

## Plant renovations near completion!

New Millennium's massive company-wide expansion program is nearly complete. All five plants have been changed, some more drastically than others. The changes have enhanced the quality of life at work and are already helping our teams meet growing customer needs.

### Increased flow at Florence

When New Millennium took over the plant in Florence, South Carolina, it needed a major overhaul. The entire roof was replaced, while two new warehouses and a production bay were being built. Insulation was added to the walls and roof to help maintain a more comfortable work temperature.



*Facility improvements at Florence (above) and other NMBS plants have increased the company's ability to provide more agile and proactive joist and deck solutions.*

"It's going to streamline our operation," Florence Production Manager Troy Norton said. "Our first goal is to give a safe environment to work in." Three brand new lines – short-span, long-span and specialty – were installed.

A new slitter is also part of the upgrade. Having a slitter, which slits master coils, will allow the Florence plant to be more flexible in its production. Instead of having the coils slit by an outside company, who would then deliver the product to New Millennium, everything can be kept in-house to speed up production time.

Another bonus: because of the new equipment, employees can now work first shift instead of a swing shift and there is more flexibility to schedule production time, which helps New Millennium and the customer.

### Big changes at Continental

New Millennium nearly doubled the square footage of its Continental, Ohio plant. The original building was 84,800 square feet. NMBS purchased the plant in April 2006 and started construction in December of that year. Less than a year later, in September 2007, an additional 88,000 square feet had been added and 9,000 square feet of the old warehouse was demolished for a grand total of 163,800 square feet. As a result, the improvements drastically improved production time and the workplace atmosphere.

A new specialty line was added and the short-and long-span lines were nearly doubled in length. Insulation was added to help create a clean, dry and warm work environment. Rail access was added to the plant, by adding 2,600 feet of track right up to the building. This has expedited the receiving process, while decreasing transportation costs, since one rail car equals 4½ truckloads.

"It's a huge improvement, a huge difference," Continental Production Manager Craig Bracken says. "As far as the work environment, it is 100% better. People are excited about working here."



*Continental facility*

## Butler serves up new cafeteria

The Butler, Indiana plant has doubled the size of its cafeteria and locker room. Now the cafeteria offers hot meals. A refurbished locker room now has painted floors, walls and ceiling along with clean lockers. The production supervisor's office was moved from the main office closer to the plant's front office for accessibility.

## Lake City adds finishing touches

Only a few minor changes were made in Lake City, Florida, a plant that was built in 2004. Nearly forty 40-foot coil racks were added to improve safety to keep the coils from rolling from the wall. Welding guns were changed for longevity reasons, while the rod bender was moved over six feet, so rod could be bent farther in advance. The plant rebuilt the rod cutter rack to make it taller and narrower, which added floor space. The plant also got rid of aprons on paint tanks on lines two and three, said Lake City Production Manager Al Singleton. The aprons were replaced with a drip tank to save paint and reduce costs.

## Supersizing at Salem

Bigger than 54 football fields, the Salem, Virginia plant is set on 60 acres. Originally, the joist plant was 146,500 square feet. Construction began in spring, 2006. A little more than a third of the original joist plant, 55,000 square feet, was torn down. The plant, which was left with 91,500 square feet, was then doubled in size with an additional 99,000 in new construction. A new 60,000 square foot deck plant was built in a separate building. A new front office that spans approximately 18,000 square feet was also added, along with a fourth building that is 6,200 square feet and includes a 1,200 square foot locker room, a 3,000 square foot cafeteria/training room, an 800 square foot kitchen; along with 1,200 square feet in offices, first aid center and hallways. The new construction added approximately 183,200 square feet, making the complex a whopping 274,700 square feet.

Heat and air conditioning were added, along with insulation, siding and a new roof. New equipment for three lines – short-span, long-span and deck – were installed so as to streamline the process. The first line was installed in the spring of 2007, and the other two, along with the deck plant, were completed last October. New lights were added to increase visibility in and outside the plants. Three new welding pits were added, along with a new fleet of 13 new cranes and process enhancements. New Millennium also added angle and channel formers, something that Salem never had before, to increase productivity.

Construction on the locker room, cafeteria, along with a small portion of the joist roofing and siding, completes the upgrades at Salem.

“It’s unbelievable the changes at this place. It’s amazing,” says Salem Production Manager, Van Johnson. “We now have a heated and air conditioned building that is well lit, clean and just a nice place to work in. I am proud to say I work for New Millennium. I think other people feel that way also.”



*Salem facility*

# NMBS-sponsored industry roundtable calls for owner-oriented agility

A leading trade magazine has published a conversation that many of us at New Millennium have been having with customers for some time. It is a conversation about a higher level of service and finding ways to proactively anticipate and solve problems.

NMBS President Bert Hollman opened the roundtable by asking the assembled owners, architects, engineers and builders some key questions:

“How do we get teamwork?” Bert asked the group. “How do we find common ground with the traditional methodology when we have a common cause with the design/builder to get the job done? How do we find common ground when we are three or four steps removed from the owner, and it is a fixed-contract basis?”

To address these concerns and others, the group was asked to think about such problems from an owner’s perspective: If you were the owner of the building being constructed, how should a structural drawing problem be resolved? How should an unexpected earlier joist delivery requirement be handled?

Here are some of the suggestions reached by the group:

- Getting subcontractor input is critical, including joist and deck expertise
- Owners need options – not just how cheap, but what is best
- Owners want to know about new collaboration processes for better results
- Everyone on the team needs to learn to adapt quickly to changes in projects

A six-page documentary of the roundtable discussion can be found in the April issue of *Building Design+Construction* or on the New Millennium website at [www.newmill.com](http://www.newmill.com).



**BUILDING DESIGN+CONSTRUCTION**

## Rethinking Project Delivery

*An Owner-Centered Approach*

Earlier this year, New Millennium Building Systems surveyed architects, engineers, contractors, building owners, and developers to determine which issues were top-of-mind going into 2008. To drill deeper into the statistical findings, *Building Design+Construction* invited 10 professionals representing all facets of the U.S. design and construction industry to participate in a roundtable discussion of the survey results. Collectively, the 10 panelists are involved in the ownership, design, and construction of commercial, industrial, office, educational, mixed-use, and retail projects in the three- to five-story height range.

Bert D. Hollman, President of Fort Wayne, Ind.-based New Millennium, framed the discussion with several probing questions: “How do we get teamwork? How do we find common ground with the traditional methodology when we have a common cause with the design/builder to get the job done? How do we find common ground when we are three or four steps removed from the owner, and it is a fixed-contract basis?”

**NEW MILLENNIUM BUILDING SYSTEMS**

Roundtable Sponsored by  
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*This printed summary of a roundtable discussion sponsored by New Millennium and conducted by Building Design+Construction magazine is to reach thousands of construction professionals.*

# Profile joists reshape NMBS design-build services

## As more architects discover special profile joists, they will need more design help

NMBS research among architects continues to show that while they are generally familiar with the concept of “specialty joists,” they are not well informed about joist design possibilities. Enter NMBS, a company with something to say on the subject.

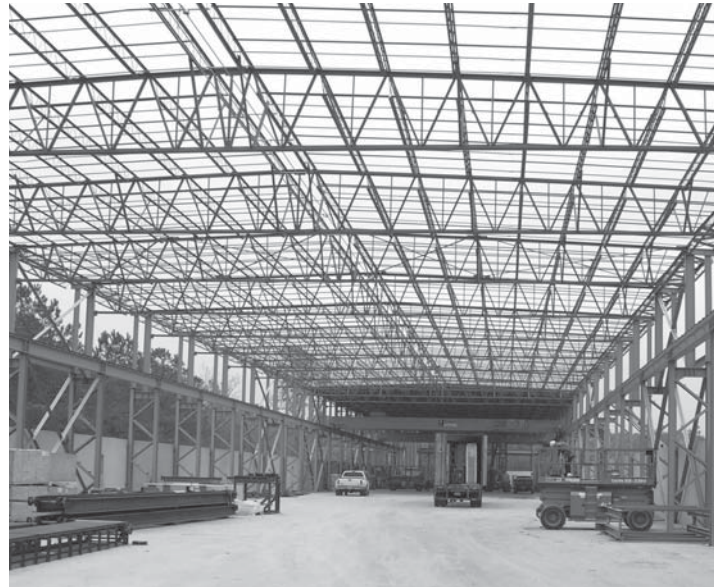
Carl Pugh, Engineering Manager at New Millennium’s Salem, Virginia plant, says there’s always been an interest in the company’s joist design capabilities. “I usually say, just as a rule of thumb we can probably do anything that falls within the parameters of 120 inches tall, 120 feet long, and 10,000 pounds. But now, we’re getting to a point where we can stretch even further.”

“We are state-of-the-art manufacturing,” confirms Tim Epple, General Manager at the Florence plant. “We can say, check with us about your joist design ideas. We can build specialty products with the ability to set up quickly and manufacture at a higher rate. We can build specialty products such as severe, double-pitched scissors in a school auditorium.”

### Agility at the design stage

One example of New Millennium’s growing expertise in joist design and production recently came in the form of a 100,000 square foot student ministry building at the Southeast Christian Church campus in Louisville, Kentucky.

Mark Wides, NMBS District Sales Manager, described the project as especially challenging at the design stage: “They had a special roof design that called for joist and girders in multiple directions to create multiple roof slopes,” Mark



explained. “This was a design that required an exceptionally large amount of detailing time to create the concept.”

George Johnson agrees. George is the President and co-owner of Artisan Industrial Metals Inc, the structural steel fabricator and erector on the project. “Everything that looks good on paper doesn’t always when you have to add steel to it,” he noted. “New Millennium was a lot of help in making this work.”

As those involved in the project have attested, by redesigning the roof structure to make it workable, New Millennium not only solved a production problem, the company solved an architectural design challenge.

### New profile joist catalog

Solving unique design and production needs is the purpose behind a new catalog coming this spring. Rivers Claytor, in charge of Special Projects, has been managing the development of the catalog.

It’s another opportunity for New Millennium to collaborate with fabricators, architects and structural engineers who have design needs that can be especially challenging for all involved.

“I see this as an evolving document,” says Rivers. “With so many variables by way of snow load, wind load, local codes and such, we can certainly help customers. The options are boundless. We can help a structural engineer, give him a lot of guidance and give him a lot of tools. But the main thing we need to give him is our phone number.”



The above architectural vision for the Southeast Christian Church campus in Louisville, Kentucky was made “real” with design help from NMBS.

# Producing Trust:

**Production managers talk about strengthening the connections between productivity, leadership and customer trust...**



*Accessories Supervisor Randy Leins and Production Manager Jake Fetters inspect the quality coming off of the small channel former at the Butler plant.*

## **What is the role of the Production Manager?**

**Craig:** I work with the line supervisors as a resource. It's about producing the maximum amount possible by providing employees a good work atmosphere. It's about having a good work ethic and team comradery. I work with the production scheduler to make sure production lines are producing joists in a timely fashion to meet their delivery schedules. I also work with engineering to make sure the product we put out is a quality product and meets the needs of our customer and SJI (Steel Joist Institute) standards.



*Craig Bracken, Production Manager, Continental, OH*

**Jake:** One of our most important roles is to communicate between all the other departments. That way I know what type of work is coming into engineering, so I can line up everything efficiently at the shop to serve the customer's needs. It's also important to communicate with the employees in the shop. Normally, they are the ones who come up with the best ideas, because they know first-hand what changes should be made.

**Van:** My main responsibility is to oversee production to make sure the shop has plenty of work, the right tools, and the right employees. I also work with other departments to make sure we meet our customer's schedules. I work with my supervisors in any capacity that they need me, as a teacher, leader, or as a listener.

**Troy:** My biggest role is to make sure the guys in the shop have the tools necessary to improve production. It's certainly about providing a safe work environment. It's about making sure these guys come in and leave the same way. I use my floor and shop experience to look at situations. We all have open door policies. Someone who has a concern is welcome to come in. In addition, I make sure the shop runs as efficiently as it can on a daily basis.

**Al:** Mainly, I'm responsible for making sure all the lines run smoothly. I'm in charge of schooling and directing production supervisors. I also make sure we are making our schedules on time, so there is a lot of discussion with the

traffic department. Traditionally I have had very little contact with the customers. That is changing and I'm getting more involved. I'm visiting with customers at job sites and asking them what kind of problems they're having on a production end. I talk to engineering, about getting their shop orders to me in a timely manner to keep customers happy. Mainly, I just do a lot of schooling along the way to lead people.

### **Describe your approach to leadership.**

**Al:** My responsibility is to take care of people in the shop. I need to give them the tools they need, give them support when they need support and to make sure they have work. I try to do things as simple as possible. I started as a rigger back in 1976 and I haven't forgotten where I came from.

**Troy:** I'm on the shop floor, teaching and coaching based on my experience. My job is to look down the road, not just at the next hour or next day, and find ways to improve processes for the long term. That's where leadership comes in. You have to look down the road but you also have to inspire people every day.

**Jake:** I like to lead by example. It's always important to be fair and consistent and to treat employees the way I'd like to be treated. I believe the employees are the backbone of the company and you have to treat them as such.

**Craig:** You set a good example and lead by example. You have good communication, a good relationship with co-workers, and a positive attitude that you're glad you work for New Millennium. You don't try to do everything yourself. You get your other supervisors and other lead people involved if a certain task needs to be done. You tell them what you want done and sometimes you work with them until it is done. I never want someone to do something I wouldn't do myself.

**Van:** I lead by example. I am a firm believer that you treat people with respect and dignity. I ask my people a lot of questions to make sure that they have what they need to be as productive as possible. I hold people accountable and set high standards. I promote teamwork.

### **What does it take to be an effective leader?**

**Al:** A leader needs to lead by example. You project out to employees you're a hard worker. They need to know you're going to be there for them. I talk to my supervisors about leadership, and it boils down to a few simple things: you're honest with people, you let them know what you expect, and you hold them accountable for that.

**Jake:** One of the things you need to have to be a strong leader is good listening skills. There is a reason we have two ears and one mouth. It is very important to listen to people. I've got 133 production employees and their collective ideas are as good or better than my ideas, so it's very important to listen.

**Troy:** What makes a good leader is someone who is consistent, someone who is confident enough to make tough decisions, but humble enough to listen to those he/she works with.

**Craig:** You are a good leader when you set obtainable goals for employees. Respect those that you work with. Listen to what they have to say and make them accountable for what they do.

**Van:** I think to be a good leader you must communicate, listen, and react. One thing that I have learned is that you must follow through with what you hear and learn.

### **How do you help others become leaders?**

**Jake:** You just talk to them quite often and get their viewpoints. It's important to know that how you treat other people is how you are perceived. You have to take their ideas and build on them. I've always believed if someone else and myself had two different ways of getting the same job done and if both ways make sense, then I'm going to let the other person have it their way. If they say they can do something and it's done their way, then they are going to do everything in their power to make it happen. Plus it gives them the confidence to do other things.

**Craig:** A true leader is someone who wants to better himself or herself. It's someone who asks a lot of questions, who wants to know the next step and what else they can do. When you find that type of person, show them what you do. If you are a leader, get them to fill in for you, if they are at that point where they can take over from time to time.



*Al Singleton, Production Manager, Lake City, FL*

**Al:** You talk to them about how to gain respect from people. You bring employees into the decision making process. It gives them value and you gain respect that way, too. Work with everyone involved. It can't be all about what I want. It has to be what everyone needs. I have to make some decisions that are cut-and-dried, but I also talk to people doing the work during the decision making process. If someone does a good job, you pat that person on the back. If someone makes a mistake, you talk that person through it and you don't ridicule that person. It never helps to ridicule people. There are natural born leaders, but if someone wants to be a leader, they can also be taught.

**Troy:** Leaders are born or developed over time. You can teach people to accept the responsibility of leadership. They are passionate and competitive in everything they do. They demand the most of themselves and those they work with. Leaders are people who are willing to accept responsibility and the pressure that comes along with it. I think people can improve upon their leadership skills, but that desire to lead people has to come from within.

**Van:** You communicate with your people. You teach them to set their goals high and to communicate these goals to their people. You show them the value of teamwork. You teach them to think outside of the box. You teach them to be proactive and stop problems before they start. You teach them to follow through on their ideas and their employees' ideas.



*Jake Fetters, Production Manager, Butler, IN*

### **Describe your philosophy on leadership and teamwork.**

**Jake:** We always stress working as a team. A team is a lot larger than each production line. It's something that goes throughout the entire company. Safety is number one. Quality is number two. Production is number three. If you always take care of business in that order, you've got success written all over it. Part of being a team is that it takes a whole team to get everything done.

**Craig:** Treat people with dignity and respect them. Be a good person to them. Try not to get involved in their personal lives, but let them know you care.

**Al:** Treat people with respect to earn their respect. Find a fair way to discipline people. Everybody is motivated by different things. Find out what motivates individual people.

**Troy:** Empower each employee to do his or her best. That's the best way to lead, get people to lead themselves, from managers to hourly employees. Only through good leadership do you get people to take that kind of responsibility and run with it. My job is to retrain employees so they know their input is important. If every person has value in this organization, then they won't want anyone to slip through the cracks. One way to get out there and lead is to push people to be successful. Teach that everyone from the General Manager to a new hire is equally as important. We all have different roles to play, each role is important and it's vital to

what we do on a daily basis. It all starts with communication. No problem is too trivial. You have to help with problems and coach them in ways to take ownership of problems.

**Van:** My philosophy has changed quite a bit in the last two years. I believe now that you must hire good, self-motivated people and put them in the right spot with the right tools and you will have a great team.

### **What are your expectations for people?**

**Jake:** One of my expectations is a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. There is a phenomenal work ethic here and people are a joy to work with. I've always told them, show up for work, give 100 percent effort and everything will take care of itself from there. Attendance is an important part of the job. If you have absenteeism, then that hurts the team. I expect every employee to work safely.

**Troy:** My expectation is that everyone does his or her best every day. We function as a team. We set goals and strive to reach those goals. If each line is successful, this facility in Florence will be successful. My goal is for these guys to not view their jobs as eight-hour-a-day jobs, but something they care about, to take pride in what they do. When they are out in the community, they should take great pride in saying I work for New Millennium in Florence. When you have people who genuinely care, that makes your job as a manager much easier.

**Al:** Give 100% every day. Everyone should be constantly looking for ways to improve and not be afraid to bring things to my attention, to speed things up or get things done better. If they need another piece of equipment, we'll do our best to get it for them. They know better than anybody what it takes to get the job done. Sometimes you have to spend money to earn more money. They have to constantly improve. We are constantly improving quality, so the customer is happy. If you don't send out a quality product, then customers won't come back. It is very closed-minded to say we are doing good enough. We have to assume our competitors are constantly improving, in order to stay ahead of them.

**Van:** I'm a firm believer that everyone has to set goals, no matter what position you're in. You've got to have something to work to-



*Van Johnson, Production Manager, Salem, VA*

wards. You've got to be here, you have to have a positive attitude. You've just got to make the best out of each and every day.

**Craig:** The work ethic in the Continental plant is very good and I want everyone to give 110%. We are glad to reach goals, but never satisfied. We look at our plant as one big machine. It takes each department to give their all for the next department to succeed, and so on. We are constantly looking for ways to increase our level of quality production so we make our customers happy.

### **What is the best way to serve the customer?**

**AI:** Give them what they need. Each customer is different, so figure out what that customer really needs. If a customer needs joists delivered tomorrow, we are going to make it happen. Some way, some how, we'll make it happen. Once you know what the customer wants, you need to communicate what those needs are to everyone else. Customer service is why we are constantly climbing.



*Troy Norton, Production Manager, Florence, S.C.*

**Troy:** Do what you say you're going to do. Everyone has been a customer. Customers know when they receive good service. The customer signs our paycheck. Without customers none of us would have jobs. Find out what the customer really wants. Is it a quick turn job? A specialty joist? Our slogan "Flexible to the Finish" is important because it really sets a tone for what we do every day.

**Van:** You must give customers what they want. They want a good quality product with a good price and delivered when they want it. It is that simple.

**Craig:** From the production standpoint, we must give them a product that fits their needs and requests. It is of good quality material with proper welding and the paint is dry and consistent. We need to meet the deadline the customer has asked for, so they will become a repeat customer.

**Jake:** The best way to serve our customers is to build what they need, when they need it.

### **What is the best way to keep improving?**

**Troy:** Keep improving communication. We don't tell people enough when they've done a good job. It makes a world of difference just to say, "Hey good job today." That lifts people's spirits and then they know their performance was recognized.

**AI:** Ask the customer what would make the job easier for them. Constantly improve quality. Get everything done in a timely manner to be successful.

**Jake:** Continue to talk and listen to your people. If you have an issue on the floor, they'll figure out the best way to fix it.

**Craig:** The best way to keep improving is talking to employees. The guys in the shop are doing the job every day, they see ways to do the job faster and easier. Another way is to visit a sister plant and see if they do things differently from how we do it.



# Team success starts with planning, says Salem's Bill Neikirk

To remain *Flexible to the Finish*, employees like Bill Neikirk, a Design Supervisor at the Salem, Virginia plant, know it's important to plan ahead. "It's about keeping the shop flowing with work," Neikirk says. "The more, the better."

By being prepared, Neikirk helps New Millennium adapt to a customer's ever-changing needs at a moment's notice. He plans hours, days and weeks in advance to out-produce the shop and stay ahead of the game. As a result, his design crew doesn't have to play "catch-up" and the shop always has plenty of work.

It's always a competition to see who can work more efficiently, the shop or the design team, Neikirk says. "Everyone has a common objective, to help the customer. The more work we can put out for the shop, the better we can arrange it for production and the smoother the production flow."

## A successful juggling act

"Bill is very meticulous," says Van Johnson, Salem's Production Manager. "He makes sure he gets everything done in a timely fashion. He's taken the extra step so many times. Some people can sit in the office and never do anything more. He's always thinking, trying to figure out better ways to do things. He's just a good New Millennium employee: someone who is proactive, thinking ahead, and trying to avoid the ups and downs of working in a day."

It's essential for Neikirk to plan ahead. That's because Neikirk and his design team start their day at 7:30 a.m. The shop comes in two hours earlier at 5:30 a.m. – so if Neikirk doesn't plan ahead, the shop will run out of work and production will come to a standstill. Neikirk spends the first hour and a half each morning "getting organized." He reviews emails, takes care of hot issues or a hot job that has to be delivered quickly, and discusses pending jobs with the scheduling and traffic departments. As a result, Neikirk has become known for planning ahead, reacting quickly and thoroughly juggling multiple tasks to keep a steady flow of work coming in and going out of New Millennium.

"He's just a solid employee who has a very important job here," Engineering Manager Carl Pugh said. "He creates work for the shop and that's critical for all of us. He's got a lot of intelligence and a great work ethic. He's got great people skills. When we need to turn something around real quick, he always steps up and has it very organized to the point where we can turn things around very quickly. He understands what he needs to do to get the job done."

## Open minded leadership

The team of designers that Neikirk supervises is more than "just a safety net for finding errors," he said. His team finds creative solutions and fills in the gaps. His team of four designers processes 20-25 projects a day. These designers detail out drafts



*Bill Neikirk, Design Supervisor at the Salem, Virginia plant, supports a team effort.*

on computers and view customer orders that need detailing or have been detailed outside of the company. It's also about offering a quality product and creating alternative design solutions to the customer to help reduce their costs.

Even though Neikirk supervises the group, he still likes to jump in and help detail when things get busy. "I feel like I'm more effective if I pitch in and help," he says. "I have a better sense of what is going on if I'm involved with what they are doing. I don't need to know every detail, but I do need to know everything they are doing, so I can respond to their questions quicker."

Neikirk tries to balance his hands-on approach with being open-minded about trying new things. "I find a need to state things and then step back and let the guys do it their way," he explains. "It's about setting expectations and then working well as a unit. We all have a common goal. We gauge ourselves on how much work we are releasing for shop orders. So we know if we are losing or gaining our lead."

It's Neikirk's ability to be a strong leader, Pugh says, that really sets him apart.

"He knows what needs to be done and takes the initiative to do it," Pugh asserted. "You don't have to tell him what to do. He's out in front making sure the necessary things get done. He makes sure his department is very aware of what their responsibilities are and you just can't ask for much more than that."