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2007 International Roofing Expo Rides a Hot Streak in Las Vegas

by Rick Damato

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April 11, 2007

ARTICLE TOOLS

Educational Opportunities and New Products Draw Record Crowd



Above left: Cutting the ribbon to officially open the 2007 International Roofing Expo are Jill Nash, publisher of Roofing Contractor; Bob Daly, senior vice president of the NRCA; Bill Good, executive vice president of the NRCA; Mark Gaulin, president of the NRCA; Rick McConnell, vice president of Hanley Wood Exhibitions; and Donna Bellantone, the director of the International Roofing Expo. (Photo by Scott Hilling.)

The International Roofing Expo continues to solidify its reputation as the must-attend industry event, and this year's show set records for the number of attendees and exhibits. The 2007 IRE, the third edition of the show since it has been owned and managed by Hanley Wood Exhibitions, was held March 6-8 at the Las Vegas Convention Center.



With 1,049 booths and 465 exhibiting companies covering 104,900 net square feet of exhibit space, this year's exhibit hall was the largest in the show's history in terms of exhibiting companies, number of booths and net square feet. Final verified attendance included 9,020 professionals, surpassing last year's record-breaking attendance figure. Attendees came from all segments of the roofing industry, including residential and commercial contractors, architects, engineers, consultants, building owners, facility managers, manufacturers, distributors, foremen, superintendents, project managers and other ancillary industry professionals. They represented all 50 states, as well as 43 countries from around the world, including Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Korea, Colombia, Belgium, Venezuela, Australia, France, Taiwan, Greece, Israel, India, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

"The aisles were completely packed and the conference sessions were full," said Rick McConnell, vice president of Hanley Wood Exhibitions. "Executives from across the industry are referring to the 2007 International Roofing Expo as the most successful show to date. The IRE has experienced solid growth with the Hanley Woods Exhibitions and NRCA partnership. Our strategic alliances with industry associations and publications, including Roofing Contractor, are beneficial to promoting and growing the show."

The show was launched on an inspirational note by Chris Gardner, the best-selling author of *The Pursuit of Happyness*, who made the keynote address, sponsored by United Solar Ovonic LLC. The audience of more than 1,400 listened intently as Gardner recounted his rags-to-riches journey from homeless single father to self-made millionaire, then got an inside look at the making of the feature film based on his life story starring Will Smith. "Whenever I see that movie trailer, I have one thought," said Gardner. "Those people spent \$70 million to recreate what I did with nothing!"

Educational Sessions

In addition to the excitement on the show floor, 50 education and training opportunities were held at the show, including 18 technical sessions, six workplace safety sessions and 26 business-related sessions, including leadership/management, legal/human resources, money matters, sales and service, and general business. Forty-four classes featured new topics, with six of last year's most popular sessions repeated due to high demand.

Contract language is always a hot topic for roofing contractors, and the presentation titled "Interpreting Contract Documents" led by Stephen Phillips was one of the most lively and interactive we attended at the 2007 IRE. Phillips, a partner with Hendrick, Phillips, Salzman & Flatt in Atlanta, took the audience, which consisted of mostly roofing contractors but did include a general contractor and a couple of building-owner representative, through a series of contract disputes. Not entirely hypothetical, the issues that Phillips put forward were mostly from cases that had been previously litigated.

The audience was not shy about asking questions or challenging Phillips, and the sharing of war stories between the attendees made this seminar most interesting. There is little doubt about the value of this type of intercourse, as one of the toughest parts of the roof-contracting business is often negotiating the world of the contract.

Crunching the Numbers

Dave Harrison, senior vice president of Marketing, Technical Services and Corporate Development for GAF Materials Corp., took a pair of fairly complex business topics and brought them down to the real world of the roof contracting business. "Financial Secrets Your Numbers Can Tell You to Help Build Profits" began by questioning the premise that the



Many of the educational sessions were filled to capacity, including this one attended by Joe Kelly (left) of Kelly Roofing, Naples, Fla., and Paul Brockman of Roof Maintenance, Nashville, Tenn. (Photo by Ben Zimmerman, Oscar Einzig Photography.)

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Making the Complex

numbers can give business owners all the answers. Harrison stated that the numbers should tell you what questions to ask to begin the process of determining the future direction of your business.

Harrison explained that the balance sheet offers a look at what has already happened with your business; it's like looking in the rearview mirror while driving your car. Business owners, he contends, really need to concentrate on data that would be analogous to looking through the windshield and at the dashboard. The primary message to the roomful of attendees, who were mostly business owners, was to work with their accountants to develop the kind of data they really need to operate the business. Harrison offered a number of suggestions for how to develop these indicators based on the kinds of services that roofing contractors offer, detailing the ways that major corporations measure themselves.

In his presentation titled "Getting More Business — Especially for People who Hate Selling," Harrison laid out very practical advice for contractors in terms of how they approach building their business. Staying with the theme of doing a great job of "keeping score" of your roofing business, Harrison took seminar attendees through a series of lessons on developing and measuring leads, as well as a number of the things that their clients look for in the sales process.

Keeping Your Edge



Robert LeClare, vice president of sales for W.P. Hickman Co. and a member of RICOWI's Wind

Robert LeClare, vice president of sales for W.P. Hickman Co. and a member of RICOWI's Wind Investigation Team, drew on key findings from RICOWI's research in the aftermath of hurricanes Charley and Ivan in his session titled "Roof Edge Performance During Hurricane-Force Winds." LeClare used photos of roofs damaged by the storms to document the importance of properly installed perimeter flashing, coping and fascia. "You've heard that old saying that when it comes to real estate, the most important thing is location, location, location," said LeClare. "When it comes to roofing, it's the edge, the edge, the edge. Once your edge is gone, your roof is gone."

RCIOWI investigators found that human error was a factor in an overwhelming majority of the

why we're here." He also extolled the virtues of seminars and forums like this one. "We ask some embarrassing questions, and sometimes the answers are difficult, but we're better off than if we didn't ask them at all," Dupuis said. He joked about sessions that centered on technical problems, stating, "You have to understand what you have here — two of the biggest doom and gloom guys you might find."

"There's a reason for that," replied Baxter. "Nobody calls us who has a good roof."

The Show Floor



Dow teamed up with Trufast to demonstrate the ease of application of roofing systems using INSTA STIK™, a quick-set, one-component adhesive, and Styrofoam™ Deckmate™ Plus FA extruded polystyrene board. (Photo by Scott Hilling.)

Educational opportunities abounded on the show floor as well as the seminar rooms. A live demonstration area provided hands-on training, techniques and tips from companies including APOC/Gardner Gibson, which showcased roof restoration procedures utilizing asphalt emulsions and reinforcements and the application of various cool roof acrylic toppings. In other sessions, Grace Construction Products demonstrated how to use Grace TRI-FLEX 30, Grace Roof Detail Membrane and Grace Ice & Water Shield to extend the life of a roof. Johns Manville spotlighted its cold-applied, two-part PermaFlash system and its DuraBase asphalt-synthetic underlayment. On Center Software's sales support manager Greg Duyka discussed how computer estimating helps commercial roofers grow their business and increase profits.

Kassel & Irons presenters Mark Storti and Daryll King demonstrated the ease of installing the company's metal roofing systems using conventional tools. OMG Inc.'s Stan Choiniere and Josh Kelly detailed the company's new fastening method for single-ply roofing, which is designed to work with either TPO or PVC thermoplastic roof membranes, replacing traditional seam fasteners and membrane adhesives. Kirsch Building Products presenters Mark Strait and

Ed Moody described Sharkskin underlayment and demonstrated its installation and advantages. Tremco Inc.'s product resources director Kurt Sosinski demonstrated the company's new low-odor, water-based roof system.

Through the Exhibitor Product Clinics, select exhibitors demonstrated the uses of their equipment, tools and materials at stations adjacent to their booths. Participants included Dow Chemical Co. and Trufast, who held joint clinics on new roofing adhesive solutions. United Solar Ovonic held clinics on solar applications, while DuPont Building Innovations demonstrated its Sealed Attic Weatherization System. Leister Process Technologies held a clinic in the parking lot of the Las Vegas Convention Center to demonstrate its new modified welding equipment for hot air welding modified bitumen.

"We were thrilled to provide so many live-action events at this year's show," said Donna Bellantone, director of the International Roofing Expo. "These demos and clinics gave the show a more action-oriented, hands-on format, giving attendees a chance to actively participate in the event."

Contractor Feedback

"This year's sessions were excellent," said Bob Burns of Rooftop Equipment Inc., New Wilmington, Pa. "I came away from the show with lots of new ideas in roofing."

"The show was great," said Steve Hegge of Berwald Roofing Company, St. Paul, Minn. "We found lots of new products and information."

"This is definitely a must-attend industry event," said Angie Basyouni, National Roofing Partners, Dallas. "Not only are the exhibits great, but the attendance is phenomenal. I will definitely attend again and am looking forward to next year's show already!"

The 2008 International Roofing Expo will be held Feb. 21-23, 2008, at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

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