

NEWS BRIEFS

Newsletter of the Architectural Woodwork Institute

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AWI NewsBriefs

AWI's monthly newsletter is published as a service for members to help them improve operations and grow their businesses. *NewsBriefs* is also a resource for news and information about AWI's products, programs and publications and other membership benefits and services. •

Coming Next Month

- Outreach to Architects
- Revamped AWI Web site
- Safety Solutions Web Portal



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Tough Economy Prompts Changes, New Directions

As the saying goes, “When times get tough, the tough get going.” While the economic downturn hit Northway Industries two years ago like so many other firms in the woodwork industry, “we had Lean Manufacturing processes in place that we ramped up to drive down costs. And, we instituted better communications to be more responsive to our customers’ needs,” Donald O’Hora, President & CEO of Northway Industries told *AWI NewsBriefs*.

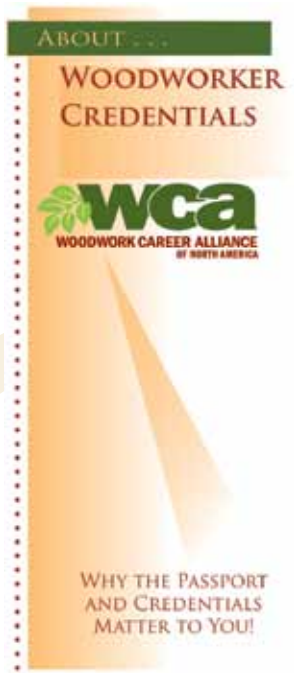
Diversification

“To turn that sales slump around, we also further diversified into new markets. All of the changes resulted in sales picking up last year,” Mr. O’Hora said.

(continued on page 2)

“All of the changes resulted in sales picking up last year...”

Woodwork Skill Standards: Workforce Development Progress



It was only four years ago when Skill Standards seemed like a distant dream. Now they are reality.

Working with grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service matched by industry contributions, the Woodwork Career Alliance of North America (WCA) was established in July 2007 and got off to a running start. The nonprofit organization mapped out a plan of work through 2013 and began developing National Wood Manufacturing Industry Skill Standards.

“The all-volunteer force from all parts of the advanced wood processing industry have written and published criteria for over 150 woodwork operation skills on over 50 of the most common tools and machines in the industry’s plants and factories,” said Greg Heuer, WCA Secretary and AWI Chief Learning Officer.

These criteria are being adopted by woodworkers and instructors to educate, train and measure the skills of industry professionals and vocational students.

What came next? WCA then developed evaluation documents. Next up is actual credentialing, with a full rollout planned in 2013.

(continued on page 4)

Tough Economy Prompts Changes... *(continued from page 1)*

“What specifically changed?” *AWI NewsBriefs* asked. “While we have diversified for some time,” Mr. O’Hora said, “we focused more on matching our

BUSINESS TOOLS

products to new markets. As an OEM supplier, we serve a variety of customers, so that if a significant decline occurs in one market, another picks up,” he said.

Communications

“On the other side, a focus on more communication with customers enabled us to strengthen existing relationships. Working with our customers, we discovered ways to work together to provide added value,” Mr. O’Hora said.

Northway Industries utilizes Information Technology to streamline the ordering and quoting processes. “Our specialists wrote Web-based programs (such as scheduling and tracking jobs) for customers to order and use our products and view the information online.” The value-added services eliminate wasted time on a telephone call and facilitate easier, timelier communication.

“Getting systems to talk to each other is difficult,” Mr. O’Hora confirmed, “but we provide programs to customers that are low cost solutions, including electronic databases and spreadsheets. When we use those systems, information from the customer gets integrated with our machinery and production documents to take guesswork out of the order processes,” he said.

“Feedback from customers has been very positive. They are willing to share more information than in the past. In today’s business climate, it is essential that we keep up with short lead times,” Mr. O’Hora said. “It’s a collaborative approach that combines what we do best with the strengths of our customers,” he added.

Lean Principles

“Lean Manufacturing is a continuous process. It always has to be a focus because it is easy to backslide. At Northway, we have great people who years ago bought into

“Northway Industries utilizes Information Technology to institute streaming ordering and quoting processes.”

The value-added services eliminate wasted time on a telephone call and facilitate easier, timelier communication.

One of the big changes instituted at Northway is investment in energy efficiencies.”

Lean Manufacturing principles; they are innovative and continually improve our systems. I am amazed that every day they come in with new ideas and innovations,” he said.

Plant Operations

“We’ve explored other cost- and time-saving measures, such as integration of certain information systems into our manufacturing processes.”

For instance, an automated material handling system in the company’s warehouse picks and sorts boards. A wireless interface throughout the plant allows supervisors and material handlers to receive information not only from person-to-person but also from machine-to-person. These innovations have led to time savings and significant cost reductions.

One of the big changes instituted at Northway is investment in energy efficiencies. Northway invested in Biomass heating for efficient climate control. A computerized dust collection system produced a 30% energy efficiency savings by adjusting to actual demand.

Increased awareness of behavior also resulted in changes. Energy consumption is tracked weekly and reported to

employees. Teams of people are committed to turning off lights and shutting down machines that are idling.

Employee Training

“During the economic downturn, we redoubled our emphasis on training. Cross training has allowed us to increase capacity and flexibility. The investment in our human resources has improved quality and reduced waste. The experience and dedication of people is the differentiator between companies,” Mr. O’Hora emphasized.

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Sustainability

“Another differentiator for Northway is commitment to ‘green’ initiatives. We are FSC-certified and we have tools at hand to comply with LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) projects. One of our staff members, Garry Astles serves on the AWI Sustainability Resources Committee,” he added.

Giving Back

Northway is unique in that it operates under a Trust set up in 2003 by the company’s late owner, C. Kenneth Battram. Its mission is to provide jobs in the central Pennsylvania region and help out in the community whenever it can through charitable



Northway personnel in a project meeting working with their Web site cabinet ordering interface. (Seated left to right) George Roush, Production Coordinator; Andrew Shreck, IT Manager; (standing left to right) Don O’Hora, President & CEO; and Elwyn Peachey, Quality Director.

efforts. Northway’s former owner had funded the Trust with the company’s assets for purposes of its mission. Northway employees are working for themselves as well as the community. •

Donald O’Hora has been President & CEO of Northway Industries since 1998 when he relinquished his millwork customer status and joined the company. He’s a 25-year veteran of the architectural woodwork industry. The company’s 130 employees work three operating shifts to produce flat panel products sold to woodwork manufacturers and resellers. Northway sells for the store fixture, institutional furniture, office furniture, and component markets. Check out Mr. O’Hora’s blog at www.northwayind.com.

Retaining Top Talent during the Recovery

As the economy continues to recover, top-performing employees may consider pursuing new job opportunities. How can employers retain their key talent?

Here are some tips:

- Offer a competitive employee benefits package that includes health care, dental, vision and prescription drug plans, as well as other components, such as a 401(k) savings plan and disability and life insurance.
- Help your employees develop and grow professionally. Offer opportunities for them to share information through internal and external training sessions, teamwork and mentoring programs.
- Explain how their role affects the company’s success. Seek out and listen to their ideas and feedback.
- Establish career paths. Provide opportunities for promotion or cross-training.
- Reward employees for a job well done and share the news.
- Look for ways to have fun in the workplace.
- Encourage creative brainstorming to overcome challenges or roadblocks.
- Allow employees to balance their work and personal lives by being flexible in scheduling.
- Establish and communicate standards of performance, conduct regular reviews and link compensation to performance.
- Treat others as you would like to be treated. •

Tips from Insperty (NYSE: NSP), a trusted advisor to America’s best businesses for more than 25 years, which provides an array of human resources and business solutions designed to help improve business performance. Insperty Business Performance Advisors offer the most comprehensive Workforce Optimization solution in the marketplace that delivers administrative relief, better benefits, reduced liabilities and a systematic way to improve productivity. Additional offerings include MidMarket Solutions, Performance Management, Expense Management, Time and Attendance, Organizational Planning, Employment Screening, Recruiting Services, Retirement Services, Business Insurance and Technology Services. Insperty business performance solutions support more than 100,000 businesses with over 2 million employees. With 2010 revenues in excess of \$1.7 billion, Insperty operates in 58 offices throughout the United States. For more information call 800.465.3800 or visit www.insperty.com.

Please see AWI cautionary disclaimer on page 1.



Woodwork Skill Standards *(continued from page 1)*

Evaluator Training Begins

With the first group of evaluators trained on April 30 in Madison, WI, the pathway to credentialing will begin in earnest.

“This first team of 12 evaluators is the core group of a network that will be formed throughout North America who will have authority to register the achievements of woodworkers seeking Skills Standards credentials,” Heuer said. “The evaluators are industry members with tool-using experience who will conduct assessments of woodworkers seeking to earn their credentials.”

Three kinds of evaluators are being trained to cover anticipated demand and interest of woodworkers and students seeking credentials.

WORKFORCE

Plant Evaluator: a supervisor, production manager, or lead person in any woodwork manufacturing facility, not only AWI plants. This type of evaluator will usually assess company employees, but may wish to conduct assessments for neighboring firms as an Independent Evaluator for a fee.

Educator Evaluator: an educator who is teaching at a high school or vocational technical school who will assess students in a school. This educator may also wish to be available as an Independent Evaluator, hired to conduct assessments in other locations.

Independent Evaluator: a woodworker or educator who will travel to different plants, probably on a regional basis, and will be compensated for expenses associated with assessments.

Subsequent evaluator training classes will take place in locations based on demand and interest in partici-

pating in evaluator development. Rollout will occur regionally in the next four years in the following states: Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and North Carolina. However, the schedule will adapt to demand expressed by AWI members in other geographic regions. Contact AWI Chief Learning Officer and WCA Secretary Greg Heuer at gheuer@woodworkcareer.org to express interest and inquire about upcoming classes.

Get Your Passport!

Woodworkers and students pursuing a career path in the wood industry can create a record of their skills and achievements by enrollment in the WCA Passport Program.

For architectural woodworkers, the Skill Standards are useful for evaluating the skills of employees and supporting a fair and appropriate pay scale. For employees, earning one's credentials validates skills and worth in furthering their careers.

The passport is a physical – and portable – record of the skills and achievements of a woodworking professional. It begins with “Tool Stamps” which are earned to qualify woodworkers for one of five credentials. The passport ties into an online database which validates that a woodworker has demonstrated the ability to safely and accurately operate specific machinery. Get your Passport at www.brightdoc.com/wca.

The evaluators will assess the demonstrated skills of woodworkers according to the Skills Standards criteria. You can get your copy at

Brightdoc while buying your passport.

As evaluators do their assessments and grow in number throughout the country, woodworkers with the

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WCA Information!

www.woodworkcareer.org
gheuer@woodworkcareer.org

- Purchase Skill Standards books.
- Learn about gaining credentials.
- Enroll in Passport Program.
- Inquire about the Evaluator Program.
- Learn about WCA progress.
- Volunteer to advance WCA's work.

Proceeds, if any, from the sales of Skill Standards and Passports, are invested in the WCA to cover development and out-of-pocket costs. The Woodwork Career Alliance is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization.



“ With the first group of evaluators trained the pathway to credentialing will begin in earnest. ”

“The passport is a physical – and portable – record of the **skills and achievements** of a woodworking professional.”



The first Woodwork Career Alliance Passport has been issued. Patrick Molzahn (right), Cabinetmaking & Millwork Program Director, Madison Area Technical College, stamps the Passport of student Adam Minch who successfully demonstrated his ability in edge rabbeting using the table saw.

qualifications you want will raise the quality of professionalism throughout the industry. And, as schools implement the program and the credential process, there will be an ongoing supply of employees who will be qualified to work as professionals in architectural woodwork plants. This is tomorrow's workforce in the making.

Find out more about the Woodwork Career Alliance... building tomorrow's workforce. •

AWI NEWS

More Online Resources Coming Soon!

AWI will deliver more user-friendly online services for members in the early summer. What can you expect? Access to a new world of resources, open 24/7 for your convenience. Here are the some of the features you can expect.

AWI Web site

- Totally new fresh design
- Easier, more intuitive navigation
- A “public face” for manufacturers and suppliers
- New password-protected gateway for exclusive member services
- Integrated eLearning
- Organized by member benefits/ service type

Safety Solutions Web Portal

- Member only access through new AWI Web site
- OSHA compliance resources for both Federal and State
- Forms, templates, resources
- Safety PowerPoints, audio, training guides and handouts
- Library of workplace safety topics
- Safety Quick Links-Safety News – keep abreast of latest regulations

Stand by for new resources from AWI...helping you make the most of your membership. •

MAKE THE MOST
Of your AWI Membership!

New AWI Members

Manufacturing

- Antix, Inc.**
Las Cruces, NM
- Anything Woodworks, LLC**
Oak Hill, NY
- Creative Design Custom Cabinets, Inc.**
Crystal Lake, IL
- Crimson Group, Inc.**
Makati City, Philippines
- Kohout Woodwork, Inc.**
Addison, IL
- Library Worx**
High Springs, FL
- MCC Millwork & Cabinet Corporation**
Gaithersburg, MD
- Meilahn Manufacturing Company**
Chicago, IL
- Milestone Cabinetry & Millwork**
Hobart, IN
- National Custom Millwork**
Beltsville, MD
- New Era Custom Design & Cabinet Works, Inc.**
Frederick, MD
- Platinum Development Services**
Ankeny, IA
- Ross Display Fixture Company, LLC DBA RDwoodworks**
Seattle, WA
- Top Service of Lexington, LLC**
Nicholasville, KY
- Trimpac, LLC**
Marshfield, WI
- Woodmotif, Inc.**
Hempstead, NY
- Woodsmiths, Inc.**
Kalamazoo, MI

Suppliers

- Clark's Hardwood Lumber Company**
Houston, TX
- Install Solutions International**
Kansas City, MO
- Surface Solutions, LLC**
Waterloo, IA •

AWI Sustainability Resources Committee Update

By Rob Ziegelmeier, Chair, AWI Sustainability Resources Committee

GREEN SCENE

Our AWI “green” team, aka the AWI Sustainability Resources Committee, has a full plate of initiatives in 2011. We’ve hit the ground running and are stepping up our efforts to deliver timely information about the ever-changing “green scene” in the design-build industry.

- 1 Our group is currently working to develop fact sheets on the individual LEED® {Leadership in Energy and Environment Design green building rating system™ of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)} wood credits which we expect to have available this year.
- 2 Participation in the “AWI Talk” series of online question and answer forums will be our most visible near-term project. “Green Talk” will debut next month online. I’ll be on hand to answer your questions about sustainability, green certification programs, and successfully participating in “green” projects. The series is free to members. Register early; participation is limited to 45. Watch for details in e-blasts from AWI and in *AWI e-briefs*.
- 3 Next, we will create a document on Forest Stewardship Council Chain of Custody program requirements and processes. We will lay out the steps involved as well as the impact on your business.
- 4 Our committee will also review the AWI Wiki Sustainable Web site resources and update them as needed.

On a side note, I have had contact with the United States Green Building Council and they are working on standardized forms for your wood credit submissions which we will address when they become available.

Feel free to contact us at anytime (rzig@awinet.org) to inquire about these and any relevant “green” issues. We want to hear from you. It’s not easy being a “green” woodworker. •

Rob Ziegelmeier’s multi-faceted committee service began in 1986 and culminated in his election as AWI National President (1996-1997). He chaired the AWI LEED® Task Force from 2003 to 2007 and currently chairs the AWI Sustainability Resources Committee, serves on the AWI Education Committee, and is an AWI LEED Team Presenter and a member of the AWI Speakers Bureau. In recent years, Mr. Ziegelmeier has established Forest Stewardship Council Certification for two companies. He conducts numerous AIA-accredited presentations to Architectural and Design firms on the impact of LEED on the woodworking industry and is a consulting resource to AWI members about LEED projects. He is currently the Northeast Salesman for Fetzer Architectural Woodwork of Salt Lake City, UT in addition to his work with AWI. He can be reached at rzig@awinet.org.



AWI / Industry Learning Opportunities

Explore the following education sessions to supplement lifelong learning opportunities for maintaining a competitive edge.

LEARNING FORUM

AWI “AWS Talk” Sessions

May 25 and June 27

Watch for AWI e-blasts and *AWI e-briefs* for news of online forums in the new “AWI Talk” series featuring specialists who will answer your questions. “AWI Talk” sessions include “QCP Talk,” “AWS Talk” and “Green Talk.” Register early for the one-hour sessions at www.awinet.org under “Meetings and Events” on the left menu bar. Seating is limited to 45 participants. “AWS Talk” on May 25 and “Green Talk” on June 22 will be coming to your desktop soon. Don’t miss these complimentary benefits of your organization’s membership in AWI.

AWI eLearning...Always On

Online, Anytime - 24/7

“Fundamentals of Estimating,” one of AWI’s most popular professional development courses, is now open for members free of charge in 2011. Take the course over time to fit your schedule right at your computer. Other resources and courses will roll out throughout 2011. Enter through the “Members Only” portal; be sure to login FIRST at www.awinet.org. Then, on the home page, on the left menu look for “Educational Offerings” to find the “eLearning” tab. Click on that tab and enter a new world of learning opportunities. Watch for news in *AWI e-briefs* about new offerings when they introduced.

AWFS® Fair

July 20-23

“Using Industry Standards as Teaching Guides”

July 23

AWI and the Woodwork Career Alliance (WCA) is sponsoring this session about integration of both the *Architectural Woodwork Standards* (AWS) and the

WCA Skill Standards into a useful, practical package for teachers of woodworking, whether they be in schools or in plants. Gain an understanding of the WCA’s Skill Standards and how the process can produce WCA’s Woodwork Passport Credential. Combining the individual credentialing process with an overview of the AWS Standards makes the goal of developing a properly trained workforce attainable. This session is applicable to anyone who trains or instructs woodworking professionals to meet or exceed industry standards for advanced woodworking.

AWFS® Fair College of Woodworking Knowledge

July 20-23

Check out the 46 CWWK education seminars that include sessions for “Shops Ten and Under, The Belt Sander Races, The Green Desk, The smartSHOP,” and more. To take advantage of the 10% discount for AWI members, register online at www.AWFSfair.org and fill in the following code: AW4323.

ISCHP³

October 16-18

AWI is a cooperating association of the International Scientific Conference on Hardwood Processing (ISCHP³), October 16-18, 2011 at Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment in Blacksburg, VA. The conference will cover hardwood related issues from source to the customer, discuss recent developments, and show paths into the future. Go to www.ischp2011.org for program details and registration information. The conference is supported by the Wood Education and Resource Center and the USDA Forest Service. •



Inspection Preparation Saves Woodworkers Time & Money

The average cost of a repeat inspection due to noncompliance with the Standards referenced is \$1,100.

This cost, which includes but is not limited to travel, meals, lodging and *per diem* for the Q-representative conducting the re-inspection, is easily avoidable, according to the Quality Certification Corporation (QCC).

ABOUT QCP

Below are some helpful hints for woodworkers on preparing for accreditation inspection, one of the three types of Quality Certification Program (QCP) inspections that also include triennial inspection and project compliance inspection.

Accreditation Inspection

Following satisfactory completion of tests on the *Architectural Woodwork Standards (AWS)* and the QCC Policies, as well as the submission of references, the QCC will contact the applicant woodworking firm to schedule an accreditation inspection. The purpose of such an inspection is to determine the firm's ability to manufacture, finish and install work in compliance with the AWS.

Steps to a successful accreditation inspection:

1. Send shop drawings to your Q-representative for review prior to, or during the accreditation inspection. Drawings are required for all samples shown, which includes the items from the recently completed projects. The drawings for all samples must conform to the criteria in Section 1 of the AWS.



2. Refer to the Minimum Sample Criteria included with the application packet and in the program policies. During the accreditation inspection, the Q-representative will inspect samples of work in the sections the firm wants to certify. If samples of these items are not already available in the plant, the woodworker is required to manufacture samples in preparation for the accreditation inspection.
3. Previously completed work in place may be used as a sample, but must not be older than two years. Prepare to show documentation of the timeframe.

The average cost of a repeat inspection due to noncompliance with the Standards referenced is \$1,100. This cost is easily avoidable.

4. Submit evidence that the same management team was in place for all QCP projects provided as samples. This may be substantiated in the form of payroll records or any type of correspondence confirming dates of employment.

Woodworking firms are responsible for ensuring all conforming materials are ready for review prior to the Q-representative's visit. Failure to do so may result in repeat inspections which occur at the expense of the woodworking firm.

Next month, watch for news about QCP triennial and project compliance inspections. For additional information, visit the QCP Web site at www.awiqcp.org.

2011 AWI Sponsors

AWI thanks these annual sponsors for their additional support in 2011. Visit www.awinet.org to contact them whenever a need arises for their services.

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