



DO YOU HAVE A BEST PRACTICE TO SHARE?

Jason (London): With the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), we have organized training seminars on Canada's housing systems for UK building professionals. We have found this an excellent way to identify early adopters of wood frame systems and, therefore, suitable partners for Canadian housing manufacturers and possible buyers of Canadian building products. The participants in these training seminars also provide a good gauge of how new Canadian products may be received in the market.

Tom (Detroit): Yes. Whenever possible, I try to work directly with companies and individuals, both Canadian and local contacts. A lot of intermediaries are injecting themselves into the process, but, in the end, I am most useful to the Canadian business community by dealing directly with that community's individual members. As an organization, we should be driven by the client's demands.

WHAT'S YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE IN THIS SECTOR?

Jason (London): The UK is a highly competitive and mature market for building products. The greatest challenge is raising our profile within the industry with little resources when our major competition has in-market promotion boards with significant marketing dollars behind them. This forces you to look for creative solutions. In this case, creative is synonymous with low cost.

Tom (Detroit): There is a lot of vertical integration in building materials distribution, with manufacturers buying their own distributors, and a lot of merger and acquisition activity. It makes the distributors more difficult for small manufacturers to deal with. However, like the carnival game where you try to swat a gopher with a mallet, for every distribution channel that closes, a new one pops up. The challenge is to find them as they are popping up. These are the types of distributors that we pursue, rather than the "big box" building materials retailers.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?

Jason (London): I'm having fun!

Tom (Detroit): There is a tremendous amount of innovation in this sector. New types of materials, building techniques and efficiencies are being developed, including the redevelopment of materials that have been around a long time. It is interesting to see how all of this, old and new, from Canada and elsewhere, is brought together into the buildings that we work, play and live in.