. Our larger Max and MaxX series are built to help load builders handle EWP products more efficiently with less risk for injury. Lumber Buddy Portable Workstations are at work in all 50 states. To learn more, visit LumberBuddy.com.



Conifer Hill Advisors LLC

Contact: Michael T. Ferraro
Email: mferraro@coniferhilladvisors.com
Phone: 617-877-5800
Website: www.coniferhilladvisors.com



What service products do you sell?

Business transition planning includes preparation for transition through internal or external sale or as part of the family's estate plan, or internal transfer to management/employees. The transition planning includes an assessment of the owner's wealth gap, steps required to close possible wealth gaps, and oversight through advisory board services to monitor the required steps necessary to prepare the business for transition.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Independent advisory board services and a business roadmap that utilizes the experience of a combined 100+ years of experience in the building materials industry with an array of solutions that includes assessment of financial and operational performance, tax structuring, strategic consulting, transaction advice, and wealth management. Regardless of whether you define success by growth, stability and sustainability, wealth accumulation and preservation, or a successful exit, you need a strong foundation and a comprehensive plan to manage and reduce risk and ultimately lead you to greater value.



Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company

Contact: Bob Lemieux **Email:** rlemieux@plmins.com
Phone: 267-825-9176 **Website:** www.plmins.com



What service products do you sell?

Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company (PLM) is a nationally recognized property and casualty insurance carrier serving the lumber, woodworking, and building materials industries. PLM protects more than 5,000 businesses nationwide with property, general liability, inland marine, business automobile, commercial excess liability, equipment breakdown, cyber liability, and employment practices liability coverages. We are also able to place workers' compensation through Green Tree Risk Partners, our wholesale brokerage.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?

PLM goes beyond providing coverage, with an emphasis on preventing and reducing losses to safeguard our customers' operations. We allocate much of our resources to this purpose—to provide our customers with valuable, industry-specific knowledge and services to help them protect themselves, their employees, and their businesses. Our Loss Control Representatives are experts in all aspects of risk management, especially in the lumber and wood industry. They partner with our customers through consultative services, helpful recommendations, and custom training plans to help mitigate areas of risk and build safer and more resilient lumber businesses.



Eastern Insurance Group, A Gallagher Company

Contact: Michael Uretsky **Email:** michael_uretsky@ajg.com
Phone: 857-753-3464 **Website:** www.easterninsurance.com

Safety Material



What service products do you sell?

Insurance: We provide tailored and comprehensive insurance solutions for your business needs.

Risk Management: We develop effective risk management strategies to help protect your people and reduce your total cost of risk.

Consulting: We deliver a strategic approach to organizational wellbeing that invests in your people's health, financial wellbeing, and career growth to align with your business goals.

NRLA Member Learning Management System



What is one product you'd like to highlight?

We power up NRLA Connect and NRLA Learn for current NRLA members. The NRLA Connect Portal Toolbox—offered by Eastern Insurance Group LLC and powered by Zywave—is customized for your business needs by NRLA leadership and members in safety and HR roles. Save time and increase employee satisfaction with HR apps. Mitigate your exposures and remain compliant with compliance apps. Access a staff of HR professionals via phone or email.

Petrocelli Marketing

Contact: Mike Petrocelli **Email:** mp@petrocellimkt.com
Phone: 603-860-4623 **Website:** www.petrocellimkt.com



What technology products do you sell?

We have more than 800,000 imprintable items for sales, marketing, and HR! We provide ad-specialty and corporate apparel that enhance your presentation in the field by keeping your brand in front of prospects, customers, and employees.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Corporate apparel. All types of brands and styles to align your brand style with your company. Create goodwill within your company and beyond.

Payment Processing Consultants, Inc.

Contact: Chris Urbanski **Email:** cju@ppcsales.com
Phone: 585-249-0110 **Website:** www.ppcsales.com



What service products do you sell?

Payment Processing Consultants is the endorsed credit card processing partner of the NRLA. We provide a heavily discounted pricing program exclusive to NRLA members.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?

Payment Processing Consultants, Inc. makes it possible for your business to accept all non-cash forms of payment so you can grow, improve convenience, and enhance your revenue management. Our mission is to make easy what others complicate with nuisance fees and jargon. We have transparent pricing, honest salespeople, and a proven track record of success both locally and nationally since 1998. PPC has an A+ BBB rating, is endorsed by more than 25 referral partners, and is locally owned and operated.





POULOS ADVISORS, INC
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Poulos Advisors, Inc.

Contact: Kyle Abrahamovich
Email: kyle@poulosadvisors.com
Phone: 802-862-7361 **Website:** www.poulosadvisors.com

What service products do you sell?

Poulos Advisors, Inc. is an independent wealth management firm that delivers objective, comprehensive, integrated investment and financial advice. We act in a fiduciary capacity and as an advocate for our clients. Our firm is compensated by the fees paid directly from our clients, striving to minimize conflicts of interests so we can focus on serving our clients' best interests. We have extensive expertise working with business owners and the specialized financial planning techniques these situations require.

What is one product you'd like to highlight?


Our financial planning service examines all areas of a client's finances such as business and succession planning, taxes, estate planning, investments, risk management, college funding and retirement. We coordinate the efforts of our clients' other advisors, looking at the interactions between financial planning issues in order to organize and optimize their financial affairs.

Coming Up Next in the May LC...

**HOME ENVELOPE
PRODUCT SHOWCASE!**

SIDING, ROOFING, SEALANTS, AND INSULATION



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: 
SHOWCASE YOUR PRODUCTS FOR FREE!
SCAN THE QR CODE TO PARTICIPATE!



NYLE Winter Outing
Loon Mountain Resort, New Hampshire

The North American Young Lumber Employees (NYLE) held another highly successful Winter Outing on January 25 and 26 in the beautiful mountains of New Hampshire. The event was well attended, with thirty-eight members from 26 member companies participating in meetings, education, and networking opportunities.

Following the board meeting on Thursday, a panel of industry experts consisting of Brian Wright of Weyerhaeuser, Eric Tucker of Beatty Lumber Company, Patti Heintzelman of Keiver-Willard Lumber Company, Pike Severance of Coastal Forest Products, and Sara Belletete of Belletetes Building Product Specialists covered topics and questions such as;

- What key trends do you foresee shaping the LBM industry in 2024? And what are the opportunities or challenges?
- How do you see consolidation and/or industry shifts at the retail level affecting the market?
- Are you doing anything within your business on the technology side that is making a dramatic impact, and how are your employees adapting to these technological changes?

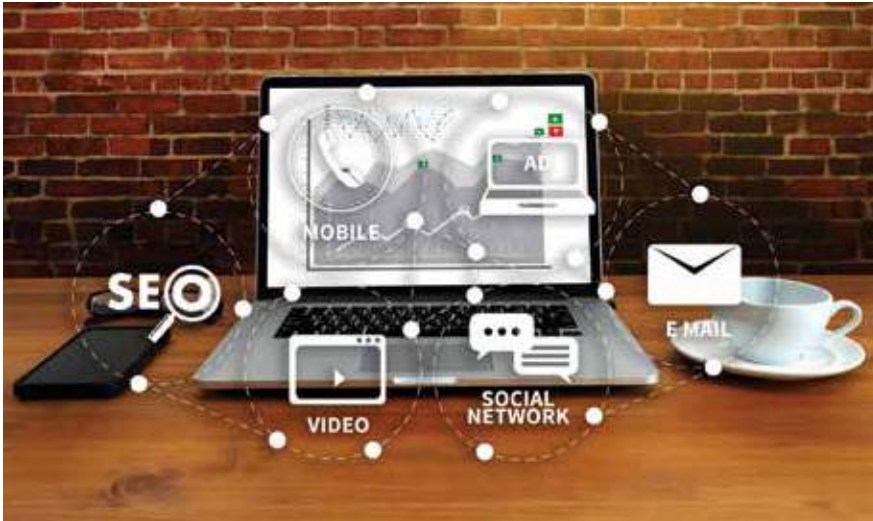
The panel addressed questions from attendees and provided extremely helpful advice and guidance regarding the incredible future for young employees in the industry.

After the panel concluded, the group enjoyed networking and more industry discussions while attending a cocktail reception and group dinner.

Be sure to mark your calendars for NYLE's Spring Leadership Conference, occurring April 10 and 11 at the Newport Marriott Hotel and Spa in Rhode Island. Kristen Pucci, founder and CEO of KRAE Consulting, and Tom Schin, founder of Build Better Culture, will be providing a full day of education on Thursday, April 11. **LC**

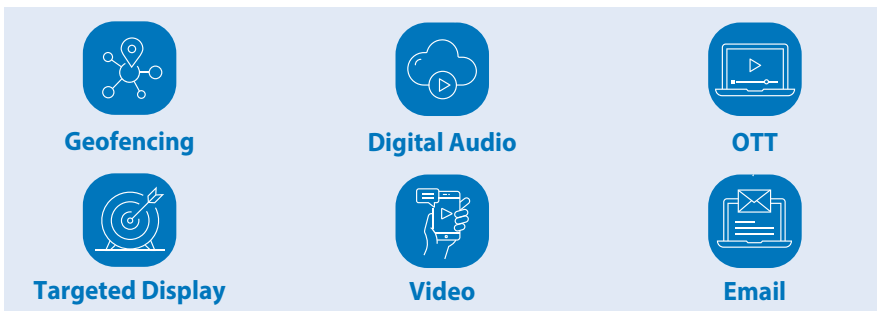
These Are the Good Old Days

By Jack Leary



Remember back in the “good old days.” I used to enjoy going through the Sunday newspaper each week looking at all the competitors’ ads page by page to see what they were promoting and how our promotions stacked up. Did I “scoop a competitor, or did they scoop me?” Also, I looked at other industries to see what they were doing, so maybe I would learn something and get a new idea. There were not multiple channels to consider, and there was no such thing as “real time.” As the saying went, if business was up, it was the advertising. If business was down, it was something else, or in our industry, the weather! We used to plan our print ads months in advance.

As you know, those days are long gone. Traditional methods of advertising are not as effective as they once were. Advances in technology have caused marketers to shift from a “push” to a “pull” approach. This means you should consider all options from a precision targeting standpoint to deliver very targeted, customer-focused, hyperlocal advertising versus using a “one size fits all” approach. In this article, I would like to share some of the newer ways marketers can leverage technology to connect with customers, including:



GEOFENCING

Geofencing is a way to engage prospects based on their hyperlocal location and then serve them a targeted message when they are in or leave their desired radius. Geofencing allows you to deliver a highly relevant message to prospects on their mobile device in unique geometrical shaped locations of interest versus a traditional circular radius. This is ideal for hyperlocal targeting in real time around competitor locations, capturing mobile IDs of prospects entering locations, or competitive conquest as prospects leave competitive locations.

For example, a dealer can use geofencing to target individuals who leave their competitors’ location. They can send a message that they offer a special product or service to entice them to shop with them.

TARGETED DISPLAY

Targeted display pinpoints customers with very accurate demographic, behavioral, and psychographic data. Using geofencing and geofarming capabilities, you can find potential customers based on their current location or historical locations (going back in time) or serve them ads as they shop at competitive locations. It starts with geographic targeting, then layers on things like relevant page content (contextual targeting), prior site visitors (site retargeting), keyword searches (search retargeting), and location (geofencing targeting). Campaigns can be executed across mobile, tablet, and desktop devices.



DIGITAL AUDIO

Digital audio is a way to serve ads through many streaming apps on mobile, tablet, laptop, or home service. You can target based on a customer profile, demographics, and interests on devices that include Google Home, Amazon Alexa, PlayStation, Xbox, Sonos, Bose, Roku, LG, Samsung, iPhone, or Android, to name a few. There are thousands of radio stations you can tap into, such as iHeart, Spotify, Alexa Home, podcasts, and more. Ads typically run for 15 or 30 seconds. As you might guess, the longer 30-second spots typically outperform the shorter 15-second spots. Compared to traditional radio, where you pay for the length of the ad, with digital audio, you pay for the placement, so the 30-second spots are the best investment.



VIDEO

Video is not only the most powerful, but it is also the most popular media format for the fourth year in a row. According to a recent 2023 HubSpot study, video will grow the most among first-time users, with one in three marketers planning to try to leverage video over the next year. Video content is 12 times more likely to be watched than text is to be read, and it has higher conversion rates. Videos get more people's attention and keep it longer, and they can be more effective than other types of content when it comes to getting your viewers to take action. It is also an excellent way to increase traffic and engagement on other social places. With today's technology, videos do not have to be a big production. I have seen good videos used for advertising that were shot with a smartphone.



OTT (OVER-THE-TOP)

OTT, or over-the-top, refers to streaming video devices or services such as Apple TV, Roku, or others. With nearly 200 million users and growing, this opens the door for new marketing opportunities for advertisers! These services stream digital content to a TV or other video-watching devices. There are multiple options for accessing your target, depending on your goals, from smart TVs to mobile and devices like desktops and tablets. Targeting can include demographics, customer behavior, behavioral interests, geographic targeting, and more. With Americans spending an average of 95 hours per month streaming, OTT can be a good option to increase or extend your brand awareness and connect with your targeted customers whenever they are viewing.




EMAIL

Email, I know what you are thinking... Email marketing has been used for a long time as part of the advertising toolbox. But if you are just emailing your house file, it is not a lot better than "carpet bombing" customers and prospects with print ads. So how can technology help? To start, many companies have a customer target profile, but do you have customer personas? A profile helps identify the target segments and align marketing efforts for the entire business, while buyer personas offer specific insights for customization and personalization. Instead of just targeting a certain demographic or firmographic, are you tying behavioral data and transactional data to your efforts? What about attitudinal data? The more data elements you can correlate, the more accurate your marketing efforts will be.

I like to think about it this way: if your target profile helps you identify who you want or who is your customer, adding additional data elements helps you determine who is most likely to be in the market for your products or services. There are many third-party data providers out there that can help you enhance the asset that is your customer data.

Attribution, if you aren't familiar with the term, measures advertising's direct effect on outcomes. Management guru Peter Drucker says, "What gets measured gets managed." Are you able to correlate advertising exposure directly to performance outcomes by analyzing the customer online and offline? Are you able to determine "web traffic lift" and creative effectiveness by analyzing website visits immediately after ads run? If you utilize geofencing, you can measure "foot traffic" in-store, yard visits, showroom visits, or online from individuals exposed to your ads. And probably the most important thing—sales! Are you determining sales conversions attributed to your marketing efforts? The great thing about leveraging technology is the ability to measure how it's working. Here is a tip: In our experience, two advertising tactics run in parallel tend to produce better results than a single tactic. Also, make sure you are including some type of "call to action" whenever possible in your ads.

The above list is not all inclusive, and each could be an article by itself, but hopefully it helps you think about how different technologies can be leveraged to market to your customers or prospects more effectively. As a marketer, I am glad we have all of these new tools technology has made available to us. "Maybe these are the good old days"? Let me know your thoughts. I would love to hear from you. 

Jack Leary is senior vice president and partner at Impact 180 Consulting Group. In these challenging times, we are here to help. Feel free to contact Jack at leary.jack@impact180group.com.

ABMA AMERICAN BUILDING MATERIALS ALLIANCE **ADVOCACY DAY**

Building Connections Between Members and Legislators

By Francis Palasieski



I spent more than 10 years in the capital of New York, where I had the privilege of working closely with elected officials from across the political spectrum. Whether they hailed from Republican, Democrat, or Independent backgrounds, there was a common thread that ran through their priorities: a genuine interest in understanding the concerns and aspirations of the people they represented.

During my time there, I witnessed firsthand the importance of dialogue between legislators and the individuals, businesses, and organizations they represented. Every legislator I worked with was eager to hear from constituents, learning about their lives and understanding the issues that directly impacted their businesses, careers, or families. This feedback wasn't just appreciated; it was integral to the legislative process, shaping policies that reflected the real-world needs of communities.

What became clear through these experiences was the significance of personal connections. Legislators didn't just rely on formal channels of information; they actively sought out relationships with local stakeholders, reaching out to business owners and community leaders to gain insights into proposed legislation and its potential impact.

Advocacy Day is an event that provides a chance to create and foster these vital relationships. It's a platform where our members have the opportunity to engage directly with elected officials, sharing their perspectives, concerns, and priorities face-to-face. It's more than just a day of lobbying; it's an invitation to build lasting connections beyond the legislative process.

At its core, Advocacy Day ensures our industry has a seat at the table when decisions that affect us are being made. By

participating, our members not only voice their opinions but also demonstrate their commitment to shaping policies that will decide our collective future.

I cannot stress enough the importance of attending Advocacy Day. It's not merely about making our voices heard; it's about seizing the opportunity to forge meaningful relationships with those who have the power to enact change. In a political landscape where decisions are often made with profound consequences, the ability to connect with elected officials is indispensable.

That's why Advocacy Day is a must-attend event. It's a special chance that holds a lot of value, not just for our industry, but for all of us. By being there, we're actively taking part in shaping our collective future. **LB**

YOUR VOICE MATTERS! REGISTER TO ATTEND



ADVOCACY DAY 2024

April 29-May 1

Washington, D.C.

SCAN TO REGISTER



OR GO TO:
abmalliance.org/advocacy-day

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Emily Holtshouser

Location: Manchester, NH

Position: National Account Manager- Pro Supply • Simpson Strong-Tie



HOW DID YOU BEGIN YOUR CAREER IN THE LBM INDUSTRY?

My dad has been a part of the LBM industry as an outside sales representative for building materials distributors since before I was born. I grew up in an LBM family, which showed me what hard work looks like, and I am excited to carry on the tradition of being a part of this industry. As a 21-year-old right out of college majoring in psychology and business management, I didn't think that being in this industry would develop into a lifelong career. Six years later, I can't picture myself being anywhere else.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR POSITION?

In my current role as national account manager with Simpson Strong-Tie, I am responsible for maintaining existing national programs in the Pro Supply channel by working with our internal branches to develop new business and drive growth across all product lines, as well as coordinating pricing programs, SKU maintenance, and trade show promotions.

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

The biggest challenge I've faced coming into this industry, which is filled with legacy knowledge, is getting up to speed as quickly as I could with zero prior experience. Whether it was learning the concept of framing or knowing what I'm looking at while walking a jobsite, there was a huge learning curve.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED SINCE WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

I have learned that if you do what you say you are going to do, it goes a long way. Your word and integrity mean everything in this industry. This is key within your company and with your customers.

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

My advice would be to always stay curious. The LBM industry has a long and distinguished history, and so many people with decades of experience. Whether it's with customers, coworkers, or vendors, networking is so important. Ask lots of questions, and be curious.

WHAT ARE YOUR PASSIONS OUTSIDE OF THE OFFICE?

Outside of the office, I love to play ice hockey and ski as often as I can. I also have a mini Bernedoodle puppy named Tito, who I absolutely adore, but he keeps me very busy! **LC**

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