

Get Ready for SteelDay 2011

BY RICK KUHN

The steel industry's biggest b-to-b networking event returns on September 23, and here are some tools to help you get involved.

YES, IT IS TIME to begin your plans for SteelDay 2011, which is coming up on September 23. Or, perhaps it would be better to say it's not too late to begin making plans.

SteelDay is an annual event sponsored by the American Institute of Steel Construction and hosted in local facilities across the nation—and beyond—by AISC's members and partners. The 2011 edition will be the industry's third annual SteelDay.

You may think SteelDay is still a long way off, but starting early is key to having a coordinated and successful event. The coordination is not only for you, but also for your potential visitors. They need to get your SteelDay event on their calendar. The earlier you are on the calendar, the greater potential you have in maintaining commitments.

Reasons to Host an Event

Hosting a SteelDay event provides the opportunity to brand your services in the context of a national event. It also provides an informal and casual networking opportunity and the chance to make new business contacts. With economic improvement, new contacts can provide additional business. This additional business can be further multiplied if typical alternate building solution proponents are switched over to a steel solution.



▲ Kevin Reynolds of W&W/AFCO Steel explains one aspect of structural steel fabrication to visitors at the company's 2010 SteelDay event in Little Rock, Ark.

This national marketing opportunity is beneficial for the entire structural steel industry. A rising tide lifts all boats, so team up with a vendor, mill, erector, galvanizer, fabricator, supplier or other industry participant to make the tide a surge. Remember that AISC staff will help guide you through the planning steps to achieve a successful event.

A Few Event Options

If this is the first time you're thinking about hosting a SteelDay event, you may be wondering what you should do or what is required. Fortunately, it's wide open—just invite others to come and celebrate what we do in the structural steel industry. (See sidebar, "Why Not Host a SteelDay Event?")

For example, invite one or more current clients who may not have visited your facilities recently and give them a personal tour. Following the tour, you can review upcoming projects and/or assess the current market condition.

A tour can be elaborate or fundamental, depending on your audience or event scope. An elaborate event may consist of a workstation-by-workstation guided tour, with someone posted at each workstation giving a coordinated mini-presentation describing its importance and function in the overall process.

A more basic tour may consist of a predetermined, explanatory walking tour of the facilities. Consider including demonstrations and workshops, which provide visitors additional project coordination insight.

Another approach is to coordinate with other local or regional industry participants. These can be vendors, galvanizers, erectors, transporters, and many others. This type of "group" SteelDay event coordinated between adjacent locations—for example, a fabricator and a galvanizer located in the same area—can demonstrate how your firms work together, the product flow, and the coordination and timing required to have a successful project.

How Do You Get Visitors to Your Event?

First, sign up. Kick off your SteelDay 2011 commitment by visiting the SteelDay website at www.steelday.org, and registering your event. Then follow up by promoting it.

- Send mailings to developers, architects, engineers, general contractors with whom you have done—or may do—business. Also include students and industry professional organizations. Contact everyone in your area who is involved in

specifying and/or utilizing structural steel. (See sidebar for additional ideas.)

- Invite bankers, insurers, family and friends.
- Discuss your upcoming event when making phone calls.
- Attach a SteelDay reminder in your email signature and outgoing documents.
- Send out press releases to your local television stations, radio stations and newspapers.
- Ask your mayor and other local leaders, as well as your state's governor, to issue official proclamations declaring September 23, 2011, as SteelDay.

To industry insiders, the benefits of attending a local SteelDay event are self-evident. But those people to whom you would like to demonstrate your expertise could use a good reminder about why they should take time out of their busy schedules to come see you. Here are nine reasons you might find helpful in promoting your event.

1. See how off-site controlled conditions are maintained and documented to ensure product quality.
2. See how fabricators transition plans and drawings into structural products.
3. Experience the material transformation from mill shapes to erectable structural steel.
4. Gain further understanding of the procurement, logistic, and material handling steps to assure correct material availability for fabrication, shipping and erection.
5. Visit a steel mill and witness the entire steel product life cycle. This life cycle begins with the scrap melting and rolling the molten steel into structural shapes to the steel's recycled return in the scrap storage awaiting retransformation. As an aside, did you know that steel is North America's #1 recycled product and a model of sustained material production?
6. Learn about the role service centers play in the structural steel distribution chain.
7. Learn how square, rectangle and circular hollow structural sections (HSS) are produced from steel coil.
8. Learn how curved steel is formed. See the various methods used to roll and bend structural steel to achieve curves, arches, and sweeps and produce spectacular visually appealing steel projects.
9. Chances are that SteelDay events are scheduled in your area. To find locations near you, go to www.aisc.org/steeldayevents/.

Remember, SteelDay is for everyone. This event highlights all elements and interrelationships of the structural steel industry. It demonstrates the variety of career options available, the vertical integration and intercompany coordination used to complete successful projects, and management's directive role.

For the host, SteelDay provides a casual forum to demonstrate one's expertise, strengthen existing business relationships and initiate lasting opportunities.

For the student, SteelDay demonstrates the excitement of being part of major projects throughout the nation and world, and the numerous career avenues available, from shop artisan to industry entrepreneur.

For the visitor, SteelDay allows one to view the off-site element of structural steel fabrication and project management, learn about new processes in the steel industry, see state-of-the-art computer numerical controlled equipment seamlessly produce structural parts from 3D detailing systems, and see firsthand the advantage of structural steel project solutions.

Be passionate about hosting your event. That passion will be picked up throughout your company and will be evident to event participants. The participants will see your passion for the industry and the commitment to excellence in your work.

Make your SteelDay a celebration with the structural steel industry. It is the perfect forum to build new relations and reestablish old acquaintances. It will allow

you to demonstrate your firm's passion for quality and excellence, and show your attendees you are there every day contributing to each project's success and thereby their success. Most of all, have fun with SteelDay.

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Why Not Host a SteelDay Event?

Although the prospect of hosting a SteelDay event may seem daunting, it doesn't have to be. Some of the most successful events are small and simple.

- **Keep it small.** Feedback we've received indicates that the size of your event doesn't matter! Some of the most successful events tended to have 10 to 20 people in attendance. A smaller event means attendees get to ask questions and ensures a certain level of personal interaction and networking. Keep in mind that "success" is not measured in numbers, but in terms of meaningful experiences and personal relationships developed.
- **Keep it simple.** A third of previous SteelDay hosts spent less than \$1,000 on events they considered to be successful. Your event doesn't have to last an entire day or cost you lots of money. You can invite people into your facility for an hour-long tour, or host a small lunch for a few of your clients. Regardless of how you choose to celebrate SteelDay, hosting an event will create an opportunity for interaction, learning, and promoting our industry.

We are here to help you every step of the way. Our host forum at www.steelday.org offers free resources for hosts, including a website for you to create an event that will be instantly published to the web.

Your reasons for hosting are personal, but the benefits of your event are manifold and felt throughout the industry. So ask yourself: why not host a SteelDay event?

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