

# GARAGE • SHED • CARPORT BUILDER

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Aug/Sept 2023  
Vol. 4, Issue 4

**BOOSTING  
SHED  
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**DIGITAL  
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# SHED U

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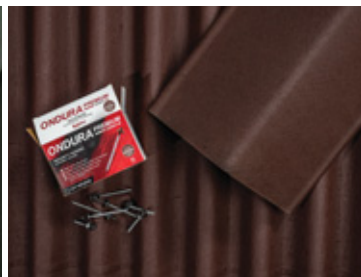
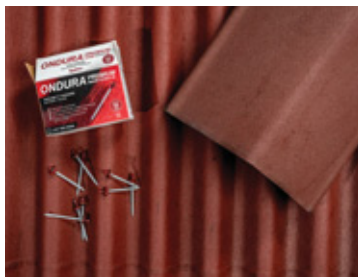


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# Introducing Mose

**H**is name is Mose, and he's an Amish builder from north central Minnesota. He wants to build sheds for a living, but not run his own company. He just wants to build.

In a world full of people who don't want to build anything, you'd think that Mose would have offers from which to choose. But that's not how the shed business works, so Mose called me, and I thought I could help.

So far I've been proven wrong. I figured there's a job for Mose *somewhere* with *some*

company that can use a person to assemble sheds, either at or near his location, or he could travel on-site to the buyers, if these sheds necessitate on-site assembly.

Yes, I understand that sheds get more expensive if you build them on-site. Typically the buyer wants them as affordable as possible, and prefab sheds that are built en masse, then trucked and dropped where they'll be used are more affordable for the end user. But isn't there *anybody* who can use a handyman builder in north central Minnesota?

So I started calling shed builders in the area, and they don't have opportunities

for Mose. He can't start his own business or become a dealer without things like internet or website management tools. He just wants to build. And for the record, he loves Steel Dynamics' new TruSteel HD product and would love to use that in his projects.

If you thought there was a punchline or a curveball coming, there isn't. There's only an invitation to email me at rocky@shieldwallmedia.com if you have an opportunity for a young man who (surprise!) wants to work even though it's the year 2023.

— Rocky Landsverk



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**Gary Reichert,**  
Publisher, Shield Wall Media

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Matthew Black of Blacks Buildings. Learn more about Shed U on page 6.

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# Shed University

New Program Will Teach People How To Sell Sheds

BY ROCKY LANDSVERK



Matthew Black

**I**f you build it, they will come. But if you don't sell it, the movie doesn't end well. So it has always baffled Matthew Black of Blacks Buildings why the shed industry seems to build sheds with great aplomb and get them delivered to the finest locations alongside busy highways, but then doesn't support the builders who are supposed to explain to customers why they should buy them.

"Too often companies rely just on their dealers to handle their sales side of things," Black said. "They dump a bunch of sheds on a lot and hope they sell themselves. But I feel like there should be more time spent in the training of salespeople. There are a lot of shed sellers who aren't trained in doing sales."

Enter Shed University, a new project being launched by Black and other industry leaders intended to create a platform for online shed sales training, and live and in-person courses, including a day and a half of learning at this coming January's Garage Shed Carport Builder Show in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Black and a host of other shed experts will be at the show, and teaching shed sellers at [sheduniversity.com](http://sheduniversity.com). Training will include both the basics of sales along with some advanced-level lessons.

## Black's Background

Matthew's passion for the portable building industry began at a young age, as he was introduced to the business through his parents' mobile home roofing company. From there, he went on to found Blacks Buildings, a company that provides the state of Tennessee with high-



quality, hand-crafted portable buildings and sheds.

That was more than 25 years ago. In the recent past, he added the MyShed.io service to his company's offerings. That website offers a 3D builder that the company says is "meticulously tailored to support shed business owners. [It] aims to propel their businesses into the realm of technology and streamline the entire online selling process from design to delivery."

Black said he isn't a devotee of a specific sales program, though if he had to name one that was most influential, he said it would be Grant Cardone ("The 10X Rule" and other books and courses).

### What is Shed U?

Recognizing a significant gap in sales strategies and efficacy, Black then embarked on a new solution that will empower shed business owners from coast to coast. Shed University aims to help people learn the best techniques for selling sheds. Elements of the coursework and discussions will include:

- Sales process management
- Lead follow-up
- Sales script development

Black said that as he has gotten to know more and more shed salespeople, he's been surprised at how few use a sales script. "The right sales script can turn a tentative inquiry into a firm order, but crafting that script requires a deep understanding of both the product and the customer," he said.

Shed U marketing information adds that its "training program guides salespeople in creating scripts that resonate with potential buyers, speaking to their needs and aspirations in a way that is both genuine and persuasive. The power of a well-crafted sales script should not be underestimated, and Shed University is leading the way in teaching this vital skill. At its core, Shed University embodies a profound commitment to advancing the shed industry. The university's unwavering focus on increasing sales, instituting a

sales process, following up on leads, and creating effective sales scripts is a testament to this commitment."

### Who Is It For?

The shed industry is comprised of a diverse group of companies. Some of them, like Blacks Buildings, build the shed, manage the shed lot, and employ the salesperson, but that's fairly rare.

"Shed University is mostly for shed sellers who are doing sales day to day, interacting with customers, we're hoping to help them get better conversions and improve their sales process," Black said.

---

**"There are a lot of customers who aren't buying sheds because the sales process isn't what it should be. The best way to make our industry bigger is at the dealer level, versus building more sheds and putting them on lots."**

*Matthew Black*

---

Black Buildings is a manufacturer and sells its own buildings through its dealers, but for a lot of companies, there are three different players involved: the manufacturer, the shed dealer, and the salesperson at the shed lot. "Most dealer locations are completely separate from the shed company or the manufacturer," Black said. "The shed companies themselves are often a brand but they aren't their own manufacturing company."

The result is that there isn't a big enough player in that mix to warrant a big marketing expense. In the case of Blacks Buildings, the incentive is there to train the salesperson and not just send them a shed because they all work for the same company. Black called it the Whole Foods model instead of the Wal-Mart model.

His hope is that the shed manufacturers and larger multi-site dealers will start

instituting a sales-training program like this. If that doesn't work, then hopefully the salesperson themselves will decide they want to learn how to best sell sheds.

### Improving Digital Acumen

Shed U will also be focused quite a bit on digital sales, not just in-person sales processes. Different levels of the food chain might each have different skillsets related to online sales, but for those who are able, the SEO and other courses could significantly make a difference. At a minimum, website and social media marketing create leads that you don't get from a shed lot alone, even a well-located shed lot.

"There are a lot of dealers just literally sitting on their lots hoping somebody comes into their building," Black said. "They're not proactively generating leads or marketing. There is an opportunity to grow the industry through sales processes' alone.

"There are a lot of customers who aren't buying sheds because the sales process isn't what it should be. The best way to make our industry bigger is at the dealer level, versus building more sheds and putting them on lots."

### Sheds Aren't Just Sheds Anymore

Black is hopeful the website (sheduniversity.com) will be ready in August. There will also be a separate upcharge for the Shed U programming at the GSCB Show in January. We'll preview the Shed U presence at the GSCB Show in January in a future issue of the magazine.

One of Black's additional goals is to begin helping the industry convey that sheds aren't just sheds anymore. They can be backyard classrooms, or studios, or guest houses. You can turn one into your hunting cabin. They can be more than storing a lawn mower. But how many potential customers realize that?

"We have to teach people what a shed can be," Black said. "We need to start teaching consumers what a shed can do."

**GSCB**



# The Basics of Selling

And How Shed U is Prepared to Help

BY GARY REICHERT, PUBLISHER/CEO

**H**enry Ford said “nothing happens until someone sells something.” I freely admit Mr. Ford is much smarter than I will ever be, but I am going to disagree. I am 100% a marketing, sales, and business guy, but he missed the first and most daunting step. Selling has three parts.

- Qualifying, where the salesperson determines the customers’ wants and needs.
- A feature-benefit presentation, where the salesperson shows how a product meet those needs.
- Closing and handling objections, where the salesperson assists the customer in making a good buying decision.

The most risk-intensive, challenging, and rewarding part happens before any of that occurs. I like quotes because I can look smart based on other people’s ideas. Zig Ziglar said “you can get what you want if you help enough other people get what they want.” That is the essence of selling: having a solution, and helping people solve their problem.

The huge question is who sees those problems and can offer a solution. If you are hungry, the butcher selling a steak solves your problem. If you need to fasten two pieces of lumber the nail salesperson solves your problem. It takes a unique perspective and a lot of courage to be the person who recognizes a problem, has an idea on how to solve it, and brings that solution to market.

Today that person is Matt Black and the solution is Shed U.

It is impossible for any businessperson to be a subject matter expert in every part of their business, but in a highly competitive field that is a requirement for success. Since you cannot know everything, the answer is knowing where and how to find experts in the specific knowledge you need.

Most builders, contractors, and shed people are most comfortable with a hammer in hand and surrounded by sawdust.



That is integral for putting out a quality product.

The challenge is finding people where the shed is a solution to their problem and communicating what about your shed, makes it the right shed, for them.

You can build the best shed on the planet and if no one knows about it, or you can’t teach them why it is the best shed, you have failed.

Matt has assembled a sales and marketing team, specific to the shed industry, to teach you how to find people who are looking for your solution and help you teach them why your solution is the best solution. Shed U provides two days of intensive learning and the opportunity for continued support by legitimate industry experts.

Shed U happens in conjunction with the 2024 Garage Shed & Carport Builder Show, January 23-25, 2024, in Knoxville, Tennessee. All registrants for Shed U receive complimentary admission to the Garage Shed & Carport Builder Show, including more educational opportunities and the chance to meet the premier vendors in the shed and residential construction industry.

Let’s make something happen. **GSCB**



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# Shed Sales Digital Master Plan

Shed University Instructors Give Advice on SEO & More

**T**he staff at Shed University is led by Matthew Black, who is a leading shed-sales expert who runs Blacks Buildings, MyShed.io, and Shed University. The group will be managing the educational programming at January's Garage Shed Carport Builder Show in Knoxville, Tennessee. Learn more about that show at [garageshedcarportbuilder.com](http://garageshedcarportbuilder.com).

What follows is a package of articles created by Shed University instructors who have built shed-sales businesses. If these articles are too technical for you, save this magazine and use them as a guide for when you decide you want to learn more, or as a checklist if you hire a digital marketing expert or agency.

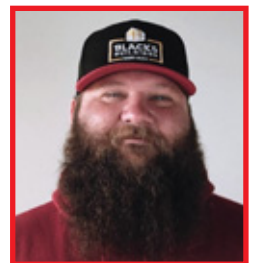
You can also use this as preparation for the Garage Shed Carport Builder Show and attend the education sessions there.

## **The ABCs of SEO: A 5-Step Guide to Boosting Your Shed Business**

By Matthew Black

As the proprietor of Blacks Buildings, MyShed.io, and Shed University, I've learned that the secret to success lies in mastering SEO. This industry's digital landscape can be dominated with a targeted 5-point SEO strategy for shed businesses just like yours.

**1) Local SEO and Google My Business:** Your shed business can have a prime digital storefront, all thanks to Google My



Business. The key here is quality — attractive photos showcasing your best work and compelling customer testimonials. 5-star reviews act as an endorsement for potential customers and a signal to Google’s ranking algorithms of your credibility. So, encourage satisfied clients to leave reviews and fill your profile with high-quality images.

Remember, your Google My Business profile is often the first impression you make; let’s make it count!

**2) On-Page SEO:** Our websites are treasure troves for keywords. You’ve done your research and found what potential customers search for in your area. Now layer these keywords throughout your website — in titles, headlines, descriptions. But here’s an inside tip: Don’t forget about your images’ metadata. Renaming photos with relevant keywords and ensuring metadata is accurate can significantly enhance your website’s SEO. These strategies help Google Search Console bots crawl your site and push your business up in search results.

**3) Backlinks:** Consider backlinks as the digital world’s word-of-mouth. When other websites, blogs, or social media channels mention your business and link back to your site, it’s a credibility boost. Search engines like Google view these backlinks, especially from established, reputable sites, as endorsements of your content’s quality. The more high-quality backlinks you garner, the higher your website can climb on the search engine ladder.

**4) Directories:** Registering your business on directories like Google, Bing, MapQuest, Siri Search, and Yahoo adds a layer of trust and authenticity. These directories act like digital phone books, and having your business listed on them makes you more discoverable and reliable in the eyes of search engines and potential customers.

**5) Voice Search Platforms:** Lastly, remember the increasing popularity of voice searches. Siri uses Yelp for its searches, making it essential to register and encourage reviews on Yelp.

Similarly, Amazon’s Alexa pulls information from Bing, emphasizing the importance of being registered on diverse platforms.

These steps, when implemented strategically, can transform



your online presence. Your shed business is not just about wood and nails, but also about effective SEO practices, helping you reach more customers and rise above the competition. Ready to nail your SEO strategy? Let’s get digital, get optimized, and get seen.

### **Harnessing Social Media Power in the Shed Industry**

By Chris Pittman  
Pittman Academy  
pittmanacademy.com



It’s Chris Pittman, and today we’re diving into the dynamic world of social media, unwrapping its potential to transform your shed business and take it to the next level.

Our journey starts with a critical hurdle that we’ve all faced at some point: time management. Yes, effective social media engagement takes time. But imagine if we could create content for an entire month in just one or two dedicated sittings? That’s where time-blocking comes in, a technique where you carve out specific slots in your schedule solely for strategizing and creating content. This way, you eliminate daily distractions and maintain a consistent, vibrant online presence without it consuming your entire workday.

Now, imagine a mixture of engaging posts filling your content calendar for the coming month. You’ve got a sneak peek of your team crafting a custom garden shed, a teaser for your summer sale, an infographic explaining the best ways to utilize your shed,



and even an online poll asking followers their favorite shed style.

It's this engaging mix of promotional, educational, entertaining, and engagement posts that keeps your social media platforms lively and your audience connected.

An indispensable tool in the Shed Industry is a Social Media Management Planner. Solutions like Buffer, Loomly, or Hootsuite are not just about scheduling; they're about optimizing. They help tailor your posts for different platforms, whether it's a Facebook post or story, Instagram's image-centric landscape, or Twitter's hashtag-heavy feeds. It's like having a mini digital marketing team at your service around-the-clock!

Of course, coming up with fresh content regularly can be challenging. That's where AI tools like ChatGPT can be game-changers. AI's potential to generate engaging content can lighten your workload, allowing you to dedicate more time to your core business functions while ensuring your social media platforms remain engaging and current.

Now, let's bring your content to life. A behind-the-scenes video of your team building a shed can help humanize your brand. It shows that behind every great shed is a team of dedicated individuals. High-quality graphics for promotional posts can stop viewers in their scrolling tracks, and a photo series can visually narrate the journey of a project from start to finish. Mixing up the content forms — videos, graphics, and photos — ensures that your audience always has something new and exciting to look forward to.

In conclusion, our goal in the shed industry isn't just to build remarkable sheds; it's also to build a compelling, vibrant online presence that engages our audience and grows our business. It may seem daunting at first, but with a strategic approach, the right tools, a sprinkle of creativity, and a dash of enthusiasm, we can turn social media into a powerful ally. This may seem like a lot, but we promise you that if you would start implementing some of these steps, it's a game-changer!

### **Harnessing Lead Forms: An Integrated Approach for the Shed Industry**

By MyShed.io Staff

Hello, passionate builders of the shed industry! It's the staff from MyShed.io here to share key insights on a vital tool we should all be honing — Lead Forms. With their power harnessed across your website, and digital platforms like Facebook and Google, they become a cornerstone of successful customer acquisition and engagement.

Lead forms are akin to the digital face of your business, warmly welcoming visitors, and subtly gathering critical information that helps you serve them better. Their simplicity is their



strength.

Be it your website or a digital ad; a well-crafted lead form solicits essential details without overwhelming the visitors. An effective lead form blends basic contact fields with more specific questions, like a visitor's shed preferences in terms of size, style, or functionality. Adding an interactive element, such as a gallery of shed options within the form, can engage visitors and provide deeper insights into their tastes.

One unique advantage of lead forms within platforms like Facebook and Google is auto-fill features, which ease the process for users by populating information automatically. Coupled with carefully chosen images and questions, these forms can provide high-quality leads that are more likely to convert into sales.

Regardless of where the form is hosted, the mobile experience is critical. A significant portion of your audience may interact with your lead forms on mobile devices. So, ensure they're optimized for smaller screens — user-friendly design and smooth transitions are paramount.

The true value of lead forms is unveiled in the follow-up. They offer a springboard for more personalized communication, like tailored email offers or exclusive invitations. The key lies in nurturing these leads, providing value, and turning potential customers into satisfied clients.

Yet, the journey doesn't end here. The effectiveness of lead forms needs continual refinement. Monitor their performance and adjust based on the insights gained. Every form, every field, every question should evolve with your understanding of what works best for your audience.

# Your Blueprint to Success in the Shed Business.

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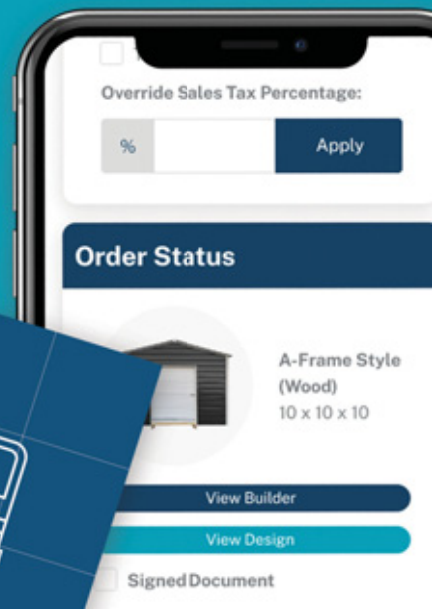


Design

Track



Deliver





Finally, remember to expand your reach by integrating lead forms in digital ads. The credibility and extensive reach of platforms like Google and Facebook can significantly bolster your lead-generation efforts. In essence, lead forms are your virtual ambassadors, bridging the gap between your business and potential customers. Be it your website or a digital ad campaign, their proper implementation and management can spur sustainable growth in our ever-evolving industry.

Let's harness the power of lead forms and see our businesses flourish!

### Utilizing YouTube for Shed Sales Success

By Dylan Street  
Guerrilla Marketing



Hey there, shed enthusiasts! Dylan Street here, the CEO of Guerrilla Marketing, and we're going to dive into how YouTube can be a game-changer for your shed business.

First things first, imagine yourself as the Bob Ross of shed-building. You're the influencer in the shed industry, and YouTube is your canvas. Share your knowledge, display your products, and show your audience that you're the real deal. They're interested in what you're selling, so why not be the one to tell them all about it?

Filming the behind-the-scenes process of how you craft your sheds is a fantastic way to engage with your audience. People love seeing how things are made, especially when they're investing in them. It's like those cooking shows where they take you through every step of the recipe — except instead of baking a cake, you're building a shed!

Show off your team's culture, too. Create videos that highlight the folks behind your amazing products. This helps your audience connect with your brand on a personal level, adding a human touch that's often missing in the digital world.

Consider vlogs as well. This doesn't mean you need to start documenting every second of your life. But regular updates or a series of quick tips about shed maintenance and selection? That's the kind of content your audience will love and value.

Thinking of running paid video ads? Well, to run them on Google, they

need a home — and that's where YouTube comes in. You can host your ads there and reach a wider audience who are watching similar content.

Make sure your YouTube channel looks the part. A high-quality banner and an eye-catching profile picture can leave a strong impression. It's like dressing up for a job interview — you want to look your best.

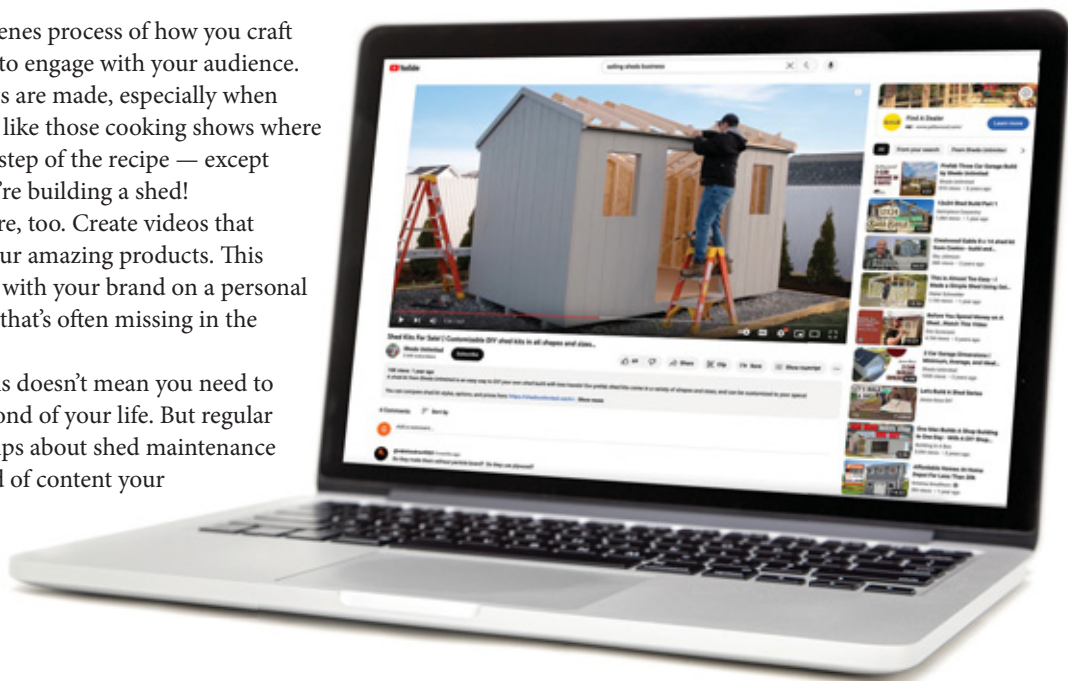
Here's a little secret: Your video descriptions are your best friends for YouTube SEO. Include relevant keywords to help your videos show up in search results when users look for shed-related content.

And finally, always link back to your website in your video descriptions and make sure your contact information is readily available. This can direct potential customers straight to your virtual doorstep.

To wrap it up, using YouTube for your shed business is like having a Swiss Army Knife. It's a multipurpose tool that can educate, entertain, and advertise, all while connecting you with your audience. So, get out there and start filming — your YouTube journey awaits! **GSCB**



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# Boosting Shed Longevity

Here's How Can You Extend a Shed's Shelf Life Expectancy

BY MARK ROBINS

**W**hile sheds vary significantly in their size and intricacy of construction, from simple open-sided huts covering bicycles or tools to large structures with shingled roofs, windows, and even electrical outlets, one of their main objectives is protecting what's inside them. To do this, they need to stick around. While it's difficult to give an exact time for the expected lifespan of sheds because many factors can affect it, what follows are tips on how to give them a long, successful life.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALPINE BUILDINGS



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PHOTO COURTESY OF ARROW STORAGE PRODUCTS

### Better Materials for a Long-Lasting Shed

Shed life expectancy comes down to the materials used in its construction; avoid substandard materials. “We focus on buying high-quality materials and cover that with a high-quality paint job,” said Dean Wengerd, owner of Cherokee Structures, Chuckey, Tennessee.

Certain materials used on sheds will help them last longer than others. However, in general terms, according to information provided by Malden, Massachusetts-based Urban Sheds Inc., expect the following lifespans for the most common types of shed materials:

- Wooden sheds such as those used for wood storage: 20-25 years
- Vinyl sheds: 25-30+ years
- Resin sheds or plastic sheds: 5-7 years
- Metal sheds: Less than 5 years

“Choosing the materials for your shed is an important part of creating a long-lasting outdoor structure,” said Rachel Hudson, associate segment marketing manager, LP Building Solutions, Nashville, Tennessee, which makes the well-known LP Smart-Side siding. “We advise using a durable siding product with a great warranty. Structures using engineered wood ... can provide superior resistance against termites and fungal decay while offering exceptional aesthetic value.”

Justus Eaton, CEO, Alpine Buildings LLC, Mocksville, North Carolina, said that materials are probably the most important aspect of the shed. “I purchased a shed years ago and within a few years from the purchase date, the trim was swelling out so much,” he said. “It looked like someone had taken a nail punch and punched the nails deeper into the trim. I could literally rip off some of the trim with my bare hands.”

Also acknowledging the importance of materials, Amanda Tharp, product manager at Arrow Storage Products, Breese, Illinois, said that it can come down to a “durable versus all-weather strength” decision. “Fabric buildings are durable and can stand up to the elements,” she said. “However, all-steel buildings are nat-

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usually more rugged due to their construction materials. Wooden sheds are also durable but more expensive. Arrow Storage sheds are made from Galvalume steel with a highly anti-corrosive aluminum and zinc plating. These steel sheds are built to last.”

### Foundation and Location

To ensure longevity and avoid damages, the shed must have a solid foundation. Tharp said make sure the shed is installed on a flat and level surface. Hudson cautions, “[Sheds] sitting directly on the ground can expose sheds to excessive moisture conditions. Products such as LP SmartSide Trim and Siding require a minimum of 6” clearance from finish grade (ground cover).”

Pick the best pad material (wood, gravel or concrete) for the shed. Paving slabs can also be an appropriate alternative for the base. Anchor the shed properly to avoid damage from improper drainage or unstable ground.

Many municipalities dictate the shed foundation choice. Local code often spells out exactly where sheds can be placed, as well as suitable foundation options, required footer depths, and more. Shed foundation requirements tend to vary based on the size of the building, the intended use (stricter codes often apply for habitable buildings), and the local climate. Check local requirements before choosing final shed foundation.

Shed location is important; it’s crucial that the shed has protection against extreme weather conditions such as heavy rains and high winds. If you live in an area that experiences heavy snowfall,



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHELSEA STRUCTURES

place sheds where they won’t be under extra snowfall from surrounding vegetation and trees. Make sure that spot isn’t at a high risk of flooding. Put the shed in a spot where it will be the least vulnerable to high winds or heavy rains, and protected from the sun and big trees to reduce everyday wear and tear from the elements. Tharp said fallen limbs can shorten a shed’s lifespan.

While warranties are a big push in the shed industry, Matthew Black (of Blacks Buildings, website MyShed.io, and education

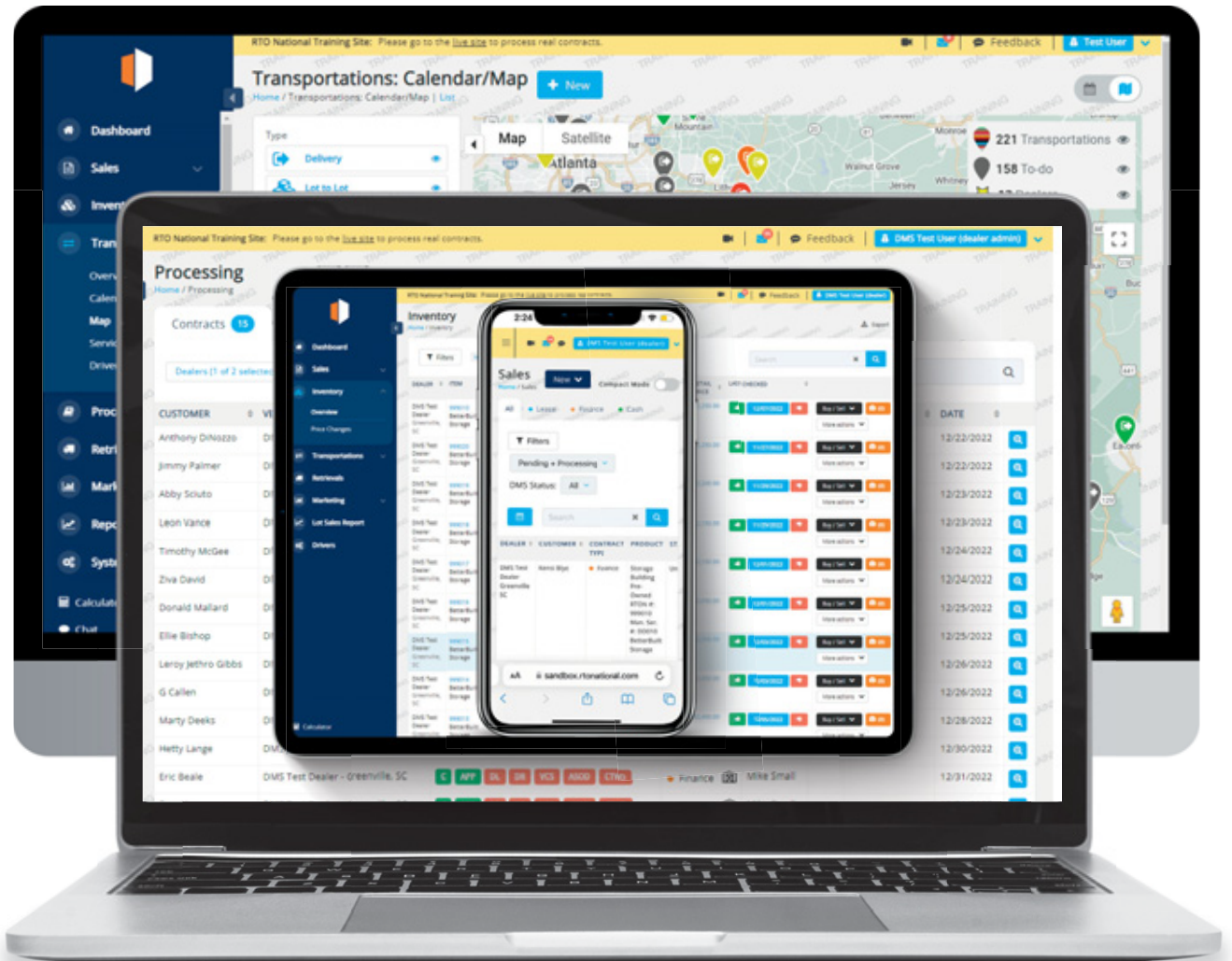


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platform Shed University) said the shed itself, and the components used to make it, are seldom the cause of call-backs related to shed warranties. “Rather, sagging and leveling issues are usually the cause of problems later, and often it’s because the homeowner wants to place the shed in a place where it doesn’t belong.”

His company offers a good warranty for a shed seller: lifetime on workmanship, and decades-long warranties for parts like metal roofs. When the company sells a shed, though, Black said it stresses that the sagging and leveling issues are not covered by the warranty.

### Quality Workmanship

The successful craftsmanship and installation of a shed affect its long life. Eaton said that “while the installation isn’t as critical as the materials themselves, that doesn’t negate its importance. Making sure that all the materials are attached as designed is very important.”

Prolonged water exposure is a bane to sheds’ existence. This is especially so with wooden sheds because wood expands and contracts when it absorbs moisture. Because of this, making sure the roof and walls are attached and sealed properly is very important. If wooden sheds are sealed correctly, the seal acts as protection from weather. “[This means] screwing metal with long enough screws, sealing the LP SmartSiding with caulk at every lap, and nailing it on the studs per the recommended standards,” Eaton added.

“A lot of times builders do not properly flash horizontal trims, therefore reducing the lifespan of the product because it is not properly sealed,” Hudson said. “Products such as LP SmartSide Trim installed horizontally require a proper flashing be installed over the top edge to help prevent moisture intrusion.”

Implementing quality control during shed installation will not only ensure its long life but also will help prevent callbacks. Easton said having an in-depth, multifaceted, quality control process



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHEROKEE STRUCTURES



is the last defense against any possible things that might have been missed. “Having one designated QC can help create consistency and also helps to set the expectations that must be met by the manufacturing team.”

### A Dynamic Design

Can a specific design actually boost shelf longevity? Yes, Tharp said, asserting that “classic styling combined with materials and finishes designed for long-term outdoor use are the key to a long-lasting shed.”

From a design standpoint, one of the most important aspects of a shed is the doors. “If they aren’t designed correctly, there will be gaps in the top and bottom of the doors,” said Eaton. “Over time, this could allow moisture to get inside of the shed. Another common mistake is the way the doors are framed. Some companies will frame their doors with the 2” x 4”s all flat instead of having some framed on edge as well. This creates a much more rigid door and doesn’t allow them to warp nearly as quickly.” **GSCB**



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# Building a Strong Year

## Mid-Year State of the Industry Insights

BY LINDA SCHMID

**L**ast year was successful for most of the construction industry, but in the last quarter of the year, predictions were made by many industry and economic experts that 2023 was going to be a let-down after that flurry of construction activity. Are those predictions coming true? How do these experts see the rest of the year panning out? And what, if anything, can individual companies do to make themselves more economy-proof?

### Current Strengths and Weaknesses

Jay Lara, COO of Carport Central, says that the residential market is not as robust as they expected, meanwhile the commercial market is steady, but is slowly seeing the signs of lending stress.

Buddy Pullen, Regional Sales Manager at AmeriLux says that units and sales are down, but it is what most people expected as the pandemic ended and everything opened up again.

“Higher interest rates make the ‘repair or replace’ question much more important,” Pullen said, “and in the current condition, I feel like end users will focus more on home

improvement and upgrading versus purchasing a new home.”

That would seem to bode well for the garage, shed, and carport industry, since extra space is often one of the reasons for a home upgrade. Instead, perhaps homeowners will invest in a shed or a garage expansion.

Mike O’Hara, National Sales Manager, believes that the state

of the economy has had limited effect on pole barn building. He says that as a representative of a company that participates in “an interesting niche market that spans residential, commercial, ag, and shed, they really haven’t been negatively affected by the economy yet.”

Even the metal and lumber pricing fluctuations haven’t negatively impacted projects according to O’Hara.

Renee Ramey, Executive Director of the Metal Roofing Alliance, comments, “We are seeing a subsection of the residential

market slow a bit due to the economic climate, but certainly that impact has been minor up to this point.”

### CONCERN OVER INTEREST RATES VARIES BY REGION

**86%** Southwest with the highest level of concern  
**36%** Southeast with the lowest level of concern

### Interest Rates

Pullen believes that the cost of borrowing money (interest

rates) is going to be the biggest challenge for builders and contractors in 2023.

Ben Johnston, COO of Kapitus, a provider of financing for small and medium sized businesses, said, “Higher interest rates are cooling the real estate market across the country, but we continue to see strong credit demand from contractors as a shortage of affordable housing, coupled with low unemployment rates, generate demand for new housing stock.” He also sees homeowners who are locked into lower rate mortgages choosing to stay in their homes rather than selling and repurchasing in a higher rate market. These homeowners are looking to renovate existing housing stock, driving demand for contractors.”

Since spring of 2022, Johnston has seen a tightening in credit, however, which accelerated after the failures of SVB and Signature Banks. As banks become more cautious, many quality applicants, often small businesses, are unable to obtain the financing they need.

Perhaps tighter credit explains why Sean Shields of the Structural Building Components Association (SBCA) sees that single-family housing construction has returned to 2019 (pre-COVID) levels. He notes that many component manufacturers who were in a position to pivot to multi-family projects actually saw an increase early this year as near-record numbers of large projects got underway.

High-end earners who will sometimes move forward with projects regardless of the economic situation have continued to invest in real estate and home improvement.

For many, the slow start to the year is providing the opportunity to retool and retrain.

“Production equipment that has been on backorder for 12 months or more is being delivered and installed,” Shields explained. “Personnel have to be trained on these new systems, and the current conditions are favorable to getting this new capacity up and running.”

Due to the current slowdown, lumber costs have been relatively low for most grades and sizes. MSR lumber is still difficult to source in many areas of the country, though, impacting products such as floor trusses and long span roof trusses.

### Residential Vs. Commercial

However, it appears that not all construction niches are equal. Rob Haddock, CEO of S-5!, says that while residential construction has taken a geographically varied hit, other sectors are doing well.

“The commercial/industrial space is still reasonably robust, especially in manufacturing and data center related construction. The agricultural marketplace is on stable ground,

pardon the pun,” Haddock said.

“Obviously, the economy has dampened real property commerce because of interest rate increases, but the *uncertainty* of economic stability going forward has played the greatest role in dampening the construction economy”, Haddock said.

Keith Dietzen, CEO of Keymark, said that it’s a bit of a surprise how strong the post-frame and roofing industries have remained while interest rates have gone from near zero to the highest in many years.”

He hasn’t seen that the Federal Reserve’s interest rate adjustments have affected business much currently. “My customers all report a very strong book of business,” he said.

### The Forecast

Tom Bowne, Chief Economist for the Freedonia Group (a division of MarketResearch.com, Inc.) has this to say: “We expect that residential construction activity will face a number of headwinds in 2023. As the Federal Reserve

maintains its tighter monetary policy in an effort to keep expectations of future inflation from rising, mortgage interest rates will remain elevated, constraining housing demand. Smaller regional banks are likely to be less eager to make construction loans while these banks’ balance sheets are under increased scrutiny. That tighter lending environment will weigh on builders’ and contractors’ ability to finance projects.”

Later in the year, however, there is a chance that the Federal Reserve may ease monetary policy somewhat, offering some relief for mortgage lending he said. The other factor that will likely

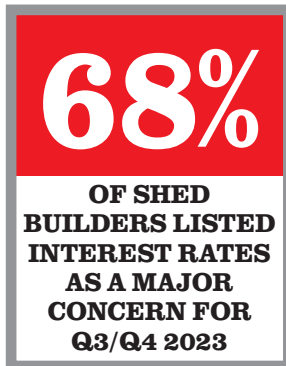
provide a boost to new construction as 2023 progresses, Bowne continued, is the aforementioned lock-in effect of existing homeowners with low mortgage interest rates retaining ownership. The lack of available houses will create new home construction demands for newly formed households.

Lara of Carport Central comments that presidential elections increasingly affect the economy and people’s decisions to make purchases or start new projects. Pullen agrees.

“With an election cycle around the corner, I expect a drop in interest rates next year which will bump volume,” Pullen said. “As far as the remainder of ’23, I am expecting a sustained trend of slowing volume while end users wait on that interest rate drop.”

Shield says that component manufacturers as a group expect the last half of 2023 to pick up. There is concern that many projects will be started within the same time frames, thereby straining supply chains and causing volatility in the lumber and steel markets. Further, hiring and training enough people to service a spike in demand could be problematic.

Component manufacturers advise builders and developers to avoid a “wait and see” attitude, according to Shields. “By the





time you realize that a lot of projects are going forward, it's likely too late to get a good place in line which can lead to many delays such as material or production capacity shortages."

Lara states that one of the biggest challenges for most contractors now and going forward is the small size of the labor pool. Dietzen concurs that the labor shortage will continue to be problematic. He advises employers to automate as much as they can.

"My best advice to contractors is to automate," Dietzen stated. "One of the most effective ways to address the labor challenge is to use software systems that

can automatically generate necessary information that otherwise would require many hours of toil from team members who are already more than busy."

These concerns may be inapplicable, at least in the short term, as Johnston warns that the SVB and Signature Bank failures have made everyone more cautious and if interest rates continue to rise, participation by those paying the bills may dissipate. More likely they will continue to build and invest, but they will be looking for price concessions and better overall terms Johnston said.

Johnston's group sees trouble ahead for the commercial market as remote

work becomes a permanent fixture in American life and many long-term leases expire.

Bowne feels the outcome of that trend is uncertain. He put it this way: "Office construction is expected to see below-average activity for a few more years as businesses continue to sort out staffing arrangements (in-person vs. hybrid) and their need for space to handle their personnel."

He expects that the non-residential construction markets in general may face a bit of a downturn similar to the residential market later this year based on the difficulty in obtaining construction financing.

"Activity in retail building construction will be dampened if consumer confidence and overall economic activity weaken during the middle part of 2023," Bowne said.

However, he did offer some hope for light manufacturing. "Construction of light manufacturing facilities will continue to be aided by efforts to improve supply chains, which could induce some reshoring of manufacturing activity," he concluded.

Lara already sees this happening with domestic manufacturing increasing mainly in steel related activities.

## **Building a Stronger Business**

What should companies do to improve or maintain their success going forward?

O'Hara advises partnering with suppliers to work together for better outcomes. They can offer such insight as when it is best to buy the supplies you need.

Lara suggests leveraging lending partners to find clientele. When the economy is not at its strongest, lending options can entice people who were previously undecided.

Pullen thinks that favorable financing options for customers will help, but he also advises that companies "minimize expenses, get lean, and protect cash flow."



PHOTO COURTESY SHARON THATCHER

**GSC SUBSCRIBERS HAVE A MORE POSITIVE OUTLOOK THAN MANY SHED BUILDERS**

**76%** Of GSCB subscribers anticipate the general business climate staying the same or improving

**60%** Of shed builders in general

Ramey said, “We anticipate the importance of environmentally-friendly building materials will continue to drive the market toward products that are sustainable, offer longevity, and provide benefits in the extreme weather conditions we continue to see happening throughout the U.S. and Canada.”

Pullen chimes in, “as the industry and our society trends to greener and more environmentally friendly methods and materials, manufacturers who do not share that view will be left

behind.”

Increased interest in energy efficiency makes a good case for Haddock’s advice. He says builder/contractors should be proactive and provide themselves a Plan B in case their usual revenue takes a dip; for example the installation of solar photovoltaic products.

Two trends that Dietzen has observed seem to bode well for the future: more and more roofing contractors are adding metal roofing to their service menu, and consumer demand for barndominiums is growing. “There is real opportunity in these markets,” Dietzen said. Perhaps they are more good Plan B options.

With some materials’ price fluctuations making estimation difficult, O’Hara had this to say: “Don’t just bid on projects to keep your crew busy. Know your numbers and take the emotion out of the estimating oprocess. Then be all-in on projects as the best advertising is word of mouth and repeat customers.”

Speaking of advertising, a good marketing plan can also go a long way to boost your business when the rain sets in, and Lara advises companies to increase their marketing efforts. You want your company’s name to be the one that comes to mind when the service you offer is needed, he said. **GSCB**

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PHOTO COURTESY OF KOHLER

# Beautiful Bathrooms

Kohler Shares the Trends

BY LINDA SCHMID

## Consumer Mindsets

In a recent Kantar and Kohler market research study, the majority of participants said the bathroom is a place where they can escape when life becomes too hectic, according to Carrie Seymour, Director of Consumer Insights. Consequently, bathrooms are a popular focus of renovation.

Renovation of existing bathrooms is far more popular than building a new bathroom within existing space or adding on to the house to create a bathroom, Bill Kozlik, Kohler Co. Associate Director of Builder and Trade Marketing, said. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people spent a lot of time at home

and it led to some critical thinking about home spaces and how they could be more functional based on better designs. For instance, many people felt their bathrooms could be set up more efficiently, Seymour chimed in. For example, double basins can allow two people to function at the same time, brushing teeth, shaving, washing up, etc.

Largely because the real estate market is not conducive to upgrading their residence, many homeowners are thinking about longevity, what their utilitarian needs are in the house they may be living in for a long time to come. That doesn't mean that luxury is necessarily taking a back seat. Many are building

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## Floating Toilets

Ronn Jefferson, Product Manager at Geberit says that bathroom renovations are big this year because increasing interest rates are motivating people to keep the homes they have and improve them. One way they are attempting to do that is making better use of the space. He says it's all about reorganizing for work from home, or being home more often, and getting the most enjoyment from it.

That's where the floating toilet comes in. A floating toilet doesn't really float, of course, but by installing the tank inside the wall with the toilet wall-mounted, you save space and it can look quite sleek.

You've probably seen floating toilets before; they are sometimes installed in public restrooms in airports and hotels among other places, and they have been popular in multi-unit residential projects where space is at a premium and quite expensive.

"The biggest benefit," Jefferson says, "is space gain. It opens space up an additional 6"-10" which may not seem like much, but psychologically it gives a feeling of spaciousness and comfort. It's very popular in powder rooms."

People also like how easy it is to clean. With no fixtures on the floor to try to wipe down and get behind in a small space, people can just "swiffer" under them, Jefferson said. The designs are rimless and more hygienic; every place that dust or debris might collect is taken out of the equation if at all possible, and tucked into the wall.

Height is flexible with these toilets, making them a comfortable choice for older adults and it is very adaptable to ADA guidelines.

Maintenance and repairs are easily accomplished. The portion inside the wall is fronted by a decorative piece that can be removed to access the tank.

The toilets have lifetime warranties, and Jefferson says that the first floating toilets were installed by Geberit in 1964. They were replaced fifty years later — not because there was a problem, but because the building was being renovated.

Like any option, there are some drawbacks. It's a new learning process for the installer; you have to open the wall, and you may have to move plumbing or studs around to fit the system in the wall, which means a little extra work and cost. You will have to plan for this. However, no one has to figure it out alone as the company offers training, in person or on demand, and this elegant yet elderly-friendly option may be just what the homeowner is looking for.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KOHLER

their "dream bathroom." It does mean that they are thinking about what they will need in order to stay in their homes as they grow older.

That's not just Baby Boomers. Research suggests that 74% of homeowners are thinking about modifying their homes to accommodate themselves as they age, Seymour said.

### Tubs & Showers

With aging-in-place on their minds, many homeowners are focused on main-floor bathrooms with accessible showering and bathing said Megan Rapp, Kohler Co. Associate Trade Manager.

Kozlik states that "showers continue to drive bathroom remodeling demand from the consumer perspective, both in terms of improving design and functionality in existing spaces."

However, tubs are very important to many people; an "escape" usually means a relaxing bath and a spa-like shower to consumers, Seymour said.

"Wet rooms where a freestanding bath is installed within the shower enclosure continue to shine within luxury homes, both in new builds and remodels," said Marla Krippendorf, Manager, Builder.

# From One Builder to Another

Zach Larison, owner of AZ Custom Remodeling, LLC, Atwood, Kansas, sees renovation through a Midwest lens; his renovation work is spread across central to northwest Kansas and southwestern Nebraska. Bathroom renovations are popular now as he says that people want a change and when they decide to invest in renovating their home they want a big bang for their buck.

“Kitchens are more complicated,” Larison said, “and more expensive. In a bathroom you can make a lot of cool changes for a lower price.”

## The Trends:

- Most popular colors are grays, blacks and some brown
- Hardware is trending to brushed bronze and flat black
- Flexstone showers, marble, or inserts in neutrals, browns and off-whites
- Tile showers in everything from brown ceramic to white porcelain marble with black veining
- Pre-cast sinks with “stone slab look” vanity top
- Glass sink bowls on real marble tops
- Tile floors
- Click-together waterproof, wood-look tiles
- Bidet built-in toilets with heated seats and remotes

## The Challenges:

The biggest challenge that Larison comes across is faulty caulking. Take your time and get a good seal, he advised.

### Other Errors:

- Liquid nail used instead of pinset for tile
- Joints were not mudded
- Leakage develops between tile and drain because the installer didn't use PVC glue.
- Vapor barrier was not used.
- One or several of the previous errors combined caused water damage in the walls or in the subfloor and now mold has developed.

Larison says that telling a homeowner they have mold is a tough conversation because they likely had no idea there was a problem when they budgeted for this renovation, and now they are going to have to pay for structural work. Sometimes they can help the customer out with payment plans, he said, but sometimes customers have to revise their plans.

To avoid these errors, Larison advises that builders take their time and do their research on the products they plan to use to ensure they are making the right choice. Also, he recommends watching the videos online on YouTube and manufacturers' websites that will show you how to use the product correctly.

Taking the time to research will help things go more smoothly, avoiding material waste and keeping errors down.

Finally, Larison said, “Bathrooms are wet; you can't over-do the vapor barrier. Make sure you have a good water seal.” **GSCB**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AZ CUSTOM REMODELING, LLC.





### Hardware, Tiles, Floors and Countertops

Sleek and contemporary looks are the order of things for hardware. Faucet collections in matte black and brushed brass continue to grow in popularity, according to Krippendorf.

Are older colors and designs making an appearance? People who want something unusual may tap into a retro vibe.

“For our 150th anniversary, we are bringing retro colors out of our archives!” Krippendorf said. “We held a vote of six popular colors and Peachblow and Spring Green were the winners.”

The trendy look and feel for the bath is moving into natural materials. Kozlik said that people are creating spaces that feel like they are bringing the outdoors into the bath. This striving to feel connected to the natural world began during COVID when people often felt disconnected from each other and they turned to nature for comfort and inspiration.

This trend has continued as our culture has recovered from the disruption in our lives that the pandemic caused. “Wood, natural stones, and metals are design trends for 2023,” Kozlik said. Pair these materials for floors and countertops with natural colors throughout and you will have a very spa-like space.

### Making the Dollars Make Sense

Kohler’s research shows that homeowners generally prefer to “splurge” on bathroom renovation rather than other areas of the house. “In an economic climate where people feel like they have to choose, the bathroom is a priority because of its role in creating a calming, spa-like environment within the home,” Seymour posits.

“Consumers are prioritizing the bathroom space, but weighing those wants and needs against declining home values, increasing interest rates, and significantly higher cost for building materials (the latter is the biggest concern for homeowners looking to remodel).”

A builder or contractor, therefore, should try to ensure that

the homeowner has thought through what they really want. Will they use a free-standing tub? According to Kozlik, utility should not be sacrificed for aesthetics. However, if aesthetics are the focus for the customer, and the elegance of a freestanding tub is truly what they want, then that is what they should get.

Talk to them about use of the space and ensure that the layout will work efficiently for those who will be using it. Consider the details, Seymour advises. Think about such things like outlet placement. If an outlet is placed near the toilet, for example, a smart toilet with bidet functionality is an option.

“Another consideration that is often overlooked is how easily a client can save water by installing lower GPM showerheads or lower GPF toilets which save water without sacrificing performance,” Seymour said.

For assistance in designing a bathroom, Rapp suggests that contractors work with designers who know how to develop a space tailored to the client’s needs. Kohler also offers a Bath Design Service to help navigate all of the decisions that must be made when renovating a bathroom. [GSCB](#)





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Peachblow (left) and Spring Green (right) were winners in a recent poll by Kohler choosing retro colors from its archives.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF SOLATUBE

# Two Views of Daylighting Systems

## Totally Tubular: Benefits of Solatube and Similar Products

BY LINDA SCHMID

**T**here are many reasons for daylighting systems: reduced energy usage, cost savings, the effect of natural light on the aesthetics of a space, and the resultant mood-brightening that many experience. There are, however, even greater benefits to be gained depending on the use of the space.

People experience improved cognition and recuperation times when exposed to natural light, said Neall Digert, Ph.D., MIES, Vice President, Innovation and Market Development, Kingspan Light + Air North America. Daylighting has also been known to reduce the need for pain killers, he added. Naturally, these are great reasons to incorporate daylighting into health care settings.

The benefits translate well to schools and offices. The visual cues of daylight

affect both human psychology and physiology, and the effects tend to be happier students and employees who have increased productivity throughout much of the day.

In retail settings, the benefits are not only happier employees but customers who are likely having a more positive experience in the store and whose instincts tell them that the color of the apparel they are looking at will not change when they leave the store.





Daylighting systems can bring natural light into educational spaces. PHOTO COURTESY OF SOLATUBE

Institutional and civic buildings, convention centers, sports arenas, manufacturing and warehousing, in fact any building which people spend any amount of time in, can derive benefits from natural daylighting. Of course, residences — both singular and multi-residence housing — can be dramatically improved with natural lighting.

That said, many would point out that windows offer the same benefits. However it is not that simple.

Contrary to what one might think, the benefits we are talking about here have nothing to do with improved levels of vitamin D. Vitamin D is manufactured in the skin when exposed to ultraviolet (UV) light, however we all know that

UV can also lead to health problems, specifically skin damage. UV light also tends to fade colors, so daylighting systems like Solatube filter UV out of the light that is permitted into a building. Instead, it is the tuning of spectral content that leads to improvements in cognition, neural energy, and mood, according to Digert.

Tubular daylighting selectively captures sunlight, stripping it of ultraviolet light and heat. It redistributes this filtered light in an interesting way, redirecting it like a duct guides air through a structure. The reflective surface inside the tube allows the light to traverse straightaways, angles, and 90-degree turns as it runs through ceilings and

walls with minimal light loss. The light can be dimmed as it comes through the ceiling fixture and even directed to highlight a wall or a table display.

The light may be softer or stronger due to the day's natural light but there are no shifting beams of light, and the level can be adjusted to be comfortable.

The daylighting system and the electrical light sources system can be incorporated into one so that the source of filtered daylight during daytime hours becomes the source of electric light when day is done.

The challenge that everyone expects with daylighting is leakage. Naturally, these systems are designed to be leak-proof. The Solatube tubular daylighting devices are designed such that all openings into the building are protected, with glazing materials overlapping and encapsulating any internal opening of the building to ensure that water cannot find its way inside. Additionally, the daylighting system's flashings use a special sealant that maintains flexibility over time for all points of contact with the building envelope. As a result, future movements in the building roof and/or structure will typically not cause future leaks to occur.

Tom Larwa, Vice President, Customer Experience, Kingspan Light + Air North America, and Digert concur that these systems can have very long lives. "We've seen the Solatube in use for decades without any issue, Digert concluded.

## The Contractor's Viewpoint

BY DAYSTAR

**N**atural sunlight has long been known to be superior to any kind of artificial light source. It contains the full spectrum of colors and studies show that people are generally happier and healthier living, working, and shopping in sunlit environments.

As a result, business and warehouse owners are turning to daylighting systems to reduce and sometimes even eliminate

the need for artificial lighting during the day. Daylighting systems, which passively harness and enhance the sun's light, are not simple skylights. Rather, applying physics to standard glass domes facilitates and diffuses the light entering a building without harshness or glare.

One example of these daylighting systems is DayStar. Their system is composed of four parts. First, sunlight is gathered and diffused through an ultra-clear outer dome and inner collimation lens. A light shaft made of insulated panels with highly reflective



## Daylighting Product Suppliers

• DayStar Natural Lighting Systems	<a href="http://allenconsultinggroup.net/product/daystar-daylighting/">allenconsultinggroup.net/product/daystar-daylighting/</a>
• AmeriLux International	<a href="http://ameriluxinternational.com">ameriluxinternational.com</a>
• Onduline	<a href="http://www.ondulinenorthamerica.com">www.ondulinenorthamerica.com</a>
• Klar	<a href="http://klar.us.com">klar.us.com</a>
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• Solatube International	<a href="http://solatube.com">solatube.com</a>
• Advanced Glazings (Solera)	<a href="http://advancedglazings.com">advancedglazings.com</a>
• MWI Components	<a href="http://mwicomponents.com">mwicomponents.com</a>

interior surfaces amplifies natural light as it is captured. And finally, a ceiling lens, engineered to diffuse highly concentrated light into a broad lighting pattern, is installed on the interior ceiling.

### Avoiding Leakage

The contractor is usually focused on two things: ease of installation and reliability. The contractor's prime concern typically is "after the job, can I sleep at night without worrying about getting a callback for leakage after the first rain?"

After all, any penetration of a watertight roof membrane can introduce a potential pathway for water, which no one wants. So, contractors need to trust that the systems they install will have a high level of leak-free integrity.

One way to ensure leak prevention is to begin with a properly installed essential roof curb that ensures the daylighting components have a level platform for attachment. Rooftop curbs are raised metal frames designed for mounting structures safely to the roof. Some skylights are comprised of a dome with pre-attached metal flashing, which the contractor cuts around to fit



**Business and warehouse owners are turning to daylighting systems to reduce and sometimes even eliminate the need for artificial lighting during the day.** PHOTO COURTESY OF DAYSTAR

into an opening, and then seals with caulk. This arrangement requires the contractor to be very careful when installing.

Insulated roof curbs made of galvalume steel or aluminum with continuously welded watertight seams work well to stop leakage. Fit the curb to the roof pitch and metal rib design. A system may also come in regular slope and ridge-mounted versions. Rib caps may be supplied to fit the roof panel and mastic sealant should be applied between the roof curb flange and roof metal.

A manufacturer that will work with you on different configurations to make the system function well with different roofs or roof profiles can help facilitate leak-free installation according to Jonas Yoder, owner of JY Construction and a 30-year contractor.

### Thermal Efficiency

After concerns about potential water leaks, many contractors seek a system that will prevent outdoor hot or cold air intrusion, or transfer through the components. Features that can help with thermal efficiency include an insulated roof curb, a double-glazed top dome with a vinyl thermal barrier, an insulated light shaft and lens, which can provide a great thermal value. In addition, these enhancements can create a system that has a low solar heat gain coefficient (SHGC) as well as U Values (a measure of insulating performance) that are over twice the thermal efficiency ratings of some common skylights. This means the customer will lose less heat in the winter and gain less heat in the summer.

### Installation Instructions

The daylighting installation process is quite simple, and a contractor does not need any special experience to perform an expert job. The installation instructions from the manufacturer should make it easy to install, step by step. If it is not, contact the manufacturer and ask questions.

### Trust Earned

If you follow the instructions and the system has problems, the manufacturer should always stand behind their product. Of course, the hope is that you will not have to ask them to do that because the system performs reliably over the long term. If you have no experience with a product, see what other contractors have to say.

Yoder says he originally installed 40 DayStar systems in a 24,000 sq. ft. pre-engineered steel building about 10 years ago. "Now, the same, industrial warehouse customer is looking to build another 9,000 sq. ft. structure with 12 more daylight systems. In my mind, that shows long-term value and reliability," he concludes. **GSCB**

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# Legendary Sales Strategy

## Outdoor Options Focuses on Service and Professionalism to Build Its Shed Sales Business

BY SHANNON LATHAM, THE SHED GEEK

**S**ometimes fate decides that you are going to do something different than you imagined. That certainly happened with Anthony Mitchell and his wife, Jessica.

Anthony and Jessica were attending flight school together. To keep the bills paid, Anthony started hauling sheds part-time. “The rest, as they say, is history,” Anthony said. They’ve now been running Outdoor Options, a shed sales business, since 2012. “Prior to 2017, we were pursuing a dealer model, but that changed into growing an in-house sales team,” he said.

Let’s learn about Outdoor Options, and also learn what other shed sellers can glean from the Mitchell’s success.

### What products and services do you provide?

“We sell and deliver all our sheds, chicken coops, doghouses, greenhouses, and traditional portable structures. We also sell steel tube carports and other steel tube structures; however, delivery and setup are arranged by the vendor.”

### What is your current territory?

“The steel tube buildings can be sold into multiple states, however our particular territory for shed sales has an



immediate and deliberate focus on the state of Georgia, until which time we can expand.”

### What is the current business climate in your area?

“The area is growing so the market is growing, too. As we like to say, the customers are hiring. There is a lot of new home construction around the lake area, and there is a lot of new industry coming to the area. We do not have the housing to meet the demand for the influx of new people to the area so outside of the lake

area we need housing, and we want to service those customers.”

### What is your primary customer base?

It is residential, agricultural, commercial, light industrial?

“We primarily service the residential customer; however, we have had some success working with municipalities. We have worked with the Atlanta Police Department, and other government agencies. We have also seen success in areas such as business-to-business rela-

tionships.

“Although the bulk of our customer base has been residential shoppers looking for traditional storage, we have found that a team focused on selling allows opportunity for creativity. We are looking for customers who are hiring in traditional and non-traditional capacities.”

### **How do you differentiate yourself from your competitors?**

“We do have several companies that sell competing products. We believe the difference in products is only a portion of our brand. We focus on offering an internal service experience known in-house as ‘Legendary customer service.’

From the first point of contact to delivery we set an expectation of customer service. We place a lot of emphasis on our team’s appearance -- we dress like a professional sales staff, we make sure the desk is clean and tidy.

“Part of ‘Legendary customer service’ is maintaining the grounds. We keep our buildings tidy, lined up, and easy to access. We keep the grass mowed and landscaped. We believe that by showing ‘Legendary’ care for ourselves, our processes, our sheds, and our lot, that we are building confidence in the customer that we will do more than just take their order. We are here to meet and exceed their expectations.”

Tell us the challenges the company has overcome, and how did you do that?

“When we began, we started with a consignment model, and we quickly realized we couldn’t offer every product the market demanded. Because we were selling buildings for a partner company, there were,



Sales professional  
**Robert Shinholster**

and still are often, limitations on what other products can be offered, whether by the company or simply being spread too thin.

“We then decided that moving to a wholesale model would help us meet the demand. By being able to purchase our buildings, it allowed for more control over the whole process from sale to delivery. There is also the bonus of establishing your own retail price of the structure, which has several benefits of its own.”

### **Similarly, to what do you owe the success of your business?**

“Not only changing from a dealer model to wholesale, but also focusing on the sales process, and an intentional building of the sales team with a focus on Legendary customer service. Through that process we have learned that referrals are largely underutilized within the industry. Your current customer is one of the best sales tools available to you.

“We find that by providing Legendary customer service



Sales professional  
**Todd Tirko**



it, reverberates from your sphere of influence into your customers sphere of influence. A customer receiving Legendary customer service is going to share their experience in private with those they know and trust.”

### **What would you tell yourself three years ago or five years ago if you could?**

Two words: Staffing and documentation. You need to continue to staff your farm of potential sales team with great candidates to choose from. We found that as we grow you need a system. You need to be able to put key employees into key positions, and you need to fill not just one, but depending on who fills those positions you need to keep the flow moving. As growth or change happens, you need to be ahead of the curve with talented and capable sales staff. To add to



that, documentation is key. If you wait to get organized as the rush happens, you are behind the 8 ball. Catching up can be a nightmare, and you find you are only as good as the processes you have built.”

### **What is your advice to somebody who is brand new in your line of business?**

“Track your leads and your customers from the beginning. Keep good records and use a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system to store information. Keep up with what they want, and follow up, follow up, follow up. Just because they are not a customer today, does not mean they are not a customer for the future.”

### **Where do you see the biggest opportunities in the coming months? Coming years?**

“Overcoming the customers apprehension to purchase a shed online. While selling online is not the primary way in which customers purchase, I do believe that we can do more than just trying to sell online. We can find ways to offer Legendary customer service online as well. We don’t want to just be an order taker; we want to be able to completely walk the customer through the process and build a system that is satisfactory using the online sales modes just as we have in-person.”



Anthony Mitchell

### **Where do you see the biggest challenges in the coming months? Coming years?**

“Finding and keeping qualified and motivated sales professionals. Often candidates see shed sales to get by or something to do when retiring. However, it doesn’t seem to be common knowledge that shed sales can be a very viable opportunity that can make for a very



fulfilling career. It is fun, the industry is growing, and with the right attitude and willingness to learn, shed sales professionals can attain well-above-average salaries through sales commissions with minimal formal education. It starts with showing up, learning, and then a focus on providing Legendary customer service.”

### **What are the things that you are not good at and would love to learn more about?**

“I don’t think most people understand what it takes to motivate a team. Complacency is one of the struggles of a team. We strive to find every way to qualify and keep good candidates for shed selling. Finding ways to be better at building synergy within a team is something I always want to learn more about.”

### **What are your Three Keys to Good Business?**

1) Transparency. It is imperative to be transparent with your team, vendors, customers and all who touch your business. Without transparency you build a foundation of doubt.

2) Grit. If you give up at the first sign of difficulty, the shed industry may not be your best fit. You must have grit; it is the main ingredient to success.

3) Education. Never stop learning. We never have it figured out; we succeed with the knowledge we have until more

knowledge opens new opportunities.

### **What are your business goals for the future? Plans for expansion?**

“We would love to build an indoor shed showroom for customers. We can make that viewable either in-person or a virtual experience for customers.”

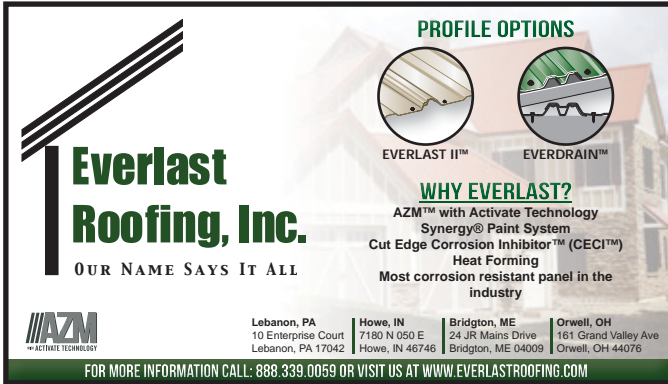
### **Tell us about your company culture and business philosophy.**

“We love to have fun. The workplace is not just a place of business. We work in retail, so the public is our canvas. The picture we want to paint is one of trust, Legendary customer service, availability, and partnership that infiltrates their sphere of influence.

“We strive to provide a Legendary workplace where all associates feel they can paint their own picture of success. We want them to feel accomplished through their work. Just as we want the customer to feel satisfied in their purchase. It’s all about providing a Legendary experience.” **GSCB**

*Shannon Latham is a 6-year veteran of the shed industry. He has served as sales manager, quality control, and RTO dealer support specialist, among other roles. He hosts the Shed Geek Podcast [shedgeek.com/] and has a desire to help move the shed industry forward.*





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## GARAGE OF THE MONTH



# Custom Metal Garage

Pioneer Pole Buildings • [www.pioneerpolebuildings.com](http://www.pioneerpolebuildings.com)

Everlast Metals • [www.everlastmetals.com](http://www.everlastmetals.com)

**T**his garage by Pioneer Pole Buildings was built to match the other buildings on the property and features a few really cool upgrades like the fun, cow-accented weathervane on the cupola. The customer saw a building they liked on the Pioneer website and used it as the idea-starter.

Everlast Metals supplied the siding and roof metals, as it usually does with a Pioneer Pole Buildings project.

The upgrades also included some smart choices for the long term like a vapor barrier and snow guards for the metal roof. The buyers also added gutters, which aren't always included with a building like this. **GSCB**





## 🏠 GARAGE OF THE MONTH 🏠



### The Details:

**Builder:** Pioneer Pole Buildings

**Size:** 34' x 36' x 12' with 18" gables and eaves

**Roof:** Everlast Metals 27g  
Pioneer Frontier Panel, Black

**Siding:** Everlast Metals 28g  
Pioneer Frontier Panel, Red

**Trusses:** Universal Forest Products

**Insulation:** SIMCO Bubble Insulation  
via High Mark Supply

**Doors:** Therma-Tru 3068 Fiberglass  
Insulated Entry Door (1)

9' x 8' Classic Raised Short Panel  
Insulated Doors (3)

8' x 8' Classic Raised Short Panel  
Insulated Door (1)

**Windows:** United Windows & Doors, Single-Hung  
Insulated White Window with Grids & Screen (5)

**Ridge Vent & Snow Guards:** Everlast Metals

**Fasteners:** Everlast Metals Answer Screws

**Soffit:** Premier Metals Post-Frame Soffit

**Additional Details:** Cupola with cow-design  
weathervane by Slate Road



# “Innovation is What We Do.”

## Beck: A Company Built on Problem-Solving

BY LINDA SCHMID

**O**ne hundred and nineteen years is a long time. It’s longer than many man-made things endure, but once in a while you find something that not only survives that long, it remains relevant and maybe even operates at the cutting edge. Beck is one of those things.

In 1904, Karl Beck started the family business as a print store. As a trained printer and businessman, his son Raimund Beck very quickly realized that there was going to be a great demand for the stapling of high-quality print products in the future. Therefore, in 1933, he secured the production rights in accordance with the patent and began manufacturing the world’s first collated staples. In doing so, he laid the foundation of the family business.

In 1970, Beck introduced the first collated nails and then introduced four more different types of collated nails.

Raimund’s son, Gunther, took over the company in 1976 and he led the way to international expansion. The company worked to standardize their offering to the industry so that their fasteners could be used in many brands of pneumatic



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nailers. Prior to this invention, you had to have different machines to use different fasteners. The machines, at that time, weren’t the hand-held tools that people use today; they were big. Therefore, it was very handy to have standardized fasteners so you didn’t have to have extra machines just to handle different fasteners.

During this period of expansion, Beck fasteners came to America. Today, the American branch of the company has sales teams across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

### Fastening Today

The versatility that Gunther brought to Beck fasteners continues to this day, according to April Clohessey, Marketing Manager.

“Our nails can be used in many other brands’ nailers, though we also have our own tools,” Clohessey said.

Their signature product is the Scrail®. A combination of a nail and a screw, it features unique threading, a diamond coating, and it can be pulled out undamaged, if used in a pneumatic screw driver, to be reused.

## The Framework of Innovation

The company thrives on innovation, which usually comes about in one of two ways. First, the sales team working with customers consults on problems they are experiencing and the R & D team creates a new tool or fastener to solve this problem. The second way that innovative products come about is through striving for sustainable solutions.

One example of their innovative product is the LignoLoc®, a collated wood nail that can be shot into wood. It melds with the surrounding wood and there is no thermal bridging or contracting.

Currently, there is an emphasis on automation to assist their customers with worker shortages. For example, In Motion is a robotic machine with a long “tube” that you push across the floor like a carpet sweeper; meanwhile it shoots fasteners into the floor.

“It’s so much faster than crawling across the floor on your hands and knees,” Clohessey said.

There is always something new coming on the horizon. Clohessey states: “Innovation is what we do.”

## Working in the Eye of the Storm

With all of this invention going on, one might think the atmosphere could be stressful, but Clohessey says that is not the case. “Of course, everyone has deadlines to meet, but really we are a team. It’s very easygoing with everyone helping each other out. We all wear different hats and there is lots of camaraderie. It’s an easy place to work,” she said, “and very creative.”

Creativity is an inherent part of

working at the company, Clohessey asserted. “It’s not just in R&D, the company finds new ways to approach numbers, financing, advertising, problem solving, everything right down the line.”



**Brett McCutcheon, General Manager; Beck America and ET&F Fastening Systems**

## Introducing New Products

The biggest challenge an innovative company faces is achieving public acceptance of a new idea. For instance, when collated staples came out, they were different from the tried-and-true staples people had used for years. People had to be educated to understand the benefits and to see that it really worked.

The same challenge occurs with most new product introductions. The American public hesitated when Lignoloc wooden nails were introduced; it’s a paradigm shift. However, as people have come to understand the benefits and sustainability of the product, it has become more popular.

## Industry Challenges

The company has faced labor pool challenges, but they have been pretty successful in hiring new people for expansion.

“Our quality of products and marketing make the company attractive to prospective employees,” Clohessey said.

Supply chain issues doubled the transit time of materials sourced overseas, but people waited for their tools and fasteners. According to Clohessey, the company was highly successful throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Things are even better now; business is booming and they’ve learned to keep more stock on hand, thereby solving most of the supply chain woes.

## Innovating Into the Future

Beck really cares about helping people, Clohessey said, “so customer service and satisfaction, plus innovating to meet customer needs ... this is our mission.”

As for the future, the company intends to keep doing the same thing it’s been doing: innovating for better service, better tools for customers, and better solutions for the environment. **GSCB**



**The new SCRAIL® SPLIT.LESS SYSTEM.**



# Marketing Smart Features

Gaining Competitive Advantage in Your Local Market

BY JIM MOSIER

In today's times, the buildings we deliver are not just about providing storage solutions anymore. The market is looking for smart and efficient structures seamlessly integrated into our digitally connected lives. This paradigm shift is fueled by the advent of "smart" features that promise unprecedented convenience and functionality. Such innovations are transforming the expectations of customers who now demand more than just a shelter for their vehicles or tools, especially for those who finish their buildings into work or living spaces.

As these advanced features become the norm rather than the exception, businesses in this industry face a critical challenge: how to effectively market these new offerings in an increasingly competitive landscape. Achieving this is vital to stand out, attract and retain customers, and ultimately maintain a competitive edge in the local market.

Today, let's explore the challenges these emerging consumer expectations pose and walk through some practical ideas to help your business rise to the occasion. By understanding these dynamics and taking proactive steps, your business can meet and exceed customer expectations and set you apart from the others in your local area.



## Smart Features

What are these "smart" features? Here are a few examples that can all integrate with Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and/or Apple HomeKit:

- Smart Lighting
- Smart Climate Control Systems
- Smart Security Systems
- Smart Garage Doors

## • Smart Sensors

These smart features can be relatively inexpensive to offer as an add-on. Not only will they provide enhanced functionality and convenience for the consumer, but they will also increase the overall perceived value of the structure, making it more appealing in the potential customer's eyes than a competitor's building.

## The Shed Industry Circa 2023

Let's face it. Our industry is starting to evolve, whether we believe in smart features or not. A new generation of homeowners has risen in the past 4-5 years, and the features that define high-quality structures no longer align with the evolving expectations of younger consumers. Customers are becoming increasingly attracted to home automation and looking for more smart features in nearly everything they purchase, which promise seamless integration with their digital lives.

Why should sheds, garages, and portable buildings be any different? Honestly, traditional offerings simply lack the attraction to buyers looking to satisfy this appetite for innovation.

To put it differently, it's not just about the physical structure anymore; customers are seeking garages, sheds, and carports that function as extensions of their smart homes. They value interactive, convenient, and energy-efficient features that enhance security, customization, and utility.

One of the problems manufacturers and dealers face in this new landscape is that they struggle to differentiate their products in a saturated market. Still, this problem can quickly turn into an opportunity if competitors aren't already effectively marketing smart features. The result of no action? A potential loss of market share, reduced customer satisfaction, and a consequential impact on the bottom line. What is the benefit of getting creative and acting quickly? You open yourself to a new market that your competition may not know exists and take the first crucial step towards future-proofing your business.

In not addressing the consumer demand for smart features and continuing the status quo, it's entirely possible that you could face potential consequences that drastically impact your market position with the next generation of buyers. I would go so far as to say that ignoring the

trend toward marketing smart structures is like walking on thin ice in late winter — you may be OK for now. Still, it's only a matter of time before your marketing strategy gives way beneath you and creates an opening for your competition.

## New Revenue Streams

Beyond the obvious marketing benefits, meeting these customer demands can open entirely new revenue streams through upsells, no matter whether you are a builder or dealer. You will be entering a less-crowded market with less competition. Today's consumers are more likely to pay for the convenience of having their building delivered with the features already included rather than ordering and installing them themselves.

Considering the above, implementing this into your marketing might even be easier than you think. Builders and dealers must embrace the wave of smart features and create a robust strategy to market these innovations to customers effectively. Let's talk about some ideas you can implement to do just that.

## Tips and Tricks

First, educate yourself on technologies like smart lighting, smart-home-enabled window air conditioners, smart garage door openers, smart locks and door handles, and energy-efficient features. These investments meet customer demands and, as stated before, increase the perceived value of your structure, increasing your profit margin.

Next, developing a strategy to effectively communicate these innovations to your market will be crucial. One obvious choice is primary digital marketing channels like social media, email newsletters, and your company website. You can create compelling content, such as videos, blog posts, and social media posts highlighting your smart structures' benefits. You can promote these through paid social media ads and Google/Bing search ads if you have an advertising budget. For

search, consider terms like "smart sheds for sale near me," "garage with homekit," and "shed with digital lock."

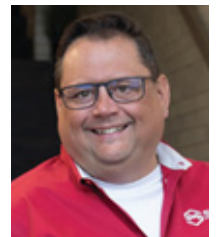
Third, don't forget to utilize customer testimonials and case studies. When you deliver that first smart building, encourage your satisfied customer to share their experience with your smart structure. Ask them to be specific about the features of the building. Also, make sure they leave these reviews on your Google Business Profile. These personal endorsements can inspire trust and prompt potential customers to choose your company over others listed.


You can also explore partnership opportunities. If you install smart solutions as a value add-on, try collaborating with technology partners to co-promote the benefits of smart features. Not only can you use this strategy to leverage the reach of your partners, but it also lends additional credibility to your offerings.

## Summary

In conclusion, the key to gaining a competitive advantage truly lies in embracing the emerging demand for smart features and effectively communicating their availability and benefits to customers. By adopting this approach, you'll take a big step in transitioning from the latest marketing challenge into tomorrow's opportunities. **GSCB**

*Jim Mosier is the founder of Shed Marketer, a digital marketing agency for the industry, and the author of the book "Selling Sheds Online: The complete guide to digital marketing for shed builders and portable building manufacturers." Learn more at [shedmarketer.com](http://shedmarketer.com).*



 For more titles, check out Shield Wall Media online: [www.shieldwallmedia.com](http://www.shieldwallmedia.com)



**Triangle Fastener Acquires CSS Fastener Business Segment**

Triangle Fastener Corporation announced that as of July 1 it had acquired a segment of the Connective Systems & Supply, Inc. business that focused on fasteners for roofing, metal building, and mechanical contractors in and around Denver. CSS has been a leading provider of fasteners and products to construction industry professionals since its founding in 1985. This segment of its business is supported by approximately 20 employees in two locations who achieved \$15 million in sales in 2022.

“The acquisition of CSS aligns with TFC’s plans for long-term business growth by developing branch locations in the western United States and expanding our catalog of proprietary TFC-branded products,” TFC said in a statement. “In addition to the pending opening of a location in San Antonio, Texas, the integration of CSS assets will bring us to a total of 27 U.S. locations, and a marked increase in our presence in the central and western United States.”

Triangle Fastener Corporation was founded as a single location in 1977 in Pittsburgh and has established more than two dozen locations and three distribution centers across the US.

**Malco Products Names Rebecca Talbot as VP/Marketing**

Malco Products, one of the nation’s leading solution developers and manufacturers of a variety of high-quality tools for the HVAC and building construction trades, announced that Rebecca Talbot has joined the company as its new vice president of marketing.

Talbot comes to Malco with a broad base of marketing accomplishments and professional experience, including positions at DeepRoot Green Infrastructure, Resideo (Honeywell) and Lakeland Companies. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Metro State University and a Master of Business Administration degree from Georgia Southwestern State University.

Talbot will succeed Nancy Gunner-

son, Malco’s director of marketing, who recently retired after a 34-year career with Malco. “We are very excited to welcome Rebecca to our team, and also wish Nancy a wonderful retirement after an incredible 30+ year career at Malco,” said Rich Benninghoff, president and CEO of Malco Products.

**Velliquette Named President of Lakeside Construction Fasteners**

Lakeside Construction Fasteners, Inc. announced the promotion of Eric J. Velliquette to President. Eric has been with Lakeside Construction Fasteners for 10 years, during which time he held the position of Vice President Sales & Marketing.

Before joining Lakeside Construction Fasteners, Eric had previously worked as the Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Atlas Bolt & Screw Company, a Marmon Holdings Inc. company, one of largest fastener manufacturing-distributors in the USA servicing the metal building industry. During his tenure with Atlas, Eric earned an MBA and selected as an adjunct professor at Ashland University’s College of Business in Ohio.

In partnership with owners John and Kyle Lane, Eric has forged continuous growth at Lakeside Construction Fasteners by providing the metal building industry with alternative product solutions, keeping quality a focus, and working to develop long-term customer relationships. Kyle Lane, CEO, said he is “confident LCF will continue with a strong future, poised to reach even greater heights under Eric’s leadership.”

**METALCON Announces 2023 Keynote Speakers**

METALCON, the only global event dedicated exclusively to the application of metal in design and construction, announces its keynote speakers for this year’s annual conference and tradeshow at the Las Vegas Convention Center from Wednesday, Oct. 18 - Friday, Oct. 20.

Contractor and Denver business owner Rico León, HGTV host of “Rico to the

Rescue,” joins the show this year as METALCON’s keynote speaker on Wednesday, October 18 at 10 a.m.

A Puerto Rican raised in Pittsburgh, his blue-collar, East Coast hard-knock surroundings cultivated his enthusiastic work ethic and success. Driven by his parents’ past experience with a crooked contractor, Rico advocates for families and resolves conflicts between emotionally and financially stressed homeowners and their builders to turn renovation and construction nightmares into dream homes. Rico and his skilled team tour each home to assess the status of projects, try to resolve issues with the builder, and create a renovation and design plan to turn the construction nightmare into a beautiful home. Rico has been on both ends, as a contractor and a homeowner, and he is not afraid to hold builders accountable.

In his keynote, Rico will share some of his most unforgettable experiences and lessons learned from residential construction projects gone wrong and then turned around, helping families navigate the process — covering the good, the bad and the ugly about construction, the insurance industry, contractors, and brutally honest advice to help everyday people. Next, he will participate in a moderated discussion by Tony Bouquot of the Metal Building Manufacturers Association, followed by audience Q&A along with a VIP meet and greet and an autograph signing.

On Thursday, October 19 at 10 a.m., Ken Simonson, chief economist of the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of America with 40+ years of experience analyzing, advocating and communicating about economic and tax issues, will explore the current state and outlook for construction in his keynote, Construction Outlook for 2024: Forbidding or Reason for Cheer? Simonson will offer his fearless forecasts regarding the conflicting trends in demand for projects, materials costs and labor availability.

Simonson has been chief economist for the AGC since 2001. **GSCB**

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GSCB AUG/SEPT 2023





**Wayne Dalton Introduces New Wood Grain Impressions Finish Collection to Classic Steel Model 8300**

Wayne Dalton’s latest innovation in garage door design: the Classic Steel Model 8300 with high-resolution digital print finishes achieves the look of real wood without sacrificing the durability of steel. The natural beauty of real wood is captured in meticulous detail through digital scanning technology, allowing design engineers to digitally construct a true non-repeating wood grain pattern.

“The value these doors bring to homeowners is through the roof. They feature an unbelievably upscale look, while benefiting from the Classic Steel collection’s long-lasting durability, and low maintenance construction,” Wayne Dalton Product Manager Chris Williams said.

Classic Steel Model 8300 is now available in four new Wood Grain Impressions finishes: Cedar Plank, Beachwood Plank, Carbon Oak Plank and Medium Oak Plank. This addition to the Classic Steel Model 8300 adds to the versatility of the product by allowing more options for any homeowner to choose from.

[www.wayne-dalton.com](http://www.wayne-dalton.com)

**Daich Coatings’ New Pre-Mixed Compound Rock Patch to Fill Holes**

Rock Patch filler, level, and resurfacer from Daich Coatings helps start new projects with a clean, smooth, level surface. Made with a tough polymer/stone formula, the pre-mixed compound comes out of the container ready to use. The cement-free product requires no messy mixing, and can be used as a prep work step on both interior and exterior surfaces. Simply pop the lid, stir and apply.

“Whether you need to fill cracks and holes on concrete walkways or smooth out the surface of a garage floor before recoating, Rock Patch is the solution,” said Peter Daich, president of Daich Coatings. “This odorless product has flexibility to it and can be worked with slowly. It doesn’t dry quickly like concrete. Take your time to smooth it into the location you wish to repair.

Then let it dry to create a rock hard surface.”

Rock Patch completely resurfaces the area needed, forming a firm bond to the underlayment. It is impact, salt, and moisture resistant. Normal cure time is 24 hours and dry times should be increased when the product is applied thick or in damp, cool conditions.

In addition to spot fixes, it can be used as a full surface base for floor paints, decorative coatings, linoleum and more. It can also be used as a flooring and be left “as is” once sealed with other coatings to protect the surface from year-round weather and stains.

[www.daichcoatings.com](http://www.daichcoatings.com)



**StaCool Industries Inc.’s StaCool Vest in Luminescent Safety Colors**

The StaCool Vest Core Body Cooling System, now available in luminescent safety colors, is helping workers beat the summer heat, allowing work zone employees to stay safe, cool, and productive despite elevated ambient temperatures. Fully adjustable models are available in safety yellow, orange, and green to wear over normal clothing, providing all-day comfort with unrivaled mobility. Under-vests are also available, to be worn under other clothing.

Easy-to-care-for, micro-thin, highly breathable materials provide wearers unsurpassed cooling comfort and mobility. ThermoPaks around vest provide hours of cooling; a spare set of ThermoPaks are included with each StaCool Vest to extend cooling time and comfort when the initial set thaws. A thermal barrier is built in to ensure wearer does not get too cold. The ThermoPaks are ideal for construction workers, road crews, welders, utility workers, power plant employees, foundry workers, industrial/manufacturing employees, and similar professions.

[www.staycoolvest.com](http://www.staycoolvest.com)



# CSI: The Good & Bad (not ugly)

**O**ur Mid-Year Survey included questions about concerns and challenges for the remainder of 2023. Some things remained constant across “All Respondents,” “Shed & Carport Builders,” and “Garage Shed & Carport Subscribers,” but there were some interesting differences.

All groups listed adding Manufacturing Equipment as a Top 5 item. Shed & Carport Builders and GSC Subscribers both listed Material Handling Equipment and Jobsite Equipment as a Top 5, while All respondents had Material Handling at #9 (with 12%) and Jobsite at #6 (with 23%).

Construction Employees didn’t make the Top 5 for either Shed & Carport Builders or GSC Subscribers. But the percentage of respondents adding them for both categories were still higher than All Respondents. All respondents had both Construction and Support Personnel added at 33%. Shed & Carport Builders had Construction (41%) and Support (43%) and GSC Subscri-

bers had Construction (65%) and Support (60%)

For challenges, the only Top concern spanning all groups was Retaining Employees. Both Shed & Carport Builders and GSC Subscribers listed Political Instability in the top 5, for All respondents it was at #13 with 22%.

While Interest Rates did not crack the Top 5 for Shed & Carport Builders it was a significant concern as reported at 47%. One other difference not demonstrated well in the Top 5 is the concern surrounding Demand for Product. GSC Subscribers had it as a Top 5. For Shed & Carport Builders it was at #12, but still at 42%. The concern for Demand among All Respondents was at 18%.

One interesting and seemingly contradictory observation is that Shed & Carport Builders and GSC Subscribers had both higher percentages associated with adding new products and services and higher percentages listing concerns, so an interesting mix of apprehension and optimism. **GSCB**

## TOP 5 LIST

### WHAT IS BEING ADDED IN 2023

All Respondents		Shed & Carport Builders		GSC Subscribers	
Employees - construction	33%	Material Handling equipment	75%	Material Handling equipment	100%
Employees - support	33%	Capital equipment (metal forming or manufacturing)	60%	Jobsite equipment	85.71%
New products or building types	30%	Manufacturing equipment	50%	Trucks	78.57%
Manufacturing equipment	28%	Jobsite equipment	43.75%	Manufacturing equipment	72.22%
Trucks	25%	Employees (support)	43.48%	Metal forming equipment	66.67%

### CONCERNS

All Respondents		Shed & Carport Builders		GSC Subscribers	
Inflation	59%	Taxes	56.25%	Interest rates	67.65%
Interest rates	51%	Political or civil unrest	53.33%	Retaining employees	66.67%
Finding employees	49%	Domestic politics and policy	52.17%	Political or civil unrest	64.29%
Cost of materials	45%	Retaining employees	50%	Finding employees	62.5%
Retaining employees	32%	Banking crisis or instability	50%	Demand for products and services	58.33%





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