

## NMBS flexibility a miracle, says Northern Steel

**Northern Steel Company Owner, Charlie Puckett, loves to wait until the last minute; and now he's found a perfectly willing partner...**

"He's notorious for making changes at the last minute," says New Millennium Project Designer, Kim Browning with a laugh.

And Charlie Puckett knows it, because waiting until the last second helps his design/build business in Port Washington, Wisconsin.

"We often wait until the last moment until we send our order in," Puckett said. "The owner, HVAC contractor, roofer, and the glass guys are constantly changing what they are going to supply, so we'll wait until last minute to see what they have done. And sometimes I'm just plain old late with getting my own work completed."

Puckett then sends out his fabrication list to New Millennium. New Millennium, he says, will have the work taken care of quickly, with the order built and shipped within a week or two.

"They do that consistently," Puckett says. "Time and again, someone will make a mistake or someone, like the mason, will want to make a change. So it's a huge value to wait until the last possible second to release the fabrication list. There have been countless times New Millennium has helped me out."

Puckett says many other joist companies haven't been able to do that for him.

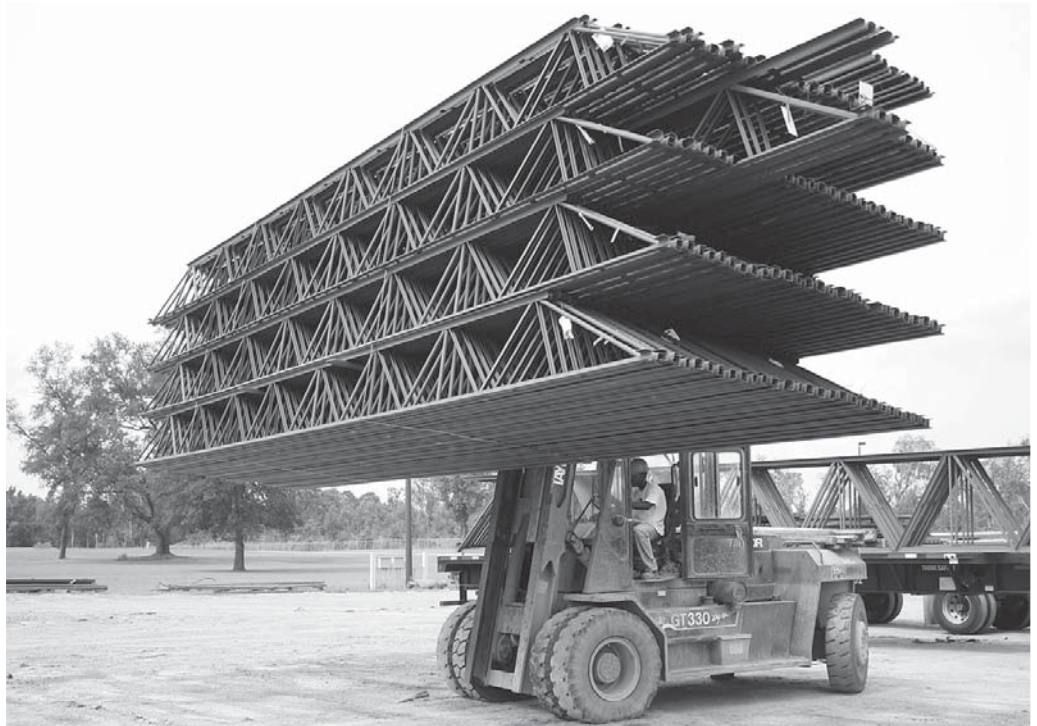
"If you make changes like that, they'll often move you back in the production schedule," Puckett explains. "New Millennium's ability to make last minute changes is tremendous for us and how we work with our customers. We don't have 10 excuses about why we can't do something. We don't have to add

two weeks on to a project or charge more because they want to change something at the last minute. Customers just don't want to hear any of that. I work with New Millennium because they can deal with everything quickly."

Puckett says he prefers to use New Millennium as his steel joist, girder and deck supplier. Why?

"They've blown everyone else out of the water," Puckett says. "I don't hear them grumbling, saying something like, 'Oh that's going to be a lot of trouble; or I'm not sure we can do that.'" All I hear is, "Get your stuff in and we'll do it." It's just that git'r done mentality."

For example, Puckett awarded New Millennium a job on September 7 that was for an expanding Milwaukee area printing company. The project required 280 tons of material – steel joists, girders, bridging and roof deck – to be delivered on



Oct. 11 and 12. New Millennium received the fabrication bill of materials on September 23 and Puckett says he was still making changes until October 1.

“That’s the kind of stuff if you send it to any other joist company, they tell you, “We’ll give it a try.” And then it may arrive a week or two after you hope to have it. New Millennium never fails me in last minute work and they come through with the delivery every time.”

“It has been countless times they have helped me out,” Puckett recalls. “In general, when it comes to structural steel and construction, they don’t always mix well. With most other building trades, materials are brought to the construction site in bulk. Tradesmen then field cut and hand fit each component as the architectural plans require. Structural steel is primarily fabricated off site, shipped to the job site, and erected/installed at that time. We have to do all we can to have our steel fit exactly to the actual building that is being constructed. It takes a lot of

communicating with other trades and people at the job site to keep up with various building changes and dimension errors. Sweating the details prior to releasing our steel for fabrication eliminates many on-site steel installation problems, sub-contractor back charges, and project delays. It’s what our customers expect from us.”

In another instance, Puckett needed three specialty girders a week ahead of the rest of his steel shipment to build a crane-building/warehouse addition for Gladwin Machinery. As usual, Puckett made the request at the last minute. A few days later he received the specialty girders ahead of time, which meant they could be erected earlier so other tradesmen could do their work and keep the job on schedule.

“Eighty percent of the time, I send in things at the last minute and it’s a miracle that New Millennium can get it done,” Puckett concluded.


## New campaign asks fabricators to challenge us

The word is about to get out: New Millennium is not your run-of-the-mill joist and deck company.

In a new ad series launching in January, New Millennium is asking fabricators to put our “Flexible to the Finish” promise to the test. The ad reads in part, “Challenge us. We’ll help you keep your delivery promises.”

“The expectation is that we will indeed be challenged,” says Richard Poinsett, GM at the Lake City facility. “It’s up to all of us to deliver on our promise of proactive service and flexible delivery.”

*Ads and other communications in 2008 will invite new customers to experience the proactive service and delivery capabilities of New Millennium.*



“You can get the joists and decking to me faster?”  
“Yep.”

“You talked to the engineer and got the RFI’s resolved?”  
“Yep.”

“And now the erector needs the bowstring joists first.”  
“Yep.”

“OK, another small project, can I get some 2” composite deck in three days?”

**“Yep. You’re golden.”**

Welcome to a very different business conversation. When you call New Millennium about your joist and deck needs, this is what you will hear. What do you need? And when do you need it?

**Challenge us. We’ll help you keep your delivery promises.**

After all, that’s what every joist and deck conversation is ultimately about, keeping your customers happy. Yep, it is. Because when your customers are golden, so are you.

Challenge us today at [www.newmill.com](http://www.newmill.com)

**NEW MILLENNIUM**  
BUILDING SYSTEMS

*Flexible to the Finish*

PLANT LOCATIONS: INDIANA | FLORIDA | OHIO | SOUTH CAROLINA | VIRGINIA

# Secret agents:

## Sales Coordinators may keep a low profile, but they are highly connected to customers...

The role of sales coordinator has significantly evolved over the last two years. No longer focused on data entry, these New Millennium professionals are now the “mini-engineers” customers directly depend on throughout a project. “I don’t think people realize how much responsibility sales coordinators have,” says sales coordinator Connie Hayes. “It’s really an important position from start to finish.”

### Service the “new” way

Stephnie Reddick has been a sales coordinator for almost three years in the Lake City, Florida plant. “When we first started, the plant wasn’t even built yet,” Stephnie says. “We were in construction trailers. We actually started selling and quoting as the plant was being built. Back then I was just keying in information. It was data entry. (Sales manager) Rich Madden helped me with the day-to-day so I could learn the job.”

Once the plant opened in February 2005 and everyone was moved in, that’s when Stephnie says she became more than a data entry typist. After four or five months, she began to work on the joist design program that requires the sales coordinators to be familiar with the drawings.

“We take calls all the time and you learn the job,” says Stephnie, who typically handles dozens of quotes a week. “We’re like mini-engineers. You develop skills to learn how to look at a joist, not just flat, but double pitched, rainbow, barrel joists; and you have to know what affects a joist as far as loads. We always discuss with the engineers how are we quoting, how it’s being entered into the joist design program to make sure we are doing this in the most accurate possible way.”

About 70 percent of Stephnie’s projects are electronic, but she still has a

few customers who mail in printed approvals. However, she ensures that every project becomes paperless, so she can more efficiently share, communicate and coordinate with everyone involved. She also now communicates with outside sales representatives electronically, eliminating manual data entry.

As a result, sales representatives and sales coordinators have become more efficient and interdependent. The shift from a single-point of contact to a more team oriented service model also has customers taking notice.



*Stephnie Reddick*  
*Sales Coordinator – Lake City, Florida*

“Customers have come to rely on us,” Stephnie observes. “We check the architectural drawings and process everything to the engineers. Learning how to juggle and being efficient is a big part of our job. Our number one priority is to make sure we take care of our customers’ concerns. We want them to feel comfortable. We try to make this feel as seamless for them as possible.”

### Taking care of the customer

Monica Puckette, who works at the Salem plant, says to take care of the customer, it’s all about communication and paying attention to details.

“You have to understand what the customer needs and make sure all their needs are met as quickly as possible,” Monica says. “You have to make sure





***Meghan Lemons***  
***Sales Coordinator – Salem, Virginia***

you follow through and are accurate and complete with the work. After the quote is done, you always ask how they are doing. You have to stay on top of everything and understand the customers' needs since they are the ones that sign your paycheck."

Monica finds creating a friendship is important to help make customer relationships and projects go more smoothly: "You chat with them a little. So hopefully you understand what they are asking for and to make sure we're in the know. To follow up, I prefer making a phone call, because it's more personal. and is much better than an email."

Meghan Lemons, also at the Salem plant, says it is always important to follow up in a timely manner. "If they want it that day, you guarantee that day," she says. "And you do everything you can to make it happen. You don't ever say no. We're flexible. If we don't know the answer, we get in touch with the right person to make sure their question is answered."

Matt Miller, sales coordinator for the Continental plant, jokes that his way of breaking the ice with customers is a little unconventional: "When I talk to a customer I always refer to them as Bud," he says. "As corny as that sounds, I try to get on a personal level. Some customers want that personal touch. Other customers are straightforward and want to talk about the project and project alone, so you have to feel things out."

However a relationship is cultivated, Charity Gall, a sales coordinator at the Lake City plant, emphasizes how important the role has become to customers, such as their preliminary review of customer drawings related to cut list projects. Sales coordinators review the drawings to see if the joists will handle certain loads, from concentrated to inward pressure, from wind and moment loads to seismic loads. Sales coordinators look for any "red flags" so these can be immediately brought to the attention of the engineers. "We have to know if the joist will support the load," Charity says. Especially for cut lists that have changes, "You have to know how to look at the drawings and see what has changed," she says. And in every case, the drawings are then passed on to the engineer.

Proactively taking care of customers often means additional service hours, but Monica observes that this is how to build relationships and repeat business. "If you say, 'sorry we can't make it happen,' that is not making the customer happy and that'll turn them away."

## **Working together**

In the Butler plant, like other New Millennium facilities, each sales coordinator has his or her assigned customers in respective states or territories. But everyone's attitude is to work together to make sure all New Millennium customers are equally well served.

"We each deal with the same customers on a daily basis," Kelli Vendrely says. "If they leave a message, we try to get back to them as quickly as possible. Each customer I handle is the most important. We never tell them we can't do something. We just say go ahead and send it in. We'll make it happen."

To do that, Kelli says everyone in the Butler plant has to pull together to help each other out. "All of us work very well together," Kelli says. "Brittany and I are across the hall from each other, Jennifer and Kelly are across from each other.

Matt is right there too. We piggyback off each other. We are always asking what the other one is doing. That way one person isn't doing all of the work."

Having strong internal communication and being able to bounce ideas off each other, says Matt, means fewer questions for the customer. Working together also helps Kelli and the other sales coordinators spend more time on the details that can either make a project go smoothly or cause costly delays for a customer. Just recently, Kelli says, one of her customers left girders off of a job. But Kelli alerted the customer before it became a problem: "I try to alert them ahead of time, because that's what you'd want them to do for you," she says. "You don't want them getting stuck."

"To be a good sales coordinator," Monica says. "You have to have a good attitude, a willingness to learn and work well under pressure. There are so many aspects you have to think about. Nothing is black and white."

And for the role of sales coordinator, nothing is more important than proactively anticipating and solving customers' needs.



*Monica Puckette*  
*Sales Coordinator – Salem, Virginia*

## New Millennium Sales Coordinators:

<b>Butler, IN:</b>	Jennifer Brewer, Kelli Vendrely, Brittany Heffelfinger, Kelly Walters
<b>Lake City, FL:</b>	Stephnie Reddick, Charity Gall, Stephanie Browning, Renee Heston, Alex Madden
<b>Continental, OH:</b>	Matt Miller
<b>Florence, SC:</b>	Connie Hayes, Linda Miller, Patsy Stoddard
<b>Salem, VA:</b>	Monica Puckette, Meghan Lemons, Laura Richardson

## Building trust is the first order at Fabricated Products

Rosemary Clement remembers when New Millennium first opened up shop in Florida more than two years ago.

"We were leery," says Clement, who is a projects coordinator at Tampa-based Fabricated Products. "We didn't trust them. We didn't know who they were or what they wanted to do. We didn't know why another joist company would want to come to Florida. Now they have a good 75 percent of our business."

She says it took about six months for New Millennium to gain everyone's trust at Fabricated Products, a structural steel fabricator that does commercial work across the state of Florida.

### What made Fabricated Products begin to trust New Millennium?

"Because they always do exactly what they say they are going to do," Clement says. "You truly just don't find people who are going to do what they say they are going to do these days."

"Plus, if they tell us we will have drawings within three to four weeks, they've always done it for me," Clement says.

Clement says there are times when she needs a joist drawing in two weeks.

"I can't think of anything specific, but New Millennium has done that for us," Clement says. "I try not to overuse that. I don't cry wolf unless I've really got one chasing me."

Jokes Clement: "If we don't have drawings, then we aren't working because we have to have drawings to know how much steel we will need."

"If I tell my customer I will have the drawings to them in three to four weeks and they get to that fourth week and I don't have it, then they come back to me saying you've lied to me," she says. "That's not fun. I've had that happen, but not with New Millennium."

### **Clement also appreciates New Millennium's customer service.**

"Things are always on a really tight schedule," Clement says. "We always look to (New Millennium sales coordinator)

*Clement says she's had problems with other companies who promise to have joist drawings to her within a certain timeframe and then don't deliver.*

Stephnie (Reddick) for anything when it comes to joist and deck. I don't know how she does it, but whenever I call, she makes you feel like you are the only customer that she has."

## **On Leadership:**

*General George S. Patton once said: "Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results."*



**Art Ullom**  
General Manager  
Salem, Virginia

### **Defining leadership**

*To continue its winning ways in the marketplace, NMBS relies upon its current and emerging leaders to stay the course. But what defines leadership? And in turn, what will it take for New Millennium to grow as a leader in the industry?*

Leadership starts with respect, says Art Ullom, GM at the Salem facility. "It is achieved by respect, by gaining trust and having good vision to figure out your direction, to choose a good path. You have to be ethical and have high standards. You can't make yourself a leader. You can do things to try to be a leader, but people have to have respect for you, for you to truly become a leader."

Ullom says much of the challenge is staying the right course; and this requires a good grasp of the situation, along with collaboration among GMs and leaders throughout the company.

"My job is to keep us from going into the ditch, to stay on the road, to try to keep important things in front of people," Ullom says. "It's all about communication. You're always talking, letting people know where we are and where



we want to go, and how important our culture is. A lot of it is reminding people so we don't get off track."

Tim Epple, GM at the Florence facility, says the value of leadership is seeing clear goals and staying focused on achieving those goals. This requires an understanding of customers and prospective customers, which New Millennium has invested significant time and effort to do.

"I think it takes patience and understanding all the people in the organization," Epple says. "You not only have to understand the company, but the needs and wants of the customers, the shareholders within New Millennium and vendor suppliers."

## Building on a vision

Along with company president Bert Hollman, Ariail Smith was among the first to share the vision of a new kind of steel joist and deck company – one that takes a clear stand on addressing customers' needs. As Corporate Manufacturing Development Manager and currently being in charge of the Continental facility, Smith says the challenge moving forward is to build toward the New Millennium vision with confidence.

"A leader is someone with confidence," Smith says. "By personally being committed, you'll help others become more committed."

This, says Smith, requires a shared sense of purpose. "People need a sense of purpose. You have to let them know what their accomplishments are. You get a group of people together and tell them: This is where we are now. If a person's doing a great job, let it be known. You don't have to slap them on the back until it hurts, but they are going to have a sense of purpose by performing up to expectations."

On a daily basis, having a shared sense of purpose means having the ability to solve customers' problems individually and as a team. An effective leader, says Smith, will help the team "figure out how you're going to take care of a problem and move forward."

Epple also points to the importance of team effort. "It's hard for one person to be committed if people aren't committed around you," he notes. Which is why having the right attitude drives team success; and why having the right people on the team is important. "When hard-working, dedicated employees are hired," Epple says, "it is easier to have employees who are committed to their jobs and to customers."

## We are all in this together

Mutual respect drives team effort, says Ullom. "If you don't show respect, people don't think you care."

Leadership then, starts by acknowledging we are all in this together. "Our profitability reflects back to employees with the



*Ariail Smith  
Corporate Manufacturing  
Development Manager  
Interim General Manager,  
Continental, Ohio*

bonus system," Ullom points out. "If we make profits, it comes back to them. If the company is doing well, we all share the rewards. If we're doing badly we don't have much to share."

Ullom says that is why, when a mistake happens, everyone must learn from it. Especially leaders, because leadership requires the forthright ability to admit to a mistake. "When you make a mistake you have to admit it. I've done it many times. I tell people, we goofed up. People like to hear that you're human. But you've got to choose the right path a good percent of the time, because if you keep leading down the wrong path, they're not going to want to follow you."

Another way to prevent mistakes is to give everyone the power today to prevent mistakes that might otherwise happen tomorrow, Ullom adds.

"You have to give people the authority to do things, to let them resolve their own problems," Ullom says. "Everybody doesn't do things the way I would do them, but I ask myself: Did it have the desired result I wanted? If so, then I pat them on the back. What we really like is when employees think of positive things we didn't think about. We always like great ideas that make us better."

Smith agrees that the most efficient way to prevent mistakes is by empowering people, then getting out of their way. "I believe in instructing, not micromanaging," Smith says. "If you micromanage, then you're spending all your time snooping and you'll be running the whole show and nothing is going to get done. If they have to go to the department head for every answer, they're not going to get anything done."

In some companies, no one does anything without one person giving the final okay. But as Smith puts it: "We don't operate that way." A strong leader knows how to discuss and how to delegate. For some people this ability comes naturally, others have to work at it. Either way, true leadership is evident when employees know specifically what a customer's expectations are, and they are empowered to exceed those expectations.

"You're always trying to make people stronger," Smith says. "You're always turning them a little looser. You're always trying to have them build their skills."

## Sharing higher standards

Leadership, concludes Ullom, is about communication. "Setting high standards are important. Talk to people. Always try to talk with the higher standards and goals in mind. Encourage people to get there. Listen to their problems. Communication is important. You have to let them know where they are at, where we want to get to. You have to tell them what you expect. If you don't tell them, they aren't going to know what you want. And make sure you acknowledge their efforts when they are making progress."

The job of a leader, Ullom says, is to be supportive of winning efforts and to "make sure we as managers aren't the opposite. Sometimes people pass things up to us. If we don't react and give them what they need, we're the problem."

Epple says employees at New Millennium are being looked to for new ideas, ways to improve production and services to customers. "Give employees all the tools necessary for the job," he says. "Employees come up with best methods to improve their productivity. If it is worthwhile and doesn't cost too much, then use it. There's no better person to ask than the person actually doing the job."



*Tim Epple  
General Manager  
Florence, South Carolina*

Smith points to the company's open door policy as a way to keep an open line of communication. "Keep people involved and informed of the good, bad, whatever it may be," says Smith. "You've got to be open with people and not hide things. As a leader, it is important to show you care. The question is how? By paying attention to what is going on in people's lives. Be sincere, because people can tell when you're not."

"As a manager, 99 percent of my time is talking to people," Epple concludes. "You've got to have enough insight to read people. People either are heartfelt for situations or they're not. You've got to know how people are struggling. A lot of times, there's nothing you can do but give people an ear to talk through it."