

editor's note



THE EDITOR AT ANOTHER ASSOCIATION WAS RECENTLY COMPLAINING ABOUT THE reaction she had received to a revamping of her association's magazine and website.

The old magazine was very gray, almost "journal-like", and the website was boring. The redesign added lots of color and snazzy graphics. Staff was very happy with the redesign, but a readership survey immediately afterward told a different story: Readers hated it.

Three thoughts quickly went through my mind. First, people generally don't like change. I wondered what the result of the survey would be six months after the redesign and if people would come to embrace the changes. My second thought was that maybe people liked the tone of the old magazine. The journal-like appearance was a metaphor for the serious nature of the content, and readers responded well to that. And my last thought was that maybe the redesign wasn't well executed. I've often seen magazine redesigns dominated by cutting-edge artists who create something fascinating to look at but difficult to read.

I went through a similar thought process during a recent discussion with the board of the National Institute of Steel Detailing (NISD). Detailers are traditionally underappreciated and underpaid and for years a greater and greater percentage of detailing work has moved offshore. But offshore rates are climbing and there are still quality issues (due, perhaps, to a lack of shop experience and a tremendous turnover rate). And the conversation ultimately turned to the Individual Detailer Certification (IDC) program.

According to NISD, the IDC program is designed to document that the professional detailer has "the knowledge and capability to produce quality shop drawings within the framework of various codes, specifications and contract documents." There are minimum experience requirements, and individuals need to pass a fairly rigorous test.

While a growing number of detailing companies are having their staffs go through the program, few (if any) fabricators or designers

are using the presence of an IDC detailer as a criterion for selecting a detailing company. I'm familiar enough with the program to know there is anecdotal evidence that it's the better detailers who have IDC staff and that better detailers mean less fabrication issues. So why isn't there a greater demand for IDC?

My first thought is that NISD has done a poor marketing job. Do fabricators even know the program exists? And if they are aware of it, do they know the benefit of hiring detailers with IDCs on their staff? My next thought is that fabricators might be concerned that a growing IDC program would result in escalating detailing costs. But you get what you pay for. Just as good fabricators aren't concerned about two guys with a welding machine in the back of a pickup truck underbidding them, fabricators should also be aware that paying a little more up front for quality detailing can reduce costs in the long run. My final thought is that maybe some smart fabricators will take the time to learn more about the IDC program, and the next time they're hiring a detailer, they'll ask how many IDCs they have on staff.

On a personal note, I'd like to extend best wishes to Keith Grubb. Keith joined MSC as technical editor in March 1999 and was later promoted to senior editor and finally managing editor. But last month, Keith began serving as a regional engineer for AISC in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Please join me in wishing Keith all the best and also in congratulating Geoff Weisenberger on his promotion to senior editor, Areti Carter to director of publications, and Kristin Egan to graphic designer.

SCOTT MELNICK
EDITOR

MSC

MODERN STEEL CONSTRUCTION

Editorial Offices

1 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 700
Chicago, IL 60601
312.670.2400 tel
312.896.9022 fax

Editorial Contacts

EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Scott L. Melnick
312.670.8314
melnick@modernsteel.com

SENIOR EDITOR
Geoff Weisenberger
312.670.8316
weisenberger@modernsteel.com

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS
Areti Carter
312.670.5427
areti@modernsteel.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Kristin Egan
312.670.5447
egan@modernsteel.com

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VICE PRESIDENT
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Advertising Contact

Account Manager
Louis Gurthet
231.228.2274 tel
231.228.7759 fax
gurthet@modernsteel.com

For advertising information, contact Louis Gurthet or visit www.modernsteel.com

Address Changes and Subscription Concerns

312.670.5444 tel
312.893.2253 fax
admin@modernsteel.com

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Betsy White
The Reprint Outsource, Inc.
717.394.7350
bwhite@reprintoutsource.com