Great Potential Leads Future Planning for Metal Building Industry

Planning a solid future for the metal building industry requires the stability of the proverbial three-legged stool. In our case, that foundational stool is composed of three attributes: knowledge, people and teamwork. Now, before you start to say “ah, those are clichés,” hear me out. Each of these elements is important to the world of metal buildings and metal building systems—and to you.

Knowledge: The Power Tool

At the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA) annual meeting a few months ago, we had the privilege of learning from Chris Kuehl, managing director of Armada Corporate Intelligence, Lawrence, Kan., and an economic analyst for the National Association of Credit Management. He put to rest the “sky is falling” economic and political concerns that seem to permeate the coffee shops and boardrooms of America today. He reminded us just how powerful a nation we are, showing us, for example, that the gross domestic product (GDP) figures in all of France are comparable to the GDP in California alone; that the GDP in New York state is equivalent to the entire country of Canada; and that Texas’ GDP rivals that of Brazil.
While he helped us see beyond the prevalent gloomy outlook, he did caution that we must be prepared; that Inflation is coming. Commodities are rising fast (especially industrial metals and oil). “Now wages are rising at a 2.9 percent annual rate. Look for a core rate of around 3 percent and real rate around 5 percent,” he said. Kuehl also brought up a tough subject that’s been on all our minds for some time. That brings me to the next point …

People: The Engine that Fuels Our Industry

Kuehl affirmed that America’s labor shortage is becoming a grave concern. “Ten thousand boomers retire every day,” he said, “causing problems in manufacturing, construction, transportation and even health care. Unemployment rates will stay low through 2019—between 4 percent and 5 percent.”

Our job is to find the workforce: to educate and inform people so they understand the value and importance of the industry; to look outside our traditions and bring talent to the table from all age groups and all walks of life.

Most of you who are reading this article are in the metal building industry. I want to hear from you: why did you enter this industry and what compels you to stay? I’ll share some of your comments in my next article. Send your responses to me at mbma@mbma.com.

Teamwork: The Fuel to Ignite a Strong Future

MBMA is extremely pleased to mesh our efforts with those of the Metal Building Contractors & Erectors Association (MBCEA). Our two associations have been working together to bolster the metal building industry for several years now, making headway in building image and awareness and in improving perceptions of the metal building industry. This was underscored by the following comment from MBCEA president, Keith Wentworth. “Our friendship with the MBMA is one for whom we are particularly thankful, we are stronger together. MBCEA board member, Dave Leinbach of The Kaiser-Martin Group, and MBCEA executive director, Sasha Demyan, recently had the opportunity to represent the MBCEA at the December MBMA meeting. Dave did a fantastic job of communicating to the manufacturers that we have common points of connection. Sasha has really enjoyed working with MBMA staff on conference planning and coordinating MBCEA presence at upcoming manufacturer/builder meetings.”

The two organizations have worked hard at training and development through a variety of means. MBMA’s director of research and engineering, Lee Shoemaker, Ph.D., has been speaking to various regional MBCEA chapters, providing research updates on topics such as energy efficiency and MBMA’s senior engineer, Vince Sagan, PE, will be making a
presentation to the Carolinas MBCEA Chapter on air infiltration testing that is currently underway. Lee also teamed with MBCEA's Jackie Meiluta to educate Nevada code officials on IAS 472 and 478 accreditation for metal building manufacturers and constructors. Jackie commented that the code officials “were thrilled to know there are standards for metal buildings that will make their jobs easier.”

We’ve also been co-locating one allmember meeting each year, which has built new relationships and contributed to greater teaming possibilities. We have held joint sessions at these meetings so that builders, manufacturers and suppliers can benefit together from greater knowledge and understanding. Be sure to attend our upcoming joint meetings May 1-3, at the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort in South Carolina. Contact either MBMA or MBCEA for registration information and program details. We hope to see you there!