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2008 International Roofing Expo Wrap-Up

by Rick Damato
March 10, 2008

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Educational Opportunities Abound at the IRE



Monore Porter Monroe shared ways to track the numbers at his seminar at the IRE show in Las Vegas. (Photo by Rick Damato.)

It seemed that green products took center stage and solar applications provided the spotlight as more than 9,000 industry professionals converged on the Las Vegas Convention Center Feb. 21-23 for the International Roofing Expo. There were 442 exhibiting companies and 1,060 booths in 106,000 net square feet of space in the exhibit hall. At press time, final verified attendance numbers were not available, but preliminary numbers indicate that attendance was flat from last year's record-breaking number of 9,020.



Huge crowds sift through the Las Vegas Convention Center during the IRE show. (Photo by Lief Lowe, Oscar Einzig Photography.)

Attendees took in live demonstrations, new product launches, technical seminars and inspirational speeches, including Archie

Manning's entertaining keynote address titled "Principles of Success."

The IRE, produced by Hanley Wood Exhibitions and sponsored by the National Roofing Contractors Association, also provided the opportunity to meet and network with industry leaders from around the globe. What attendees discovered was an awe-inspiring selection of educational and networking opportunities, as well as eye-catching products, including the first ever New Product Pavilion at the IRE.

"The International Roofing Expo continues to be the ultimate gathering for the industry," said Donna Bellantone, Director of the IRE. "The show is a great venue for the most influential players to help drive the future direction of our industry."

"We're very pleased with the number of high-quality attendees who come to the International Roofing Expo to make important purchasing decisions," said Rick McConnell, vice president of Hanley Wood Exhibitions. "We had a phenomenal opening day, followed by a strong second day."

Keynote Address

The IRE's keynote speaker was Archie Manning — the father of back-to-back Super Bowl champion sons Eli and Peyton. Manning, who shared some personal anecdotes and some words to live by in his speech, which detailed the principles he developed as well as some of the secrets he used throughout a 15-year NFL career and what it takes to be a winner. United Solar Ovonic sponsored the keynote address.



Former NFL quarterback Archie Manning was the keynote speaker at the IRE show in Las Vegas. (Photo by Lief Lowe, Oscar Einzig Photography.)

"I played 15 years and went through 12 coaching changes," Manning told the standing room only crowd at the Renaissance Hotel ballroom, located adjacent to the Las Vegas Convention Center.

Manning played most of his career with the New Orleans Saints, but he talked about the time he played for the Houston Oilers, and how then-coach Bum Phillips provided a pregame speech to the team.

"Bum tell us, 'We're going to hit the Falcons right in the mouth,'" Manning said, quoting Phillips. Before the Oilers went out onto field, Manning recalled, "You know, Bum, we're playing the Buccaneers today."

"Our coach didn't know who the team was," Manning said, and then relayed what he heard Bum yell in the tunnel leading out to the playing field. "Those dang Buccaneers aren't so tough either."

Manning provided inspirational words to live by as well as recollections of his playing days. He pointed to teamwork, leadership, flexibility, and having a game plan as being the keys to success. "All must develop an attitude of leadership," he said. "What can I do next time to change the results?"

Manning said teamwork is essential because you must depend on others. "Every single thing you've done in your life that has made you successful is because of teamwork," he said. "When you learn to depend on others, you become a developer of others."

Educational Sessions

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The first-place winners of the "Best New Product" award at the New Product Pavilion were Gary and Robert Allen of LUMA Resources for their residential solar kit. (Photo by Chris King.)

With 48 sessions, the educational offerings at IRE a course tracks included a variety of topics on various segments of the industry, and the Spouse Program offered 23 sessions for the involved spouses who are looking for ways to help manage and grow their family businesses.

Roofing Contractor staff members moderated and sat in on several sessions, including a panel discussion titled "Contract Legal Issues for Residential Roofing Contractors," led by attorney Philip J Siegel, a partner with Hendrick, Phillips Salzman & Flatt in Atlanta and presented along with contractors Ken Kelly, president of Kelly Roofing, Naples, Fla., and Brett Hall, president of Joe Hall Roofing in Dallas-Fort Worth. The session explored common terms and conditions of a residential roofing contract and provided tips on how to help contractors protect themselves in case of litigation.

The structural integrity of the building is of primary concern. "It's not your building and you should not be responsible for its condition," noted Siegel. "Specifically provide that you are not responsible for the structural integrity of the building — defer to a structural engineer." Thoroughly defining the scope of work is essential, advised Siegel. Hall shared some of the contract language his company has developed and advised documenting all jobs with before and after photos and saving them at least as long as state law requires. "We put them on Zip drives. Before and after photos can save you a lot of money," he said.

All of the panelists stressed the importance of using the contract as a tool to help educate the homeowner about the work process, possible problems with noise and vibration, warranties and payment terms. "Communication is the key," said Kelly. "If homeowners know up front what's expected, they're less likely to jump to conclusions."

Management, Leadership and Numbers

Dave Harrison is senior vice president, chief marketing officer for GAF Materials Corporation. Not the typical corporate executive, Dave spends a great deal of time on the road visiting with roofing contractors and distributors. Along the way he has developed quite a reputation as a public speaker throughout the roofing industry. He somehow manages to mix a superior education with a solid book of business experience and turns it into information that is both eye opening and easy to understand — even for a magazine editor.

Harrison started his session titled "Management Failures — Leadership Successes" by asking the audience what their expectations were from the seminar. At the time he stated that the content of the seminar could be adjusted to meet their needs. He later confided in the group that he did this to begin to establish a rapport and trust with them. Trust is a key element in human relationships, especially in the business of selling a product or service, he noted. A main point in his seminar is that great salespeople do two things very well: generate trust and educate better.

Harrison ran through the numbers, equating how large enterprises look at the books and noting how that same thinking could benefit even smaller contractors. Maybe one of the most valuable tips in this seminar was the advice on benchmarking the value and profitability of a roofing business by size.

Attending a seminar by Proof Management's Monroe Porter is somewhat like reading his popular column, "Measuring Up," that appears regularly here in the pages of Roofing Contractor. After over 30 years as a business consultant and public speaker, Monroe is in very familiar territory when it comes to making this kind of appearance.

The attendees of his session "Improving Profits by Knowing the Numbers" were dedicated troopers since it began on a Saturday morning at 7:45. But attend they did, and their questions and answers added a good deal to the pre-planned content.

Improving profits is always important in the roof-contracting business, but discovering ways to improve profits in a declining market is rare. Monroe's basic principle is to improve profits you have to charge enough for the work you contract to perform. Monroe shared ways to track the numbers to come up with the kind of information needed to get down to the true cost of work.

The bottom line is that accounting systems can and should be changed to help the contractor improve profits by charging the right price. Knowing the numbers will also help you avoid one of the key pitfalls of a declining market, which is to cut prices to keep working. When you know the numbers, it is easy to see how very impractical that can be.

New Product Pavilion



The Wayneflex TPO flexible gray roofing membrane, the second place winner, is an innovative underlayment for clay tile, cement tile, metal and other low-slope roofing applications. Wayne County Rubber's patent-pending membrane utilizes a state-of-the-art custom UV stabilization package containing the antiblocks and antioxidants necessary for maximum protection.

Capturing third place was Tuff Toe's super durable epoxy boot protection formula. Applied as a thick liquid, the durable yet flexible protective layer forms a permanent bond to any footwear, new or used, including work, safety, hunting, hiking and riding boots.

IRE 2009

In 2009, the IRE will return to Las Vegas, but moving over to the Mandalay Bay Convention Center on Feb. 3-5, 2009. To be considered as a speaker for the 2009 IRE, a "Call for Presentation" form will be available online at www.theroofingexpo.com. Speaker requests must be submitted by April 2, 2008. Any questions or suggestions for future topics should be forwarded to the IRE Conference Manager, Brandi McElhaney, at 972-536-6392 or BMcElhaney@HanleyWood.com. For more information on next year's IRE, visit www.theroofingexpo.com or call 972-536-6323 or 866-860-1970.

Rick Damato

rickdamato@yahoo.com

Rick Damato is the editorial director of Roofing Contractor. He can be reached at 770.246.3448.



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