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Sunny Side Up

Solar Power Offers Builders a Bright Future

Over the last century, many modern innovations were initially considered passing trends that would fade into obscurity. They included electricity, telephones, automobiles, airplanes, radio, television, and the internet. But as we know, they weren't temporary fads; they completely transformed society. Solar power may well be one of those transformative changes.

There are some great opportunities for

builders in solar system installation for those willing to learn how to break into the field. While there have been some bumps in the industry along the way, the overall direction is toward large-scale implementation of both commercial and residential solar power.

Solar power has been around for decades, but in recent years, it's gained steam because of federal and other financial incentives, reduced costs, and improved technology. Just in the last few months, there have been several scientific

breakthroughs that show potential for greatly increased solar efficiency.

Although solar power is still in its infancy, it's poised to grow exponentially, and there's a huge opening for builders. The earliest adopters will have a big advantage, so it's worth considering if this area is right for your business. For an overview of the topic, read the article that starts on page 18.

— Dan Brownell



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Multipurpose barn in the Okanagan Valley area of British Columbia, Canada. COURTESY OF S-51

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Maximizing Sales Success

The Vital Role of Sales Training in the Garage, Shed, and Carport Industry

BY RANDY CHAFFEE

In the competitive and ever-evolving landscape of the garage, shed, and carport builder industry, success hinges on more than just the quality of products. It's equally about the skill and effectiveness of the sales team. To prosper in this market, it's imperative that companies invest in comprehensive sales training programs. From in-house coaching to webinars, seminars, and podcasts, here's why sales training is invaluable to driving growth and sustaining success in this sector.

Understanding the Industry Dynamics

Before diving into the significance of sales training, it's crucial to grasp the unique dynamics of the garage, shed, and carport industry. This sector caters to diverse consumer needs, ranging from residential storage solutions to man caves, she sheds, lake-side cabins, and commercial storage solution projects. Consequently, sales professionals must possess a deep understanding of product specifications, customization options, and installation processes to effectively meet customer expectations.

Elevating Customer Experience

Sales training plays a pivotal role in enhancing the overall customer experience. Through in-depth product knowledge and refined communication skills, sales representatives can guide clients through the decision-making process with confidence and clarity. A key element is the ability to become the trusted advisor who is not simply selling a structure but assisting in facilitating a solution. This approach by well-trained sales professionals contributes to a positive buying journey, fostering trust and loyalty among customers. Let's remember, people love to buy but do not like to be sold. Equally, they wish to feel important and heard. If we learn to make use of good open-ended questions, listen, and engage in an intentional back and forth, we will learn



what the potential customers real needs are. We are assisting the customer with making the right decision and not selling them a structure.

Leveraging In-House Sales Coaches

Having seasoned, successful veterans in-house can serve as invaluable resources for nurturing talent and refining selling techniques within the organization. These veterans can serve as mentors of the industry, offer personalized guidance and feedback to sales teams, helping them overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities. By leveraging the expertise of in-house coaches, companies can cultivate a culture of continuous learning and improvement, ultimately driving sales performance and revenue growth.

Harnessing the Power of Webinars

Webinars provide a convenient platform for delivering targeted sales training content to a distributed workforce. From

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product demonstrations to sales strategies, these online sessions offer flexibility and accessibility, enabling sales professionals to enhance their skills from anywhere, at any time. Moreover, webinars facilitate interactive learning experiences, allowing participants to engage with subject matter experts and peers, exchange insights, and glean best practices for success in the industry.

Engaging Through Seminars

Seminars offer extensive learning opportunities for sales teams to probe deeper into key industry trends, market dynamics, and sales methodologies. By bringing together industry experts, thought leaders, and sales professionals under one roof, seminars foster knowledge sharing and collaboration which help inspire participants to adopt innovative approaches and refine their selling strategies. Additionally, networking opportunities enable sales representatives to forge valuable connections and gain fresh perspectives on industry challenges and opportunities.

Empowering Through Podcasts

Podcasts delivered by Shed University, Shed Marketer, and Shed Geek Podcast offer a versatile platform for delivering engaging and informative sales training to sales professionals on the go. Whether it's interviews with industry leaders, case studies, or practical sales tips, podcasts offer a wealth of valuable insights that sales teams can incorporate into their daily practices. By subscribing to relevant podcasts, sales professionals can stay abreast of industry trends, sharpen their skills, and draw inspiration from real-world success stories, driving continuous improvement and performance excellence.

Step Out of the Box...Actually See No Boxes

Networking is essential both within and outside the industry. While developing a strong network within our industry is imperative, it's equally useful to look outside our area of comfort.

Let's watch, listen to, and personally meet successful individuals from as many aspects of life as possible. There is much to learn from and share with fellow industry professionals, but we all tend to participate in groupthink. This is where we all come from the same viewpoint, so we have a tendency to not explore other views. Some groupthink is understandable and good, but once we step out of our comfort zone, we begin to grow. Let's take advantage of differing opinions, strategies, and techniques that have been proven winners, even if they are not narrowed down to just our industry. What works in another field may be just the answer for us.

Conclusion

In the ever-evolving landscape of the shed, garage, and carport industry, sales training emerges as a strategic imperative for driving business success and sustaining a competitive advantage. From in-house coaching to webinars, seminars, and podcasts, each training methodology offers unique benefits for empowering sales teams with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to excel in their roles. By investing in comprehensive sales training programs, companies can elevate the customer experience, maximize sales performance, and unlock growth opportunities in our exciting industry. In essence, sales training isn't just a cost; it's an invaluable investment. **GSCB**

Randy Chaffee brings four-plus decades of experience to the post-frame and metal roofing industries. A board member for the Buckeye Frame Builders Association and the National Frame Builders Association, his podcast is available at [facebook.com/BuildingWins](https://www.facebook.com/BuildingWins). No web access? Call (814) 906-0001 at 1 p.m. Eastern on Mondays to listen.



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TEAM RUBICON: Helping People in Crisis

Working Toward More Resilient Communities

BY LINDA SCHMID



Hurricane response in Florida. PHOTOS COURTESY OF TEAM RUBICON.



Flooding response in San Diego.

You may have heard of Team Rubicon, a humanitarian organization with local volunteers, or Greyshirts as they call them, in every state. The organization has grown from its inception 14 years ago when Jacob Wood, a Marine, pitched in to help Haiti after the 2010 hurricane that devastated the island. He met eight other volunteers during this mission, and they banded together to start a volunteer organization. Today Team Rubicon includes 160,000 Greyshirts. Once you find out a bit about Team Rubicon, you will understand how they manage to recruit so many volunteers!

Team Goals

Devon Miller, Sr. Communications Associate, explained that Team Rubicon engages in three phases of relief: mitigation, response, and recovery. Response is the part of their work that people are likely to hear about, it's the part that the media reports on, but all three phases are important.

Mitigation is about helping people to become prepared and even avoid problems when disasters strike. For example, clearing away the brush and flammable items from yards where wildfires are a threat and sandbagging in areas that suffer from flooding.

Response is about showing up when

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disaster strikes and doing what needs to be done. This often means clearing the route so first responders can get to the people who need attention and organizing volunteers.

Recovery is about helping people get back into their homes. Sometimes that entails repairs and sometimes that requires rebuilding. The organization employs local tradespeople for these projects with the mindset that the money spent is

invested into the local economy.

Domestic & International Services

The goal of the domestic services is to develop a bank of volunteers across the US that can jump into action when needed. Local volunteers who know the area and work to develop connections with local leaders and communities is invaluable. In times of crisis, they can

help the team to find the areas where they are most needed, as well as helping them with places to shelter. Besides the local people, they have about 40,000 Greyshirts who will deploy to crisis areas as needed.

The International operation has many of the same goals as the domestic team, but there is greater focus on medical services, water, and hygiene. This is because these items are often scarce in the environment even before the disaster or crisis hit. Team Rubicon deploys mobile medical units, type 1, which means they are small and able to reach remote areas, and they are self-sustaining so the volunteers are not using resources that the locals need.

Team Rubicon In Hawaii

Team Rubicon was fortunate enough to be part of the initial response to the recent, devastating wildfires on Maui. Erin O'Rourke, Operations Manager, said they operated in the up-country region of Kula which was attacked by the same fire that did so much damage in Lahaina. Their operation consisted of clearing the access route to the area, managing local volunteers, and handling the donations



Donations management in Hawaii.



Hawaii wildfire recovery.



Flooding response in San Diego.

that came in. Post-disaster work is continuing in the region.

The Veteran Connection

With labor shortages what they are, especially in hands-on work like the trades, one might think that it would be hard to find workers and volunteers to fulfill the team's mission. One great resource is veterans.

The organization was developed by a veteran, and O'Rourke said, "We have found that military people are especially suited to do this work. They have the grit and determination we need."

She explained that their volunteer activities depend on what is needed in each individual case, but often Greyshirts use power saws to cut up trees and remove them from the access route and perform other manual labor. They work in grim circumstances and may be subjected to stark living conditions, and these are things that veterans have generally experienced before.

"Working with Team Rubicon often gives veterans a sense of purpose that they may be missing after they leave the service," O'Rourke said.

Miller estimates that about half of their volunteers are veterans. Training is provided to Greyshirts for such things as using power tools and leadership training, and some veterans have taken the skills they have developed with the organization and found employment opportunities, such as firefighting, working for FEMA, or as EMTs.

The Trades Academy

Team Rubicon is working on a new initiative; they are developing a Trades Academy. The mission is to train people in skills such as carpentry, HVAC, and electrical work so they will be able to better help with recovery, getting people back in their homes.

The Academy's goal is to provide tuition-free training with the help of generous sponsors and partners like



Hurricane response in Florida.



Rebuilding in Selma, Alabama.

the A. James & Alice B. Clark Foundation. The academy will be open to all, as O'Rourke said, it's for "people who want to give their time and make the world a better place."

Supporting The Mission

During a natural disaster, war, or a pandemic, people need many things. Miller quoted founder, Jake Wood,

"There are a thousand things that are more important than money, and all of them cost money."

The team needs funds and volunteers, or "kick-ass civilians" who are willing to help, so they can continue coming to the aid of people in need across the country and the globe. If you would like to support Team Rubicon, visit teamrubiconusa.org/give. **GSCB**

Opportunities for Builders & Suppliers!

6 Reasons You Should Be Featured on BuildMyBarndo.com!

BY LINDA SCHMID

“**W**hat are these opportunities?” you ask. But, first things first:

Have you heard of BuildMyBarndo.com? This is a new website started by Shield Wall Media, the publishers of Frame Building News. Unlike our other websites, Build My Barndo is not created and maintained for you, our industry professionals. This website is for the people who are considering building (you guessed it!) barndominiums, which leads us to the reasons you should get involved with Build My Barndo.

Why Should Builders Get Involved with Build My Barndo?

Builders, you can:

1. Get your company out in front of prospective clients. BuildMyBarndo.com is a great opportunity for builders of barndominiums to get their company and their fine work out in front of people who are considering building barndominiums! After all, the people who visit a website called Build My Barndo are either planning to build a barndominium or at least they are curious about it, which may lead to them building one. If you showcase your excellent work, you may be the builder they think of when they are ready to start their new home.

2. Build your reputation. You can provide information to Build My Barndo staff, they will write an article, quote you, and build your reputation with the



Graber Post Barndominium. PHOTO COURTESY OF GRABER POST BUILDINGS.

audience that matters most: prospective clients.

3. Show yourself to be a Subject Matter Expert. Editorial opportunity abounds on this site, and an article with your name as author will help show that you are the expert. Build your reputation and you may find that you build your client list, too.

Does writing an article sound intimidating? It doesn't have to be; you have backup in the form of Build My Barndo editors.

4. Get published easily. You can participate even if you don't have a project complete with details and component information. Send photos of a job and you can be published ... with credit of course!

5. Participate in a virtually unlimited fashion. You can send photos of 2, 3, 4,

5 ... how many barndo projects do you have? These projects do not have to be recent, either. If you have barndo projects that are several years old, we'll take them! You can submit them at: <https://buildmybarndo.com/barndominium-photo-submission-form/>

6. Enjoy Free PR! Where else can you get this kind of exposure at no charge?

At Shield Wall Media, we want Build My Barndo to become a catalyst for growth and teamwork in the industry. The more we educate people about barndominiums, the more we succeed. Let's build the barndominium community and all grow together. **GSCB**

Contact me at linda@shieldwallmedia.com to discuss how you can participate in BuildMyBarndo.com.

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Pre-Cut Steel Soffit + Quick Delivery

Speedlap Celebrates Their First Anniversary!

BY LINDA SCHMID

The Speedlap team planned to start a company that would produce soffit, but their vision didn't end there. They wanted soffit made from the same grade and brand of steel as the roof panels on a project. Speedlap started business May 1, 2023 bringing that vision to life.

Darin Westhoff, CEO explains that their system includes running industry standard 29 gauge Grade 80 coils. The soffit will perfectly match the roof. Further, the company cuts the soffit to the lengths the rollformer needs for a job.

Traditionally, Westhoff said, rollformers carry aluminum soffit and send it to the contractor to cut to all the required lengths on the job site. However, his team will use the same steel as the panels used in the project so it will match, and they will cut it for them.

"A rollformer can put in one order with 41 different lengths of soffit. This means they will all be cut to the lengths needed, and organized in labeled boxes so they can put the box on a lift and go right around the eaves, installing and getting it done so much faster than the traditional cutting on the job site allows."

This customized matching and cutting service means the rollformer doesn't have to carry soffit and the contractor gets a better aesthetic for the job and an easy time installing it. The company's tag line: "Happy Job sites!" takes on real meaning for contractors.

"At first, contractors may not put much stock in pre-cut soffit, but after they've done a couple of jobs with it, they tell their suppliers they never want to go back!" Westhoff said.

Getting Started!

Starting a manufacturing business begins, of course, with

developing the product. The team was testing their product on a machine they had purchased, but the machine did not produce the soffit they were looking for. They continued looking around, and eventually they had a machine designed to match their vision so they could get precisely what they were looking for.

"The machine runs 29 gauge Grade 80 steel, the same steel

most people are putting on their buildings," Westhoff said. "The machine is equipped with shears and can make a lot of footage fast," he added.

Soffit comes in solid, vented, or center-vented in about 40 different colors.

Growing the Company

The company started with Westhoff and one production person; now they have 6 employees. Further, in one year they have developed a client list in 32 states.

Their outside salespeople call on rollformers across the country. Over the autumn and winter seasons they made a push across the South where more construction is done in the winter than in the Midwest, helping to keep production going year round.

A YouTube video done by a happy customer helped spread the word about Speedlap soffit, bringing in calls from across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Further, their first time out at the Construction Rollforming Show in Cincinnati last fall, the company picked up 15 rollforming customers.

Servicing Customers

Westhoff said that many other companies in the area offer soffit. They sell 12-foot aluminum or steel, but only in 4-5 different lengths.

"Our end users like that our soffit is already cut to fit and it



will match the panel.”

Lead time can vary, but they usually get it to the rollformer in two to four days. Less labor is required to install the soffit helping them to deliver on their tag line: “Happy Job sites”. If the contractor is happy, it strengthens their relationship with the rollformer, which makes the rollformer happy and strengthens their relationship with Speedlap.

Lessons Learned

Westhoff advised that when you are in uncharted territory, don't rush your research and development. Ensure that the product is what you want before you move forward.

“Culture is very important,” Westhoff said. “You can't have in-fighting; everybody has to work together.”

A strong team is developed, he believes, by carefully selection of employees. They have hired everyone through referrals.

They include everyone in weekly meetings and idea genera-



Darin Westhoff, CEO, Speedlap

tion, so there is a strong feeling of pulling together as a team. If they develop a good idea about what will make their jobs easier, for example, “they can implement it within the hour,” Westhoff said.

Moving Forward

Westhoff believes that people are going to want cut-to-order soffit at an increasing pace. This will make it easy for the rollformers who won't have to carry as much inventory, as well as the installer who doesn't have to cut soffit on site.

Meanwhile, the company has expansion plans of their own. They have another machines on order, and they are planning to add custom-cut orders in

aluminum to their product line so they can serve customers in coastal areas.

Congratulations to Speedlap on their anniversary! The company has developed their own niche and is making a success of it. **GSCB**



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Solar Opportunities for Builders

The Solar Market Is Currently Small but Poised for Explosive Growth. Builders Have a Chance to Expand Into Solar Panel System Installations.

BY DAN BROWNELL

Solar panel systems have been used on homes for decades, and they continue to increase in popularity but still account for just a small fraction of the overall residential housing market. According to solarinsure.com, as of 2024, only 4.2 million, or 4.96%, of single-family homes have solar panel sys-

tems. While the number is small now, it's on track for extensive long-term growth.

Solar Growth Over the Long Term

With generous federal and state financial tax and rebate incentives for homeowners, combined with sharply decreasing costs for solar panels, builders

have an opportunity to capture some of the remaining 95% of the single-family residences that don't yet have a solar system.

In addition, the federal initiative to replace gas-powered vehicles with electric vehicles will likely increase demand for solar panels on homes, garages, and carports to reduce or eliminate the cost

(LEFT) This 3,500-square-foot, multi-purpose barn is located on a small 8-acre equestrian estate with spectacular mountain and lake views of the Okanagan Valley area of British Columbia, Canada. The barn features a 24-gauge Cascadia Metals Black SMP Standing Seam Metal Roof. The S-5-PVKIT® solar mounting solution (in black to match the black anodized PV frames) enabled solar installers to direct-attach PV modules to the standing seams, eliminating the need for a traditional rail mounting system and provided a simple, secure, economical and penetration-free method for attaching the solar modules. PHOTOS COURTESY OF S-5!

for charging them. The federal mandates for moving from gas-powered to electric are aggressive. A Forbes.com article dated March 20, said, “The auto industry will meet the new standards if 56% of all new vehicles are electric by 2032, at least 13% are plug-in hybrid or partially electric,

and only 29% are traditional combustion engine vehicles, according to the EPA’s regulation.”

An article on na.panasonic.com, also shows a close relationship between an increase in electric vehicles and an increase in residences with solar panels. The article says, “As of March 2023, about 4% of Americans own an EV. Of those EV owners, about one-third have homes fitted with photovoltaic (PV) solar systems and charge their EVs at home. In California (the number one EV ownership state), nearly 40% of EV owners have home PV systems.”

Opportunities for Builders Have Mostly Been Overlooked

Solar system installations are a largely untapped revenue stream for builders. According to Mark Gies, director of strategy and market development for S-5!, so-

lar panel system specialists are currently doing the lion’s share of the solar panel installation work. “Builders are generally just not doing solar, and I think that’s a shame because I think builders, roofers, and contractors could make more money if they got into doing solar themselves,” he said.

Gies pointed out that dedicated solar installers usually work under a general contractor, or they install after the rest of the construction is complete. “A lot of solar is sold after the fact. You would think a lot more would be spec’d in and would happen on new buildings, but generally somebody builds a house and then they say six months later, ‘OK, now I’m going to put solar up’ and the planning seems disconnected. Or they knew they were going to do it, but they were just going to get the house built first, move in, and then worry about it.”



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Jon Shenski, builder and co-owner of Northern Neck Pole Buildings, agreed with this perspective. “Usually when we build a custom barndominium, the client never talks about solar to us, even if it is in their future,” he said.

“I think there are opportunities for change in that world,” Gies noted. “The roof and the solar system should be viewed as one system. If you’re doing it all at once as you build the building and the roof, you can incorporate things that make it more feasible for solar. So there are definitely benefits to upfront planning.

“I was at a recent event and had the opportunity to speak with some builders,” Gies added. “They said that sometimes they’re putting a building together and finishing the roof. They take their ladder down, and as they’re driving away, somebody else is driving up, putting another ladder up, and they go up on the roof to install solar. I said, ‘You know, that could be your money if you expanded your business offerings.’ For some reason, the electrical contracting industry has

taken over all aspects of solar installations. There’s no reason why the building industry couldn’t do that as well. I talk about that a lot.

“There are definitely opportunities for the roofing industry to expand vertically and to integrate solar installations. They would have to hire electricians, but installing on roofs is a natural fit for a roofer, because they’re the ones who know roofing. Not enough solar installers know roofing. So, there are opportunities for growth in solar installations in the roofing industry and the building industry overall.

“There’s an organization called NABCEP [North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners]. They’re one of the organizations that will certify people to become official solar installers. A lot of electrical companies say, ‘Yeah, we have certified installers on staff.’ But they’re just electricians who just took some courses and took the test.”

According to Gies, if an electrical company can hire certified solar installers, builders should be able to as well

and compete with electrical companies for those same solar contracts. There are potential roofing sales opportunities too. Because a roof may need to be replaced on an existing building before a solar system is added, that’s another area of synergy for roofers and builders.

A Caveat About Recent Economic Headwinds

Although the long-term future of solar looks bright, certain segments of the solar market have suffered significant setbacks in the last two years. Solarinsure.com explains on its website that “2023 has brought immense challenges, with higher interest rates, tighter financing, and adverse policy shifts in key states contributing to over 100 solar bankruptcies based on our industry data, a number unseen before in our almost 20 years in the solar sector.”

As is often the case, companies with a strong foundation survive and grow, while financial storms weed out the weak ones. There is great opportunity in the solar sector, but builders should



do due diligence to ensure that the solar companies that they're working with are well-positioned to navigate the economy. But this is another argument for builders to do their own solar installations. It not only increases the potential for profit but could also decrease risk because it brings control in-house.

It should also be noted that while growth in the solar residential sector skyrocketed in recent years, it has slowed in the last year, according to a Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) market report updated in March 2024 (seia.org/solar-industry-research-data). The report states, "Nearly 7 GW of residential solar were installed in 2023, marking the 5th consecutive record year for the segment. High household electricity bills and power outages have driven demand, as

have changes to California's Net Metering rules. Customers in California rushed to sign up for projects under the old, more favorable rules before they expired in Spring 2023, and build out of that pipeline propped up national installation volumes in 2023. In 2024 however, the buildout of the California queue coupled with higher financing costs nationally will lead to an overall contraction in the residential market, despite modest growth in non-California markets."

Another factor that could affect solar growth would be a change in administration and policies after the November election. However, the federal solar tax break is scheduled to last through 2034, which should help soften the uncertainty, and the overall long-term momentum of solar would seem likely to overcome

short-term slowdowns.

This long-term momentum is buoyed by a mid-April announcement of a breakthrough in solar panel technology. According to an article published April 13 on thedebrief.org, "A new material capable of greatly improving the efficiency of solar power systems reportedly raised the quantum efficiency of solar panels to an unprecedented 190%... Traditional solar cells possess a maximum external quantum efficiency (EQE) of 100%, which means they can generate and collect a single electron for each photon they absorb through sunlight collected... The efficiency displayed by the new prototype tested by the Lehigh University team far exceeds the current theoretical limits for conventional silicon-based materials used in such PV systems and could potentially

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The Basics of Solar Panel Systems

Since solar panel systems are currently used in only a small part of the residential market, many builders may have little or no direct experience with solar. An inexperienced builder could face a couple of scenarios. The first is a customer who requests a solar system to be integrated with a new residential structure. In that situation, it's best that the builder work with the customer at the very beginning stages to create a plan to accommodate solar power, as it affects so many aspects of the construction planning, including building location and orientation. A south facing roof angled at 30 to 45 degrees and that's not shaded by buildings, trees, or other obstructions is best.

On the other hand, if a customer asks for a solar system to be installed on an already existing structure, there will be more constraints to work around. In that situation, the panels might need to be installed in a direction or at an angle that's less than ideal. Another factor to consider is the type, age, and condition of the roof of an existing building. It might not be able to support the weight of a panel system.

Or if it's an asphalt roof that's already old, it would need to be replaced before the solar panel system is installed. Otherwise, at some point, the solar panels will need to be removed, a new roof installed, and then solar panels replaced, which would add so much cost that it could make the solar system financially impractical. That issue might not be a factor, however, if the current roof is a metal roof in good condition with an expected life span that's longer than the anticipated life span of the solar panels.

In any case, if the general contractor and/or builder don't do the solar work themselves, they will need to work with a licensed solar panel company to do the planning and installation of the system.

The design needs specialized knowledge. For instance, the calculation to determine the optimum panel setup for a structure can be complex because so many variables are involved. There are many solar system companies to choose from. Builders and homeowners should do careful research to find a reliable company with good reviews and warranties.

Homeowners should also consult their insurance company, as solar panels can raise insurance rates. Although wind



and hail coverage for panels might be included in a standard insurance policy, a solar panel system would likely raise the value of the home and increase the rates for that reason.

While the increased home value could help homeowners get a higher amount for their home when they do sell, it could cause a home to take longer to sell on the market, depending on policies of the state or region. According to the website unbound.com, “Solar homes may languish on the market for much longer when there is no incentive for owning a solar-enabled home.”

Unbound.com also points out that “Solar education in lower adoption states can be a major stumbling block. In many cases, buyers don't understand the difference between grid-tie and off-grid

systems. They tend to assume all solar energy systems are off-grid, which rely on panels to generate 100% of their energy and run entirely on a battery storage system. The fear is that they'll be stuck without power if the solar array goes out and they don't know how to fix it.... In areas where solar energy is less popular, a little education may be necessary to convince buyers that a PV system is a reliable way to power their home.” For more details on how solar impacts home

sales, visit unboundsolar.com/blog/do-solar-panels-increase-home-value.

Once an on-grid solar system is installed, it will need an inspection and Permission to Operate (PTO) from the utility company. If the building and solar systems are done by separate companies, the GC or builder's role is to meet the building's structural requirements, ensuring that the proper permits, codes, and zoning for the structure are done completely and correctly. The solar panel installation company is responsible for the permits and codes for installing the solar system and the electrical work.

Even if the builder doesn't do solar installation, having a good knowledge of solar panel systems is helpful because as part of the initial planning conversation with the homeowners,

the builder can help the customer do a preliminary review of solar requirements and costs to help answer basic questions. Several online tools are available, such as a peak sun hours map and a solar calculator to determine whether it makes sense financially to invest in a solar panel system for the client's particular situation.

A peak sun hours map shows the average peak hours of sun for each state. In the continental United States, that varies between 3.5 and 6 hours. A solar calculator can help a builder and homeowner do the math on the system size needed, its estimated cost, tax incentives and rebates, potential monthly savings, and estimated number of years to reach the payback point.

Monthly Peak Sun Hours Maps

• solarreviews.com/blog/how-many-

solar-panels-do-i-need-to-run-my-house

- <https://unboundsolar.com/solar-information/sun-hours-us-map>

Solar Calculators

- solarreviews.com/solar-calculator
- <https://unboundsolar.com/solar-information/solar-cost>

Planning a Solar Panel System

If, after an initial review with the builder, the customer decides in favor of a solar system, the solar installation company will evaluate the customer's current structure or proposed new one and its site characteristics, such as its geographic location, average light per day, roof size, position on the property, obstructions that could block sunlight, direction and angle of the roof, roofing material and age, and power requirements to determine if the proposed system will deliver the results needed and, if so, the number of solar panels needed and whether the roof is strong enough to support the solar panels system and handle wind uplift and snow loads. A reputable solar installer will use proper attachments to connect the solar panels to the roof.

Solar Glossary

Inverter: A device that converts DC power to AC power

String: The group of panels connected to a single inverter

Array: All the solar strings connected to form a solar system

PV: Photovoltaic (PV) panels that comprise a solar panel system

Solar Panel System Types

On-Grid (Tied In)

An on-grid solar panel system ties into an existing power grid through a utility company, typically using a net metering system, which is a two-way connection to the power grid that measures how much is drawn from the grid when the solar panel is not producing electricity, as well as the amount of excess electricity the solar panel system contributes to the power grid. With the net metering system, the utility applies a credit to the solar panel



owner for electricity produced above what is drawn from the grid.

The disadvantage of net metering is that some utility companies sell their power at high retail rates but credit the excess power from solar panels at a much lower wholesale rate. Sometimes the rates vary depending on the time of day and the corresponding level of power demand on the grid. Homeowners should evaluate the utility company's terms carefully before committing to a long-term plan in which a decision is based heavily on the ability to sell power back to the utility. For more information on net metering, visit solarreviews.com/blog/what-is-net-metering-and-how-does-it-work.

Off-Grid

An off-grid system is not connected to the existing power grid. That means it's totally dependent on solar panels for electricity. It won't be able to draw any power from a power line when the solar panels can't keep up with demand. For that reason, a battery storage system is essential to store power for times when the panels aren't producing power, which would be the majority of a 24-hour period.

However, a battery backup isn't a practical solution to power all the electrical

needs of a home for an extended period. In fact, it's only expected to provide power for essential appliances, such as a refrigerator and lights for around eight hours on a single charge. That's enough to help with a power outage from a storm, but not a dependable long-term replacement for electrical power.

For this reason, off-grid systems are only practical for limited power requirements such as garage or shed, especially if it is either inaccessible to an on-grid power line or is so far from a house (or other structure with an existing power line) that the cost of digging a trench and running wire from it is cost prohibitive.

For situations in which an off-grid system is the best choice, an inverter is needed to convert the DC charge generated by the solar panels into AC current used by standard household receptacles. The system also needs a solar charge controller to regulate the current and voltage supplied by the solar panels to allow safe and efficient battery charging.

An off-grid system is also practical for smaller structures and lower power needs such as running an overhead light and device charger, etc. in a shed or garage. Some small solar panel systems are available in DIY kits, typically 200W or less,



Nestled among the Yarra Ranges, 67 kilometers east of Melbourne, Australia, Moora Moora is an off-grid co-operative community hosting 30 solar-equipped off-grid homes, 70 people and three electric vehicles (EVs). Reaching freezing temperatures in winter and scorching heat in summer, the community's residents required shelter to protect their EVs from the elements while charging. To provide such protection and also fast-charge their vehicles, a shared community carport was constructed, purpose-built for rooftop solar photovoltaics (PV). The carport features a corrugated iron roof with a 9.5kw solar array. Twenty LONGi solar panels are mounted in landscape position to the roof using the PVKIT rail-less solar mounting solution along with the CorruBracket 500T PV. The EV charging station allows for an extra 10kW of charge for the community's EVs, in addition to the solar power provided by each of the homes. With residents planning to purchase another six EVs, this project provides a place for the residents to protect their investment and charge their additional vehicles. PHOTOS COURTESY OF S-51

which don't need a permit or inspection since they're low power and not tied into the grid. For more information, visit marketwatch.com/guides/solar/solar-power-for-shed. Small off-grid solar vents can also be added to sheds, garages, attics, greenhouses, and other small structures to control heat, improve air circulation, and lower humidity.

Hybrid

A hybrid solar panel system is both tied into the power grid and has a backup battery system. While a battery backup system is very expensive, it does offer a couple of advantages. First, it provides backup power during a power outage on the grid. Second, it can allow homeowners to store power during times of the day when power rates are low and to meter them back to the grid during high-demand/high-rate hours so the owner can be credited with the higher rates. However, with this strategy, the payback period for batteries can be quite long — 20 to 30 years, according to some sources.

So, the biggest benefit of a hybrid system isn't making money by selling power back to the utility but having backup power during a power outage.

Charging Electric Vehicles with Solar Panels

While it's most common to have an EV charging system that's tied into the grid, an off-grid solar panel system can completely recharge an electric vehicle if it's connected to an adequate number of panels exclusively dedicated to it. The typical number of dedicated panels varies from 7 to 12 depending on the type of vehicle, driving habits, area of country, etc. An off-grid system would also typically have a battery storage system to store electricity when the panels aren't producing power. For more information, visit energysage.com/ev-charging/how-many-panels-do-you-need-for-your-ev.

The Federal Solar Tax Credit (ITC)

From 2024 to 2032, the federal solar

tax credit, known as the Investment Tax Credit or ITC, is 30% for qualified solar electric costs, including solar panels, other components such as wiring and inverters, mounting equipment, batteries, labor, and sales tax. To qualify for the tax credit, the solar installer must be licensed, and the applicant must own the system (not lease it), and it must be on-grid. Some solar system companies will only install residential installations that are on-grid. The federal solar tax credit will decrease to 26% in 2033, to 22% in 2034, and will be eliminated completely in 2035 unless renewed by Congress. For more details, visit marketwatch.com/guides/solar/federal-solar-tax-credits.

Other Solar Incentives

In addition to the federal solar tax credit, other incentives are available, such as rebates, subsidies, low-interest loans, and state tax credits. These vary according to area and timeframe. Find more information from the following sources:

- dsireusa.org
- <https://unboundsolar.com/solar-information/state-solar-incentives>
- forbes.com/home-improvement/solar/solar-tax-credit-by-state
- solarreviews.com/blog/the-top-solar-incentive-programs-in-the-us

Solar Installers

Following are several sources for lists of solar companies.

- solarreviews.com/solar-companies
- solarpowerworldonline.com/top-solar-contractors

Other Solar Information and Resources

- energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-going-solar
- energysage.com
- solarunitedneighbors.org/go-solar/faqs
- mobenosolarsolutions.com

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For More Information Contact Missy Beyer:
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Keep Your Customers Happy

Sell More Garages and Sheds!

BY LINDA SCHMID

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF COUNTRY CARPENTER, INC.

A well-known business principle is that in order to grow your business, it is important to keep your current customers happy. A happy customer will come back to you if they should decide they want to remodel or to build another building.

They are also likely to share their great experience working with you with their friends and acquaintances, especially if those people are considering a building project. Of course, word of mouth works both ways; people will talk whether their experience is good or bad, so the best thing you can do is ensure your customers talk you up rather than down. If many people have a good experience with your company, you will gain a reputation as one of the go-to businesses in your market.

How do you make customers happy? People invariably say a quality product combined with superior service is the answer. No one is going to argue with that, but what makes for superior service? It is more than showing up when you say you will and speaking politely (though of course, that is a good start).

In the garage/shed building world, there are certain items

that need to be considered before the project is begun. If you do not initially ascertain these important pieces of knowledge, the project may be doomed from the start. You probably are familiar with them, but we have gathered a handy checklist here.

Questions to Ask

- What is this building for? Will vehicles be stored in it and how many? Are there other items that need space in this garage? How big does the building need to be?

- Where is this building going to be located? What are the local ordinances or building codes? What setbacks are in place? What permits are required? What specifications need to be met? Is the land zoned for the planned activity in this building?

- Where on the property is this building going to be situated? Is access going to be a problem?

- What kind of materials is the customer interested in? Are they looking for low maintenance? Durability? Do they wish to match another building on the property? Do they already know whether they would prefer a wood or steel frame and what panel material they want?

- What kind of foundation is acceptable for the soil conditions? What does local code require?

- What kind of design are they looking for? Do they want to match the design of another building? Are there specific elements they are looking for?

- What kind of activities may take place in the building? A workshop? An office? A dog pen? Any activity, human or animal, will require certain elements, including appropriate ventilation, insulation, and perhaps other considerations.

- Are special accommodations required for accessibility, such as a ramp or wider than traditional doorways?

- What kinds of doors and windows does the customer need? Man doors? Overhead doors? Windows that open? How many of each?

- Are special security items required like cameras or a specific



type of lock?

- What timeline is the customer expecting? Are there specific deadlines to meet?
- What is the budget? What can you do to help keep the project in line with it?

This list may not be exhaustive, but it is a strong start. Knowing the answer to all these questions is important because knowing the customer's expectations is, naturally, the first step to being able to fulfill them.

Provide the Customer All the Information You Can

Craig Froh, Director of Sales at Country Carpenter, Inc., said that they have a similar process when they sell post and beam kits to customers. "We try to elicit as much information as we can about what they need, what their concerns are."

The team starts from day one talking to the customer, finding out if they have much experience with post and beam, or if they are likely to need more help, and they make sure they are there for questions.

When a contractor or salesperson is talking to a customer, they need to find out how much the customer understands

about the building process Froh said, "You can tell pretty quickly if they understand construction terminology. Are they engaged in the conversation? If not, educate them."

"Transparency is important," Froh continued, "customers don't like surprises, so we give them as much information about what is coming as we can. We tell them about additional costs like roofing, foundation, and electrical. We provide 3-D modeling to help them visualize their design."

Transactional or Relational

Matthew Gerber, Owner and Business Development Manager of Meyer Building, LLC, said that they look at every interaction as an opportunity to build a relationship. "We believe that relational interactions will bring more success than transactional interactions in the long run," he said.

Gerber said Meyer Building will stand behind their buildings and help customers with any problems they may have with a building after the transaction is complete. This approach makes sense. Look at it this way, if a customer purchases a tool at the hardware store, that is a transaction. If a customer discovers when they get the tool home that it is not the correct tool for their project, and the store refuses to help with a solution, that





may be the last transaction between that store and that customer. If, however, the store manager recognizes that the relationship can be more important to the store than the one transaction and tries to help the customer, that customer will almost certainly shop at that store the next time they need a tool. Now the store is building a relationship with the customer.

Selling a garage is different than selling tools, for one of many reasons because the customer may not need another building any time soon, while another tool may be on the shopping list next week. But, the fact is your customer may build again at some point, and as previously mentioned, your reputation is on the line in a big way with each purchase. If your customer tells people that you didn't show up when you said you would, or you built a leaky garage and did not resolve the problem, those people are not likely to trust you with a big purchase of their own.

Only the Beginning

Froh said that after one of their kits is built, they contact the customer to ensure that everything is good. "Often the customer is very excited about their new building and they send pictures to us.

"We want to keep the relationship with the contractor after the build for things

like maintenance and making alterations, Froh continued. We support them through the life of the building."

Sometimes customers return for small things, but often people return to buy another building. One happy customer has built four buildings with them Froh said.

Communications and Responsiveness

Gerber said that in the quest to keep customers happy, he believes the biggest pitfall that builders tend to fall into is a lack of sufficient communication. "This is all very elementary stuff," Gerber said, "but it's easy to be caught up in your busy

building schedule and not communicate and update the customer."

When things don't go right and the crew isn't going to make it to the jobsite on Wednesday as planned, they call to tell the customer there has been a change of plans, so the customer isn't left wondering if they have been forgotten. If the crew accidentally damages a panel, they let the customer know what happened and that they will replace it. If they didn't say anything and the customer saw the panel, they might worry...what happened, are they going to take care of it? You don't want your customer worrying about these things.

When the crew is going to be dropping off materials at the jobsite, Gerber or someone on his team call to let the customer know. It may be an unnecessary contact, but it is a contact. They speak to them and keep them in the loop. In effect it is like they have reached out and touched the customer. Perhaps in the ensuing conversation they find out a bit of what is going on in the customer's life, or they find out what the customer is concerned about on the job site. It's one more chance to build the relationship with the customer.

The other part of being communicative and responsive is follow-through Gerber said. You can talk all you want, but if nothing you promise actually happens you are not going to have a happy customer. **GSCB**





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Be Aware of BOI

5 Fast Facts About Beneficial Ownership Information Reporting

BY CLIFTONLARSONALLEN

Key Insights

The Corporate Transparency Tax Act is designed to help the U.S. government collect information to prevent use of the U.S. financial system for illicit activities.

All domestic entities and any foreign entity registered to

do business in the United States must report beneficial ownership information.

The reporting is complex and there are penalties for non-compliance. Be aware of your BOI reporting requirements.

Many businesses must soon report new beneficial ownership information (BOI) to the U.S. government. Our earlier article [<https://blogs.claconnect.com/realestate/beneficial-ownership-information-reporting/>] covered a high-level overview of BOI reporting requirements, and now we're sharing important updates to help you clarify your responsibilities. Read on for five fast facts.

Background

In 2021, Congress enacted the Corporate Transparency Tax Act (CTA), which establishes uniform BOI reporting requirements for certain types of corporations, limited liability companies, and other similar entities created in or registered to do business in the United States.

The CTA is designed to help the U.S. government collect information necessary to prevent bad actors from using the U.S. financial system to facilitate money laundering, tax evasion, human and drug trafficking, and other illicit activities.

The CTA authorizes the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), a bureau of the U.S. Treasury, to collect and disclose BOI information to authorized government authorities and financial institutions. Since CTA's enactment, FinCEN has issued implementing regulations — the basics of which are discussed briefly below.

CliftonLarsonAllen will not advise on or assist with BOI reporting preparation. We recommend that you reach out to your attorney for assistance in complying with these filings.



5 fast BOI reporting FAQs

1. What companies will be required to report BOI to FinCEN?

All domestic entities and any foreign entity registered to do business in the United States. Entities subject to BOI reporting include a corporation, limited liability company, or any other entity created by the filing of a document with the secretary of state or similar office in the United States.

2. Are there exemptions from BOI reporting?

Yes, FinCEN notes 23 BOI reporting exemptions.

Perhaps the most common exception to BOI reporting is the large operating company exemption. Generally, a company meets this exemption if it has at least 20 full-time employees, more than \$5 million in gross receipts or sales, and an operating presence at a physical office within the United States. For purposes of the \$5 million threshold, the threshold is measured as gross receipts or sales net of allowances on Forms 1120, 1120-S, 1065, or other equivalent tax return. It should be noted, however, that the 20-employee threshold is not applied on a consolidated basis. As a result, a parent company filer of a consolidated C corporation tax return must itself have 20 or more full-time employees to meet the large operating company exception.

Other exemptions apply to Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entities and certain types of regulated financial companies.

3. When does BOI reporting start?

Reporting companies created or registered to do business before January 1, 2024, must file initial BOI reports with FinCEN on or before January 1, 2025. Reporting companies created or registered to do business on or after January 1, 2024, will have 90 days from creation or registration to file their initial BOI reports. Any changes to previously reported BOI must be reported to FinCEN within 30 days.

Reporting companies created or registered to do business before January 1, 2024, must file initial BOI reports with FinCEN on or before January 1, 2025.

4. What information does a reporting company disclose to FinCEN?

A reporting company must report:

- Legal name
- Any trade, doing business as, or trading as names
- The current street address of its U.S. place of business, jurisdiction of formation or registration
- IRS taxpayer identification number
- Type of BOI filing (i.e., initial report, a correction of a prior report, or an update to a prior report).

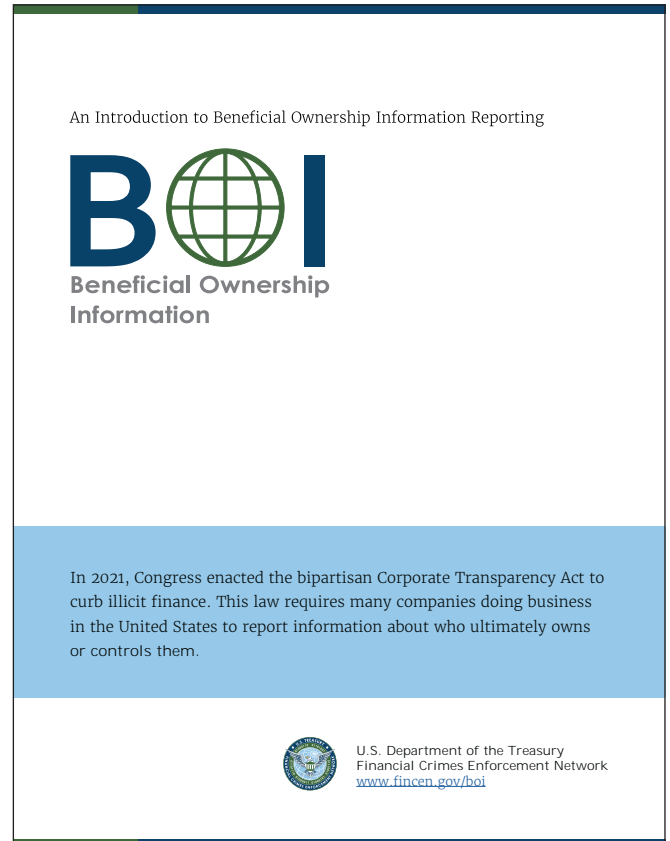
In addition, for each individual who is a beneficial owner or company applicant, the reporting company must report:

- Individual's name
- Date of birth
- Address
- Unique identifying number from an acceptable identification document (e.g., driver's license, passport, etc.)
- Name of the state or jurisdiction that issued the identification document.

A beneficial owner is an individual who either directly or indirectly (1) exercises substantial control over the reporting company (e.g., a senior officer or key decision-maker), or (2) owns or controls at least 25% of the reporting company's ownership interests. A corporate entity owner is "looked through" to its ultimate owners for purposes of determining the 25% ownership test.

The information contained herein is general in nature and is not intended, and should not be construed, as legal, accounting, investment, or tax advice or opinion provided by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP (CLA) to the reader. For more information, visit CLAnet.com.

CLA exists to create opportunities for our clients, our people,



The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network has published the brochure "An Introduction to Beneficial Ownership Information Reporting," which can be downloaded at <http://tinyurl.com/3und37eh>.

Although not required, many filers are encouraged to obtain FinCEN identifiers to help facilitate filing this information. There is no fee to file BOI reports with FinCEN.

5. Are there penalties for failing to file BOI reports with FinCEN?

Yes, be aware of BOI filing penalties. A person who willfully fails to comply with BOI reporting may be subject to civil penalties of \$500 per day and criminal penalties including a \$10,000 fine and/or up to two years of imprisonment. **GSCB**

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It was standing-room-only around the Maze Nails nail driving competition.

What's New in Post-Frame

Exhibitors, attendees enjoy annual Frame Building Expo in Des Moines

BY KAREN KNAPSTEIN

For the better part of a week, Iowa was the hub of the post-frame industry. Frame Building Expo (FBE), sponsored by the National Frame Building Association, was held March 6-8 in downtown Des Moines at the Iowa Events Center.

The event hosted more than 160 exhibitors on the Expo floor. Several attendees polled said their most important objective was to find new products. If you missed the event but would like to learn about some of the products debuted in Des Moines, read on.

New Products

Component manufacturer Plyco debuted some new innovations, which included its Designer Series doors – Series 92 and 20 — that are now available in several new colors, with textured panels, and with several frame colors. Plyco reported: “Customers can now choose from the various panels and frames to customize their doors.” Also, the Klik-Fit Trim Kit is a new addition to Plyco doors to “help create a stylish, finished look after installation.”

About the show, they said, “Overall, it was a great show. We had wonderful attendance in the booth looking at the new innovations and were able to have great conversations with current and prospective customers.”

Keith Dietzen shared an exciting project that SmartBuild currently has in development. “SmartBuild’s big deal was to show off our software Release 1.90, which will be used to design two levels of interior living space in a barndominium.” It was very

well received; people had a strong interest in it.

Coming in 2024, SmartBuild is developing a software version for building design people. “After we came out with the 1.90 barndominium-specific release that can lay out the bath, kitchen, and other details,” Dietzen said, “we found we started to get inundated with inquiries from building designers. (Before, it was for builders and contractors.)” During the inquiries, the building design people said the tools they were using weren’t efficient in designing post-frame structures. “We did a deep dive with these people,” Dietzen continues. “The tools that they have to generate a full set of drawings for a barndominium customer takes 10-20 hours. When they use SmartBuild, it has all the details including structural details. Building designers are saying it’s valuable the way it is but we will be doing more. ... Once it’s fully developed, SmartBuild for building designers will take a 10-20 hr task and boil down to less than 2 hours.”

Ultimately, a project will be able to go from design to price within the same day, he explains. The company will have some initial releases within the next 60 days, and then will be rolling out regular updates. “We’re going to connect the whole post frame industry to the architectural design community.”

Post-frame building and metal roofing supplier True Metal Supply exhibited at FBE for the first time this year. The company’s booth featured its post frame buildings with Buffalo River Truss’ Parallel Chord Steel Trusses, as well as its Board & Batten Steel Siding with various Wood Print Coatings. “The steel trusses drew a lot of attention, as a hybrid building style. Many show



True Metal Supply exhibited for the first time at FBE.

attendees were intrigued by the 100' clear span capabilities and ease of installation.” The company also reports its new Wood Print Coatings on its Board & Batten Steel Siding attracted both influencers and builders in the industry. “We expect these building components to continue growing over the course of 2024.”

The company also reported that in 2024, Sweat Shield™ condensation control will be a new focus. It creates a lasting barrier between the building’s metal envelope and the harmful effects of condensation. “This material is pre-applied to True’s, Through Fastened Tuff-Rib panels and is designed for buildings with interior, exposed metal roofing”

They said they “had an excellent experience as we received quality leads and reconnected with industry partners. We’re excited to have the show in our home town, Knoxville, in 2025!”

Hixwood’s Paul Zimmerman said, “I always enjoy the NFBA show, with Iowa being in our core area. It was a very productive exhibit for our team. The seminars were very informative, I wanted to give a shout out to the barndominium seminar. This has great growth potential for the post-frame industry.”

Regarding Hixwood’s sponsorship of the Family Lounge, Zimmerman said, “With God and family first in our lives at Hixwood, it is natural for the company to sponsor the family lounge. A mother with children that accompanied her husband to the show said, ‘I wonder if they realize how much this area is appreciated?’ It made it worthwhile and I am hoping someday the children playing in the family lounge area will be leaders in the post-frame industry that we love so well.”

In addition to its standard line of tools, including the Ridge

R-3:10 and the Ridge R-9, the County Line Concepts exhibit featured some new tools, including The Ceiling Panel Support for holding panels close to the ceiling for installation. Also shown were the Ridge R-Awl, used to give accurate marks on the panels, and the Mega Bracket, which sits over the rails on a mega deck and keeps materials and equipment off of the floor. The Post Plummer, which allows for adjustment of the posts for a final, accurate alignment and the Pole Cat and Wall Lifter (used with your equipment to raise posts and walls into place) were also exhibited.

“The exciting part of our business is talking with contractors and getting ideas of what they are looking for and then bringing them to the table,” said County Line Concepts’ Gordon Moeggenborg. “We are always open for your input.”

Metal shear manufacturer Integrity Sales & Service, maker of the Dyna-Cut shared a bit of news. While the company didn’t debut any new products at the show, they do have some exciting tools in development. Keep watch for future announcements.

Crowd Favorites

A large crowd gathered around to watch the always-popular nail-driving competition, which was once again sponsored by Maze Nails of Peru, Illinois. A total of 47 contestants stepped up to compete. “We timed each contestant on how quickly the

could drive three 40d (5-inch) Hardened Ring shank Pole Barn nails into a LVL Microlam Beam,” explains Len Kasperski of Maze Nails. “The nails were preset into the Beam 1/2 inch for safety reasons. Each contestant raced against the clock to see who could drive all three flush to the surface the quickest. This was our 20th annual Nail Pounding Competition.” When the results were tallied, Joshua Gingrich came in with the fastest time of 8.75 seconds, earning him first place. The second and third place finishers, respectively, were Vernon Bortrager at 8.87 seconds and Eddie Conrad at 9.85 seconds.



Attendees could try the product innovations at the Simpson Strong-Tie exhibit.

Atlas Building Products once again sponsored the Screw Driving Competition. Three-man crews stepped up to drive 1” Woodtite fasteners into 29-ga. ag panels using a DeWalt 268 screw gun. “The winning team was Countryside Metals with a three-man team time of 43.7 seconds,” reports company spokesperson Amanda Edwards. “Coming in second was Timbercrest construction with a time of 47.52 seconds. The fastest individual was TJ Mast with a time of 13.2 seconds.”

Looking ahead, next year’s event takes place a little later in the year; the 57th Annual Frame Building Expo & Conference will be held April 2-4, 2025, in Knoxville, Tennessee. **GSCB**

Off-Grid Battery Power for Sheds

Turn a Sales “No” Into a “YES!!”
With This Electrifying Solution

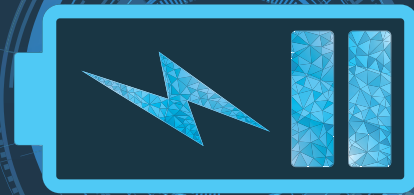
BY PAM KAROUSIS



I work for K & K Barn Sales from this office shed. It has never had electrical wiring installed, but I needed power for lighting, laptop, and monitor. I turned to a rechargeable battery pack to supply the power I need, and it has worked well. It's also a perfect way to demonstrate a solution to a customer and potentially remove an objection to a sale.



My battery pack powers the 4 ft. LED light over my desk, as well as my laptop, monitor, and desk lamp, transforming my shed into a very usable office space. A battery pack also works great during a power outage at home.



One of the advantages of a shed is that it can be used for storage or other functions without electricity. But a shed can be far more useful if it can power devices such as a light, a radio, a laptop, fan, etc. The lack of power might be a dealbreaker for potential customers who want a shed with electrical power, but for one reason or another, it's not feasible for them to install a dedicated electrical system. They may not want to deal with the paperwork to get a permit, or it may be too expensive to have a system installed, or perhaps because of the shed's location, it would be inaccessible to an electrical line.

The Solution

There's a simple, low-cost alternative you can show customers that may help you sell a shed: a portable, lightweight rechargeable battery pack that can cost as little as \$200 to \$300.

I use a rechargeable battery pack myself in my 12'x20' office shed, where I work as a shed salesperson. My shed has never had electrical wiring installed, but to use it effectively as an office, I needed power for a 4 ft. LED light, my laptop, a monitor, a desk lamp, and a charger for my cell phone. It certainly has met my needs, and you can use a similar setup to demonstrate this option to customers to potentially turn a shed sale “No” into a “Yes.”

I show all my customers how my shed is powered. They get so excited at the possibility of adding lights and small electronics in their shed without the hassle of permits or exterior wiring. It's definitely a win/win for dealers and customers!

(FAR RIGHT) My battery pack powers the 4 ft. LED light over my desk, as well as my laptop, monitor, and desk lamp, transforming my shed into a very usable office space. A battery pack also works great during a power outage at home.

(RIGHT) Here's my battery pack, plugged into the power strip. It has a digital gauge that shows output and the percentage of charge remaining. It also has a built-in light, DC plug, AC plugs, and USB ports.

What's Needed

To make a workable office space, I bought a rechargeable battery pack from Amazon. The brand I use offers a wide range of prices and wattages, currently at around \$179 for 300W and \$499 for 700W. There are far more choices of brands, power options, and prices. The battery I chose has a fast recharge feature that recharges from 0% to 100% in just an hour. It has two outlets, three USB ports, a light, and can recharge from a power cord plugged into an outlet, a solar panel, or a car cigarette lighter.

I also bought a power strip to plug in all my devices into; then I simply plug the power strip into the power pack. My battery isn't powerful enough to run high-energy demand items, such as a coffeemaker, mini fridge, or power tools, but there are higher-priced battery packs rated for those uses for customers who are interested. Another option is to have more than one power pack to run more devices.

Recharging

I take the power pack home at night to recharge and bring it back to work the next day. If needed, I can take it to the retail shop next door to my office to recharge it if it runs low during my work hours.

Close That Sale

If a customer's major hesitance in purchasing a shed is their lack of access to electricity, you can offer this simple, practical solution. This idea may never have occurred to them, and with that objection resolved, it may make all the difference in making a sale. Easily 15 to 20% of my customers become even more motivated to purchase when I can demonstrate how easy it is to power their shed. They're just amazed. It just adds so many more possibilities with how they will be able to use it. It has also added to my upgrade sales for them to order a workbench or shelves built in. **GSCB**

Pam Karousis has been selling sheds since 2021 and has been at



K & K Barn Sales (<https://kandkbarn.com>), since 2022. She has two sheds at home, and two office sheds she works out of six days a week, so she's fully immersed in the shed life. She enjoys designing sheds for her customers and helping them decide which shed is the perfect one for their needs.



I placed a dollar bill on top of my battery power pack for size comparison. The pack is lightweight, so it's easy to bring back and forth to work every day.



Residence featuring SunStyle solar panels.



SunStyle Diamond Dragonscale solar panels.

CertainTeed Launches New Solar Offering in Partnership with SunStyle

CertainTeed, the leading North American manufacturer of sustainable building material, has entered a strategic partnership with residential and commercial solar roofing pioneer, SunStyle. This deal signifies a notable expansion for CertainTeed, broadening its U.S. offerings to include the premium Swiss-engineered

line of product. Through this partnership, CertainTeed is poised to deliver an array of industry-leading solar solutions to its customer base, including homeowners, architects, builders, and more.

SunStyle has been a leader in the development of building-integrated photovoltaic (BIPV) technology for more than 15 years and extends CertainTeed's growing portfolio of solar technology offerings.

Combining structural roofing materi-

als with solar modules, SunStyle offers a comprehensive solar roofing system with industry-leading performance and sleek aesthetics. SunStyle solar roofing modules are installed edge-to-edge in a patented overlapping diamond dragonscale configuration, engineered for weatherproofing and strong enough to withstand harsh weather conditions. The solar roof system can be installed on single- and multi-family homes, or on commercial and industrial buildings.

For more information, visit certainteed.com/products/solar/sunstyle.

Ambassador Supply Names Joel Usina Marketing Director

Ambassador Supply has named Joel Usina as the company's marketing director. Usina's career includes over 12 years of marketing experience working as a website and graphic designer and as a director of marketing for Redfli Electronics/Redfli Design Build. In addition, Usina has held the role of director of operations and director of family services for Genesis Outreach.

Based in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Ambassador Supply is an investment and management company in the residential and commercial construction industry. For more information, visit ambassador-supply.com.

ATAS Announces 2024 Metal Wall Panel Installation Seminar Dates

ATAS International will conduct wall panel installation seminars for the following locations and dates.

Allentown, Pennsylvania

- July 24-25
- Oct. 15-16

Mesa, Arizona

- Sept. 18-19

University Park, Illinois

- Nov. 6-7

Classroom learning and hands-on installation practice, along with a factory

tour, are covered during the seminar. Classroom learning includes education on ATAS' specific wall panels, common substrates to which panels are applied, and tools recommended for panel installation.

For the hands-on installation portion of the seminar, three different panel applications will be covered: horizontally applied panels over open framing, vertically applied panels over a solid deck, and metal shingles applied over a solid deck.

Classes are taught by industry experts with many years of experience working with metal wall cladding. For more information, or to register for a session, visit atas.com/in-person-installation-seminar.

Sheffield Metals Announces New Branch Opening in Plant City, Florida

Sheffield Metals International (SMI), a leading provider of coated and bare metal coil and sheet products, has announced a new branch opening in Plant City, Florida. It's the sixth Sheffield Metals branch to open and the closest to its Acworth, Georgia, location. The new branch will provide convenience for existing customers in Florida and the Caribbean and help Sheffield Metals reach more of its target market.

Those customers currently buying products from Sheffield's Acworth, Georgia, location will now be able to get products from the Plant City location.

"There are a lot of customers in the Tampa area that are excited about this new opening," Steve Gansey, Branch Manager of the Sheffield Metals Plant City location, said. "We've had people from our Acworth locations asking when the Florida branch will open and start production. They're looking forward to getting whatever products they need quicker."

The opening of the Plant City location fits into the larger goal of Sheffield Metals: to provide customers with the best service possible, no matter where they're located.

The new Plant City branch will be located off the I-4 highway at 4021 South Frontage Road.

Tando Division Renamed Tando Composites

Derby Building Products has announced its Tando division has been officially renamed Tando Composites, paying tribute to its state-of-the-art composite technology. Tando Composites offers two exterior cladding solutions — Beach House Shake® composite shingle, and TandoStone® composite stone.

"Updating the brand's name to Tando Composites reflects decades of manufacturing development that is revolutionizing the exterior cladding category," said Ralph Bruno, CEO of Derby Building Products, the parent company of Tando Composites.

Beach House Shake, with the look of individual, natural cedar shingles, perfectly replicates cedar's natural color variations, saw cuts, and grain patterns. In four shades that resemble fresh-cut Eastern white, fresh-cut Western red, bleach oil shingles, or deeply weathered Eastern white cedar, Beach House Shake authentically meets the local design style in any geography.

Unlike natural cedar shingles, Beach House Shake will stay looking perfect, without any discoloration, from the day it was installed for the life of the home.

Additionally, Beach House Shake holds a Notice of Approval from Miami-Dade County for use in High-Velocity Hurricane Zones and severe weather conditions. For the contractor, installation is fast and easy using standard tools and 80% fewer fasteners than individual cedar shingles.

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TandoStone, a game changer for siding installers, delivers the authentic look and feel of stone to create on-trend mixed material home exteriors. The leading brand of composite stone, TandoStone is available in various colors and two profiles: Stacked Stone, featuring a dry stack profile without grout lines, and Creek LedgeStone, imitating the appearance of hand-picked stones with visible grout lines.

Using standard siding tools, TandoStone can be installed in a fraction of the time compared to natural stone or stone veneer. Learn more about Tando Composites at <http://www.tandocomposites.com>.

Marc Kermisch Joins Malco Tools Board of Directors

Malco Tools, 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 Marc Kermisch, chief digital and information officer at CNH Industrial, has joined its board of directors.

Kermisch brings over 25 years of leadership expertise and experience with a variety of leading U.S. companies, where he has led corporate IT functions, driven technology strategy and

architecture, and enabled e-commerce platforms. Kermisch will be instrumental in advising Malco on how to best leverage its technology investments to deliver value and improve customers' digital journeys.

"We are honored to welcome Marc to the Malco board," said Malco president and CEO Rich Benninghoff. "Marc's focus and deep experience in driving operational efficiencies and building strong partnerships will be invaluable to Malco as we implement new technologies that allow us to better serve our partners and customers as we continue to grow our business."

Malco Tools leads the market in high-quality specialty tools for the HVAC and RSG trades, and has seen year-over-year growth thanks to new product innovations. Kermisch's appointment rounds out Malco's board, which is focused on driving measured and strategic growth for the company and further strengthening the Malco brand in the marketplace.

For more information about Malco Tools, visit www.malcotools.com.



Marc Kermisch, new member of Malco Tools Board of Directors.

Tecta America Commercial Roofing Acquires Eberhard Companies

Tecta America, the national leader in commercial roofing, has acquired Eberhard Companies based in Van Nuys, California and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Eberhard has served the greater Los Angeles and Las Vegas markets since 1945, making it one of the most recognized commercial roofing providers in those areas and has performed some of the most iconic roofing work over the last 80 years.

Eberhard has established itself as a premier provider of new construction, reroofing and service and maintenance services for property owners, and general contractors, as well as local, state and federal government customers.

Eberhard's focus on safety and taking care of its people and customers has been the keys to its success and growth.

The operation will be known as Eberhard, a Tecta America Company, LLC in the southern California market and Eberhard Southwest, a Tecta America Company, LLC, in the southern Nevada market.

Tecta America Corporation has grown to over 95 locations nationwide and is the largest roofing contractor in the United States, with an impeccable quality and safety reputation. Tecta is an approved applicator of all major manufacturers. **GSCB**

Brass Knuckle SmartCut KCR303 Features Improved Fit and Tactile Sensitivity

The Brass Knuckle medium-duty glove is now even better. Brass Knuckle® SmartCut™ (BKCR303) offers triple-threat benefits with A2 cut protection, excellent dexterity, and superior grip, now improved with better tactile sensitivity, better fit, yet the same great protection.

OSHA estimates that over 70 percent of hand and arm injuries could be prevented with the proper protective equipment. That means considering form and fit as well as function. A glove that fits well promotes compliance. It's one that workers will want to wear.



Brass Knuckle SmartCut BKCR303 medium duty glove.

BKCR303 starts with ultra-high-molecular-weight polyethylene fiber for ANSI cut resistance level A2 protection and thinner, 13-gauge material for dexterity. A non-sticky polyurethane (PU) coating on the palm and fingers creates a solid-gripping glove. Polyurethane also delivers enhanced puncture protection and abrasion resistance, all without adding bulk or reducing sensitivity.

The glove is designed specifically to provide enhanced flexibility and deliver the right balance of protection, performance, and comfort for medium-duty jobs. SmartCut BKCR303 is the natural choice for material-handling applications requiring cut resistance and dexterity.

The polyurethane palm and finger

coat delivers excellent grip even against oils, fats, and greases. An uncoated back and wrist improves ventilation, while a seamless and stretchable full knit wrist provides a snug fit and prevents dirt, debris, and cold from getting inside the glove. Color-coded cuffs easily indicate glove size.

For more information, visit brassknuckleprotection.com.

FastenMaster Introduces the New FrameFAST

FastenMaster has introduced the new FrameFAST fastener, featuring the patented TORX® ttap® Drive system. This new design empowers pros with the choice of using a standard impact driver or the award-winning FrameFAST tool. FrameFAST replaces many commonly used hurricane ties, installing 5X faster without the need for compressors, nailers, and hoses. The new 50pc box and 250pc bucket will include a free alignment guide ensuring a code compliant connection and TORX® ttap® driver bits that deliver a wobble-free drive.

“In 2011, FastenMaster began replacing hurricane ties with structural screws



FastenMaster FrameFAST fastener.

and in 2017 we introduced FrameFAST, the first system specifically designed to replace hurricane ties,” said Nikki Long, Structural Business Unit Director. “Our latest innovation delivers FrameFAST to more pros without the need for a specific tool while increasing productivity for home builders, remodelers and deck builders.”

The new fastener is certified for continuous load path applications including securing roof trusses, wall studs and plates, in addition to attaching deck joists to carrying beams. Backed by FastenMaster’s exclusive ProjectLife Guarantee, FrameFAST is guaranteed for the life of the project and is approved for use in ACQ pressure treated wood.

Established in 1981, FastenMaster is a brand of fastening solutions for professional contractors. Its products are engineered for structural, decking, and trim applications in residential construction, and its product line includes the LOK Line of structural wood screws, Tiger Claw Hidden Deck Clip System, Truss-BRACE roof truss support system, as well as Cortex Hidden Fastening Systems for deck and trim applications.

For additional information, contact FastenMaster at 800-518-3569 or visit www.FastenMaster.com.

Malco Tools Unveils Additions to Its Best-Selling C-RHEX® Line

Malco Tools, 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 additions to its popular C-RHEX® line including C-RHEX drivers and C-RHEX SAWTOOTH in 3/8-inch and 7/16-inch hex sizes. The new models offer trade professionals more options to quickly and easily install and remove fasteners commonly used on commercial sites.

With the addition of 3/8” and 7/16” hex sizes to Malco’s C-RHEX lines, trade professionals now have access to more driver options that feature a heavy-duty, deep-set magnet that does not contact



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the screw, so the fasteners spin true, and the magnet retains its strength for years to come.

Built with S2 hardened steel for long life and superior durability, the removable and reversible hex driver allows users to easily clean the socket and magnet. Trade pros can get back to work quickly by removing the driver from the impact to push the drive side of the shaft through the socket to quickly clear sealant buildup.

With the new SAWTOOTH 3/8" and 7/16" hex drivers, pros can rapidly remove sealant and adhesive-coated fasteners when doing retrofits or removals of existing HVAC equipment and ducting with the sawtooth action.

The C-RHEX drivers portfolio allows trade professionals to quickly change between popular hex sizes and eliminate troublesome buildup of sheet metal



Malco C-RHEX Driver 3-8 7-16

shavings with the swipe of a glove or towel. C-RHEX drivers are quick to set up and change between sizes while the driver shank remains installed in the drill chuck. The new hex reversible sockets in the 3/8" and 7/16" sizes ensure trade pros

have the right size without the need for additional tools.

"We're excited to offer new sizing options for our popular C-RHEX driver and SAWTOOTH product lines that are the perfect tool for contractors working on commercial HVAC and duct jobs," said Rebecca Talbot, Malco's vice president of marketing. "Malco is proud of the positive response we've received for our C-RHEX products and we look forward to providing future innovations that trade professionals need to make their jobs easier and safer."

The new models join Malco's existing C-RHEX portfolio, which includes 6 mm & 8 mm; 7 mm & 8 mm; 8 mm & 10 mm; 5/16" & 3/8"; 1/4" and 5/16"; and award-winning C-RHEX SAWTOOTH drivers in 1/4" and 5/16".

For more information about Malco Tools, visit www.malcotools.com. **GSCB**

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Fox Country Sheds

A Legacy of Hard Work, Integrity, and Stellar Customer Service

BY JEANNIE KONTIS

Who started the business and when?

Fox Country Sheds has been in business since 1998. It was originally known as “Fox’s Country Sheds,” a company started by the Fox family — Earl and his son Charles — who sold the business to Adam and Jeannie Kontis when Earl retired and Charles wanted to travel for mission work. The Kontis family have owned the business since 2008, and soon after changed the name to Fox Country Sheds. We are still referred to as “the Fox family” because the business has such a well-established reputation in the area. Also, some of the original Fox family continued to work for us for several years after the transition.

What was their previous history, prior to starting the business?

Adam and Jeannie had operated several successful businesses before taking over Fox Country Sheds, including involvement in

real estate sales, investment, and construction, as well as three successful hospitality establishments. A background in construction and business ownership paved the way for transition to prefabricated building manufacturing.

Were there changes in location through the years?

The current location for Fox Country Sheds has remained unchanged for several decades. Even prior to the formation of the Fox’s Country Sheds manufacturing brand in 1998, the facility had been a storage shed manufacturing shop for several decades. Every local knows that sheds are built in “that building on 322.” Decades past it was Brickerville Structures and then Ben’s Country Sheds before becoming Fox’s Country Sheds (now Fox Country Sheds). Most of the old T1-11 sheds that we haul away now have a Brickerville Structures placard on it from about 40 years ago or so.



From left to right: Alex, Jeannie, and Adam Kontis.

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If your company has developed a new product for builders or contractors, email a new product announcement to one of the contacts listed below for possible publication in our business-to-business magazines.

Include a clear, high resolution image of the product (no logos or advertisements), along with a brief description of your product and the problems it solves.

Submission is not a guarantee of publication. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, length, and clarity.



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NEW PRODUCTS



S-51 Unwells New Clamp for Riverlock Profiles

S-51, the inventor of engineered, manufactured, metal roof attachments, introduced its new S-5-RC™ clamp for attaching a wide range of roofing accessories to the Riverlock™ metal roof profile. The two-piece design of the S-5-RC interfaces with the rib geometry and creates a mechanical interlock strong enough to mount most rooftop applications with certified holding strength, protecting the roof from corrosion and preserving the metal panels' thermal cycling characteristics. Applicable for small- and large-scale industrial, commercial and institutional projects, the clamp can be installed anywhere along the seam for placement flexibility. Installers can utilize the S-5-RC with rails or pair the clamp with the S-51 PVKIT™ solar solution for streamlined rail-less and penetration-free solar mounting to save time and money. Made of high-tensile structural aluminum to match Riverlock's long-lasting performance, the S-5-RC requires no maintenance or reinspection and is warranted for the life of the roof.

New Stanley's Control-Lock™ Tape Measures

Stanley has released the new Control-Lock tape measures that feature an integrated finger brake, providing users with maximum control and protection when extending and retracting the blade. Coming in lengths of 12, 16, 25, 26, and 30 feet, they're made to reach out to 12 feet. Features listed:

- An integrated finger brake that provides improved control of the blade when measuring and retracting



Malco Products Expands Line of C-RHEX Drivers

Malco Products, SBC, one of the nation's leading solution developers and manufacturers of a variety of high-quality tools for the building trades, today launched an extension of its line of award-winning, Clearable, Reversible Magnetic Hex Drivers: the Building Construction Series, which features deeper sockets for installing fasteners with higher head heights such as concrete anchors, pole barn screws and other common fasteners for roofing, siding and gutter applications. The C-RHEX Building Construction Series models are available in six lengths from 2" through 12". Reversible 1/4" and 5/16" hex sockets allow for quick changes between sizes, and the Building Construction Series drivers are designed to work effectively with painted fasteners, as well as specialized pulls in the internal sockets prevents fastener sticking. End-users can save valuable time and effort by having access to two reversible hex sizes in one driver with color-coded grooves for easy identification. These drivers are built with S2 hardened steel



Bosch: New Cordless Rotary Hammer Has Corded Power

Bosch has released a new cordless rotary hammer that it says has the power of a corded tool. The concrete rotary hammer is called the Proxactar 18V SDS-max 1.5/16" Rotary Hammer (GBH18V-40C) and outperforms its corded counterpart, the Bosch 11264EVs, according to Bosch. Features listed:

- Cordless Design: Delivers corded hammer performance, with 6.7 Ft.-lbs. of impact energy (EPTA) powered by a single 18V CORE18V 8 Ah or 12Ah battery, making concrete work easier.
- KickBack Control: Reduces the risk of sudden tool reactions in binding conditions.
- Soft Start and Controlled RPM: Adjusts the tool rpm and bpm for more controlled drilling and chiseling applications when working with softer materials like brick and tile.
- Anti-Vibration System: Helps to reduce tool vibration, due to the longer air cushion built into the hammer tube and dampers added in the handle.
- Lock-On/Off Button: Keeps the tool running when locked on (hammer mode only) and helps prevent accidental activation of the tool trigger when locked off.

What else can you tell us about your history?

We have been building quality backyard storage sheds in the town of Brickerville, Lititz, Pennsylvania — a small area in Lancaster County — for decades. We are proud of the reputation that we have established and continue to uphold.

What products and services do you provide?

We manufacture prefabricated wood storage buildings — primarily sheds and garages. We like to keep current on styles and trends that homeowners lean toward. When we originally took over the business, only vinyl sided sheds were being manufactured. We added painted sheds as well, which are quite popular.

Our main focus is on wholesale because we respect our dealer's time and want to be available for support as needed, to answer general inquiries or to do custom orders. We do also sell retail, mainly locally or in areas where we don't have a dealer. We feel it keeps our ideas for new styles and trends current so that we know what to offer our dealers.

What is your current territory?

We focus primarily on the East Coast of the U.S., mostly mid-Atlantic, although we have a few dealers in more central states and the occasional retail sales out of the area, too. For instance, we just shipped a shed to Michigan.

What is the current business climate in your area?

Our area in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, is generally involved in a lot of manufacturing, so unemployment is relatively low. This means that homes sell easily, and homeowners need sheds. We are seeing an uptick in larger styles, such as two-story garages or large sheds in general. This seems to be the consensus from most of our wholesale orders also. While the orders might be a bit slower than in recent years, during the pandemic we had an increase in sales. We are seeing larger sized/priced orders coming in. People who have the means are buying big buildings.

What is your primary customer base?

Our primary customer base is our wholesale dealer customer. Besides our wholesale orders, our retail sales consist of residential (mostly) but we also have our fair share of businesses placing orders when in need of either a storage facility or even an outdoor area to retrofit for staff breakrooms or excess office space.

How do you differentiate yourself from your competitors?

There is definitely competition in the area, as we are located right in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the heartbeat of shed manufacturing on the East Coast. We don't really do anything in particular as a gimmick to try to differentiate ourselves; rather, we treat everyone as we would want to be treated, with respect and terrific customer service. We build a quality product and

it speaks for itself. Our customer service is top notch, and that is really the feedback that we hear most — from our wholesale dealers and from our retail customers. The one main point that would differentiate us from our local competition is that we are the only shed builder in the area (that we know of!) who is not a member of the Plain Community. We are the only “English” shed builder in the area and that takes people by surprise! But we feel we have an excellent relationship with our local competition and can speak freely with them about the current business climate, etc.



Fox Country Shed Crew Christmas Party

Tell us the challenges the company has overcome, and how you did it.

The largest challenge has always been the workforce, generally finding labor for the shop who have the skill or are trainable, who will want to work for an honest wage, who pay attention to detail and take pride in their work. We seem to have honed that need now, and have a great crew working in the shop with us. Some have been with us for 14 years, some 10 years, and that seems encouraging to new employees who can see that they can have a good career and make a living building for Fox Country Sheds.

To what do you owe the success of your business?

It is really the same mindset that we look for in our employees: hard work, attention to detail, and pride in our work. We treat our customers and our employees fairly and with respect. We have an excellent relationship with our suppliers, who have become more like friends over the years. It all boils down to being honest and respectful, and not being afraid to take chances. You need to be flexible with ideas, with investments in your building and equipment, and with your relationships.

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

“Don't sweat the small stuff” would be Alex's answer. Five years ago would have been right before the pandemic, and we

had to just “go with the flow” with the materials shortages and backlogs. It was really hard to see where it would all end up — with the surcharges and pricing fluctuations. Jeannie’s answer would be “invest in technology,” as we were so busy building sheds that we really didn’t have time to keep up with our website and new online tools, which we are catching up with now.

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

Don’t get so hung up on pricing and markup and margins right off the start. Your main concern is providing excellent customer service, and the referrals will come. Get to know your vendors and suppliers and create a relationship with them. Make friends with your customers. They are spending a lot of money, and they want to know that you are trustworthy and not trying to make a buck off them.

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

It’s really the online shopper that is creating the biggest op-

portunity. If you are not reaching your consumer online and giving them all of the information they need, while still providing personal service, you are not taking advantage of the biggest opportunities available to you. And this is an ongoing effort, as technology changes so quickly.

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

The biggest challenges would be HOAs and local government obstacles with regards to setbacks and whether a homeowner can get a shed that they want and place it in a reasonable area in their yard. Some newer home developments and local zoning make it hard for a homeowner to place a shed, making them jump through hoops such as stormwater studies, etc, that it really creates a burden for many customers. They just get overwhelmed with the paperwork.

An equal challenge as a manufacturer is the cost of insurance. General liability, property insurance, and worker’s compensation for our line of work is getting to be very expensive. Of course we continue to be insured to protect ourselves and our employees,

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as well as our customers, but the reality of it is we know that many of our competitors are not insured, and oftentimes they end up paying for it greatly.

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

So many areas! None of us are perfect and we always have a lot to learn. Time-management would be a good start; it's easy to plan your day of phone calls and appointments, but as a business owner there are always obstacles that get thrown in the mix and can upend the schedule. The shop schedule never gets missed. You have to be good at letting the reins loose a bit and pivoting and still getting the sheds completed in time for loading on the trailer that has been scheduled for weeks.

Technology can help with some of those time constraints, but we need to make time to learn about the technology, and then it can mess up the time-management thing.

What are your Three Keys to Good Business?

1. Hard work - never being afraid of the long hours and planning involved.
2. Integrity - being honest in your business dealings and in life in general.
3. Self-efficacy - having the self confidence to take risks and seeing things through.

What are your business goals for the future?

We are always looking to increase our wholesale accounts because we are a manufacturer and that is our main business. We are always open to talking to retailers to see how we can help them to add Fox sheds to their inventory.

We are also always on the lookout for a larger manufacturing plant, or a property to build on so we can really spread out and work more efficiently.

Lastly, future plans would include Alex taking the reins entirely as Adam and Jeannie take lesser roles in the day-to-day obligations.

Tell us about your company culture and business philosophy.

The Fox Country Sheds Mission Statement: It is our goal to provide our (wholesale and retail) customers with a superior product built with integrity and quality. We strive to satisfy our customer's needs through the process of ordering, customizing, and delivering a product which will enhance the end user's property and fulfill their storage needs within their budget.

Who are your component suppliers? Can we give a shout-out to them for their great products?

- Metal Roofing from AB Martin. Shingles from Service Wholesale Inc.
- Plywood & Lumber from Capital Forest Products, Seven D Wholesale, Culpeper
- Insulation - Elite Insulation, Home Depot
- Fasteners, Adhesives, Sealants - Apple Outdoor Supply, WEH Supply, Leola Fasteners, Corus
- Ventilation - Ridge vents: CL Aluminum, Gable vents: Apple Outdoor Supply
- Columns & Railings - Red Run Structures
- Windows & Doors - Bird-In-Hand Windows, Apple Outdoor Supply, WEH Supply
- LVL Beams: AB Martin, Mussleman Lumber **GSCB**

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PROJECT OF THE MONTH



Carport With Deck

National Barn Company - Central Division • www.nationalbarngo.com

For this project in Park Hill, Oklahoma, our customer

imagined more than just a functional carport.

He wanted a space that seamlessly blended protection for his vehicles with an inviting outdoor living area. By adding a raised deck, we were able to craft a delightful extension of his home, perfect for

hosting friendly gatherings or simply enjoying a quiet moment of relaxation. **GSCB**



The Details:

Builder: National Barn Company

Size: 16'x36'x14' ceiling height roof only

Roof Pitch: 3:12

Metal: Burrow's Post-Frame Supply

Posts: Burrow's Post-Frame Supply, solid sawn 6"x6" pressure-treated

Trusses: Burrow's Post-Frame Supply

Additional Details:

- Attached porch with wood deck underneath, 2:12, 10' ceiling - 0' OH
- Wall girts, 2"x6" #2
- Skirt boards, 2"x6" #3 pressure-treated
- Corner bracing, 2"x4" #2
- Truss carrier (double-top plate), 2"x10" #2

GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PRODUCTS & SERVICES SEEN IN THIS ISSUE. HERE'S HOW:



If you are looking for more information from companies featured in this issue, fill out this form.

Mail the completed form to us, and we will have those companies get in touch with you. There's no need to fill out multiple forms; we'll do the legwork for you.

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GSCB JUNE/JULY 2024

First CSI Annual & Market Report On Its Way Soon

Help Improve Future Reports by Participating in Surveys

As of writing this, the first CSI Annual & Market Report is being sent to the printer. Because of the timing, the Annual may be included with this issue.

July 2 will be the fifth anniversary of our acquiring the Construction Division from the previous owner, F+W Media. In that time, we have expanded into multiple related markets. These include roll forming, sheds and portable buildings, and cold-formed metal. Adding these to the audiences from our legacy magazines, there seemed to be one frustrating point spread across the markets: a lack of actionable data.

We were asked to participate in market surveys by sharing our lists. At that time, the combined subscription list for our magazines was almost 60,000. Performing the due diligence revealed that some of the surveys had contact lists of under 100 people. Not 100 responses, but under 100 people on the list to receive the survey. Our experience told us there had to be a better way.

We experience about a 6% completion rate for the recipients of the survey; naturally, the more the better. Our surveys are still growing, and we are refining our best practices regarding survey content and generating responses.

This year we received 302 responses to our survey. Not earth shattering, but enough to generate data with a reasonable confidence level.

Typically, market reports are sold as proprietary and cost recipients several hundred to several thousand dollars. We are providing it to all our subscribers free of charge.

If you see value in data for our markets and use this information in any way, please help us improve for the 2025 CSI Annual. There are a few simple things you can do:

First and foremost, take the survey. The more responses we have, the more complete the data. The 2024 Annual is admittedly weaker in some geographic regions and some market segments. More responses solve this concern.

Second, tell people and share this information. The more

people who know about this, the more people can benefit from the information and take the survey. We are publishing and distributing the report free to subscribers so the information can be shared and help grow our corner of the construction industry.

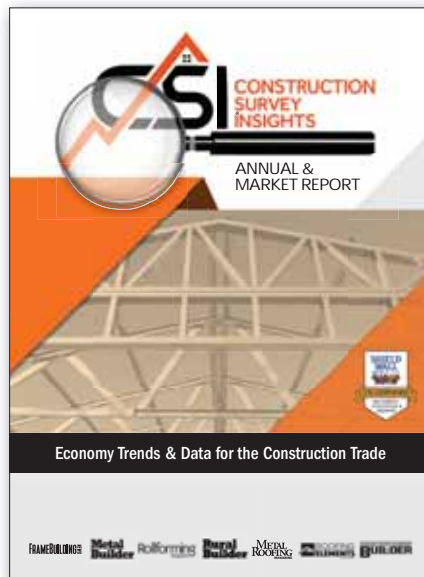
Third, suggest topic areas or questions we should add to the survey. My email and phone number are all over our publications and I appreciate feedback.

Last, but certainly not least, consider sponsoring a section. If you look at the metrics (cost per thousand), this is the most cost-effective product we have to reach our audience.

Collecting, curating, printing, and distributing the data is expensive. I personally want to express sincere gratitude to the sponsors who helped us make this

possible and our advertisers. Without your support, we could not make this type of investment in the industries we all serve.

Thank you for your confidence and support as we continue to grow and support our industries. **GSCB**



If you like the CSI columns or find the information useful, help us help you.

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