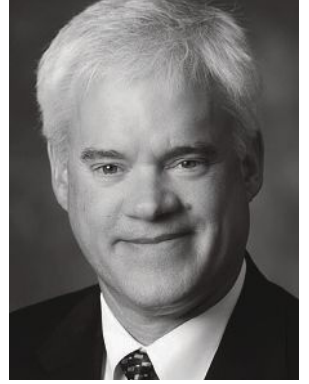


Changing Times Signal Great Opportunity

Metal building manufacturers work to improve the industry

By Tom Boal,
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A good friend in the industry likes to point out that in every vehicle you drive, you'll always see one thing that never changes—the rearview mirror is only a fraction of the size of the windshield. That analogy reminds us to remember what's behind us, and that our focus clearly needs to be on what is in front of us, on the bigger picture—and plan strategically to deal with whatever is ahead.

For example, our lives and perceptions have been changed—perhaps permanently altered—by a pandemic that just doesn't seem to end. It continues to present unique challenges for us all. When we've tried to get on with life, up pops another crisis, another variant, another CDC recommendation—and we are forced to adjust once again. But change helps us grow.

In the current business climate, this is particularly true in the context of labor issues. While many people today talk about the great resignation, others express it as the great re-negotiation. Perhaps the latter is a more accurate term. In some circumstances, employees are leaving to pursue other career choices; but more often, they're asserting a certain leverage since labor demand is outpacing labor supply. This unusual predicament may allow for some much-needed change from employers to create an environment that allows us to attract and retain top talent. The pandemic is not over and it will continue to impact labor. Being realistic and addressing this issue upfront is crucial. We need to confront deficiencies in work environments, analyze labor costs, etc., to improve our human resource structures and invest more in innovation and automation.

One way to begin that process is to learn

from one another. As president of a metal building manufacturing company, I am continually impressed with the camaraderie that exists among my counterparts whose firms are involved in the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA). I have found that competitors affiliated with the MBMA are very willing to share their best practices and their experiences with each other to better the industry overall. It has been heartening for me to see how the leaders of MBMA member firms have helped each other navigate these changing times. Such relationships remain invaluable throughout this pandemic. MBMA provides the peer-to-peer networking we could not have readily achieved through other means.

I have also found that MBMA, through its staff and committee volunteers, is helping members attract new employees by providing resources to


educate potential team members. A list of videos in the attached sidebar exemplifies the types of informative materials available. MBMA also promotes metal building careers through social media posts that appeal to young people who are exploring what career path to take. In addition, their educational materials promote the innovations and creativity now inherent in the design of metal buildings.

are not such critical concerns like they were in 2021. There are still some component shortages, but the material supply side of the business is stabilizing quite well.

We're also pleased to see that MBMA members like Steel Dynamics and Nucor Steel are investing in U.S. steel production with new mills featuring electric arc furnace (EAF) technology. EAFs allow steel to be made from a 100% scrap metal feedstock, which greatly reduces the energy required to make steel when compared with primary steelmaking from ores.

And as an aside, I was pleased to note in MBMA's recently updated Environmental Product Declarations that MBMA member firms are using more recycled steel and producing less scrap than in years past. Thanks to the work of MBMA's Energy and Sustainability committees, we now know that the metal building manufacturing firms surveyed are, in aggregate, using 20% more recycled steel and producing significantly less scrap.

It is true that demand remains strong and there are plenty of building opportunities on the horizon within the low-rise building segment. Perhaps this is one reason why so many firms are being added to the MBMA member roster in the first quarter of 2022, MBMA is gaining a record number of new members. That growth was made possible by the efforts of the MBMA Membership Committee and its chair, Darren McGonigle with Konecranes. Thank you all!

Together, we can define new ways to overcome current and inevitable challenges to enhance industry growth. If your firm is not a member, I encourage you to consider joining the MBMA. Let's face industry changes together. I urge you to get engaged today to gain competitive advantage and new opportunity for tomorrow. 

Tom Boal is chairman of the Metal Building Manufacturers Association. More information about the association is available at www.mbma.com.

Author's Note: My first paragraph is a direct quote from a previous article in the December issue of Metal Construction News. Do you know who said it?

Videos to Educate Potential Employees

If you want to help potential employees understand some of the roles available to them in the metal building industry, show them what real people in real jobs have to say about their personal careers in the metal building industry. All videos below are available on the MBMA YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/c/mbmamedia

- ***I am an Engineering Manager***
- ***I am a Design Engineer***
- ***I am a Project Estimator***
- ***I am a Project Clarifier***
- ***I am a Detailing Supervisor***
- ***I am a Project Detailer***
- ***I am a Detailer in Training***
- ***I am a Roll Form Operator***
- ***I am a Materials Handler***

And help them learn more with these relevant videos:

- ***Metal Building Careers***
- ***Metal Building Systems 101***
- ***Introduction to Metal Building Systems***

Supply and Demand: A Metal Building Boom

One reason that human resources and technology are so important today is that the metal building industry is particularly strong, despite the pandemic. Now that supply chain issues have mostly evened out, steel shortages