

editor's note



A FEW YEARS AGO, I VENTURED ACROSS THE POND TO TAKE A LOOK AT A BRITISH PROGRAM THAT CERTIFIES SUSTAINABILITY IN FABRICATORS. I was intrigued because the emphasis on what constitutes sustainability was so different than what I had been thinking about.

To me, sustainability was another word for green—reduced energy use, increased use of recycled materials, fewer greenhouse gas emissions. But our elders in the UK had a more mature outlook and considered sustainability as a three-legged stool. Not only did they look at green attributes, but they also considered whether a company itself was sustainable (Did it pay its employees adequately? Were its fee structure and workload sufficient for the long-term health of the company?) and most intriguing, whether a company and its employees worked to better society.

That last leg seems awfully highfalutin but in practice is anything but. How do a company and its employees benefit society? The sustainability program looked at practical characteristics such as whether the company sponsored a local youth team or whether it encouraged staff to volunteer.

I like to think of AISC as a good example of a company that tries to meet its societal obligations. Obviously, as a non-profit we're engaged in activities that enhance public safety (through development of standards, for example), have an extensive scholarship program (through the AISC Education Foundation) and engage in numerous green activities (such as donating extra food from lunches at NASCC: The Steel Conference). But we also do a lot of the small things I

hope all companies do. For example, many of our staff participate annually in a charitable home-rebuilding project. On an even more simple basis we participate in "jeans days" where employees who make a small \$5 donation to a given charity are allowed to wear jeans that day. And I'm not sure how to even count the number of hours our staff donates to groups ranging from animal shelters to local baseball leagues. (By the way, the easiest way to get involved with a scholarship program is to make a donation to an already established organization, such as the AISC Education Foundation.)

I urge all companies and all individuals to think about how they can give back to their community. Anecdotally, the pool of volunteers seems to be shrinking. When I go to a school function, it's always the same parents who have volunteered. And when I go to a community activity, I see the same parents who volunteered at school.

I'd love to hear how you, either as a company or an individual, help your community. Let's all work for a sustainable world and a better society.



SCOTT MELNICK
EDITOR



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

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Tasha Weiss
312.670.5439
weiss@modernsteel.com

DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING

Areti Carter
312.670.5427
aretic@modernsteel.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Kristin Egan
312.670.8313
egan@modernsteel.com

AISC Officers

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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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