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Thank you for being a member!

DON'T LET YOUR MEMBERSHIP LAPSE – RENEW TODAY!

Watch for renewal notices in April or contact membership@wrla.org to update your business and contact information today.





SHIFTING THE MESSAGE

Over the course of the past few weeks, I have been invited to participate in a variety of roundtable discussions and economic summits to represent our members and the lumber and building supply (LBM) industry to government, alongside other industry association leaders.

One of the key messages that was brought forward from our members, in addition to other associations, is that there seems to be a lack of urgency from the government to move forward and get back to normal, and there doesn't seem to be enough government engagement with the business community to discuss solutions to do just that. This "management by fear" messaging needs to shift to messages of hope. It is only a matter of time before businesses providing essential services could also be negatively impacted as the funnel of disposable income will begin to diminish if people cannot get back to work.

As a result of these discussions, further strategies and recommendations are being drafted. We will remain involved in these dialogues and keep you informed on the details and next steps.

While on the topic of business, each and every company has had to overcome a unique set of challenges over the last year. These challenges are still impacting many businesses, and some have unfortunately lost the battle completely. Like many small and medium enterprises, the not-for-profit and charitable sector have been hit very hard – many of them are member and donor funded, and rely heavily on events. Events often cover 60 percent of their operations simply because the value placed on connecting in person is so high. Without those opportunities, all of them have had to get creative to try to sustain their operations and keep staff employed. This includes many organizations, like the WRLA, which continue to represent the business community to government in an effort to ensure that businesses can continue to operate, keep people employed and serve communities in the long run.

With our fiscal year coming to a close as this magazine goes to print, WRLA's board of directors and I would like to express our gratitude to each of you for your support, whether it be through purchasing a membership, registering for education and professional development courses, sponsoring our various events, advertising in our print and digital publications, or booking a booth in our Showcase with a Twist. Your support provides us with the opportunity to continue to work on your behalf and develop programs that benefit your business, and we look forward to working with you in 2021.

With our eyes on the future, our focus is to change gears – having spent this past year in survival mode, it is time for us to shift into more strategic planning and discussions in order for us to chart the course ahead.

I continue to enjoy the many conversations with members, and of course enjoy learning from you and how your business continues to be impacted along with the success stories among challenges. It provides necessary intel about the industry and allows me to continue to connect on a personal level.

To continued success for the year ahead...

Liz Kovach
PRESIDENT, WRLA

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THE 5TH QUARTER OF 2020



First and foremost, I would like to start with a sincere thank you to all those who took part in our WRLA Showcase this year. Your time, support and critiques over the course of this year's show made the WRLA Showcase as good as it could have possibly been given the circumstances. However, having spoken to a number of regular attendees after show's end, from vendors to retailers, the eagerness to return to shows in-person as soon as possible was echoed by all. After all, it's the community we are part of as WRLA members that makes the WRLA Showcase so special.

As you read this, we are in the final month of the first quarter of 2021, I have heard it described as the fifth quarter of 2020, and I couldn't agree more. Only this time around we have some recent history to learn from. Lumber shortages, historical high prices and new virus variants have us in a similar position to the one we found ourselves in last year. Only this year, with the experience and knowledge we have gained from 2020, we are better prepared to handle what lies ahead. We have been fortunate enough to be able to remain open during the entirety of this pandemic so far. As I have mentioned before, many of our stores are the cornerstones of our communities. People are going to be turning to us in their time of need and it is up to us as an industry to rise to the occasion. With understanding and compassion, we can seize the opportunity to further cement ourselves as valuable contributors to our communities.

I am looking forward to the opportunities 2021 brings, as I hope you are too! I am looking forward to new and inventive ways the WRLA can help all of our businesses grow, such as the business sessions the WRLA is hosting virtually, which kicked off in February. I am looking forward to being called upon to help those

in need, and most of all, I am looking forward to seeing you all again in person. Be it at one or all of the golf tournaments in the summer months, some of the multiple WRLA-associated events or at very least, the 2022 WRLA Building & Hardware Showcase in Winnipeg next January!

I wish you all the best in these fifth and sixth quarter of 2020!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel Seibert". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

Joel Seibert
CHAIR, WRLA

I am looking forward to the opportunities 2021 brings, as I hope you are too! I am looking forward to new and inventive ways the WRLA can help all of our businesses grow, such as the business sessions the WRLA is hosting virtually, which kicked off in February. I am looking forward to being called upon to help those in need, and most of all, I am looking forward to seeing you all again in person.

FORGE ON.

▶ PLAN AHEAD.

WRLA BUILDING & HARDWARE SHOWCASE

2022 | 2023 | 2024

IN WINNIPEG

Photo: RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg



Photo: Ben Aguilar



wrla.org



WRLA NEWS

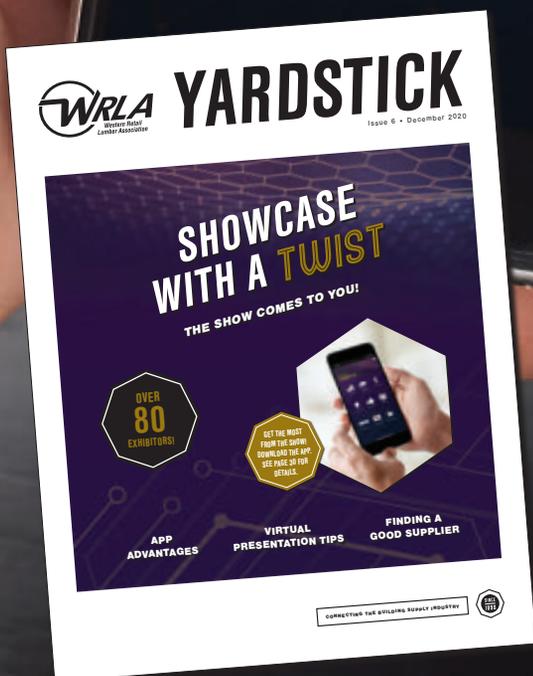
SHOWCASE WITH A TWIST RECAP

What a wonderful show, if we do say so ourselves! It was definitely different but that didn't stop WRLA members from capturing the show spirit and making the best of it, even if we couldn't get together in person. From daily education sessions brought to you by sponsor, Sexton Group to product knowledge sessions by exhibitors, there was so much to be learned. Plus, new connections were made, friendships were rekindled, and fun was had!

Thanks to everyone who participated! Here are some incredible show numbers:

- 83 exhibitor booths
- Over 1,000 app downloads, including 468 retail dealers, 509 exhibitors and 25 buying group representatives
- 303 attendees at 10 education sessions brought to you by Sexton Group
- 825 attendees at 22 product knowledge sessions

Thanks again to our education sponsor:



BRAGGING RIGHTS GO TO...

The individual who topped the showcase leaderboard was Curtis McGill of Taiga Building Products with a whopping 512,109 points and 16/16 achievements. Kudos also go to Fries Tallman Lumber, which had staff taking three of the top 10 positions. Here is the Top 10:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Curtis McGill
Taiga Building Products | 6 Mark Johnston
Fries Tallman Lumber |
| 2 Greg Gardenits
Westman Steel | 7 Steve Robson
DuPont Performance Building Solutions |
| 3 Darren Kiel
All Weather Windows | 8 Sheryl James
Fries Tallman Lumber |
| 4 Dwight Neufield
Canadian Lumber/TIMBER MART Morden | 9 Len Regier
Fries Tallman Lumber |
| 5 Rory Fehr
Fehr Building Materials Ltd. | 10 Rees Eyre
Harris Rebar |

MISSED SOMETHING AT THE SHOW?

The 2021 WRLA Showcase with a Twist had a full schedule of product knowledge sessions from exhibitors and education sessions, sponsored by Sexton Group Ltd. If you missed any or want to rewatch, each session was recorded and is available to view online at wrla.org/showcase.



WELCOME ABOARD

WRLA is pleased to welcome Brett Sigurdson of All Weather Windows to the board of directors. Based in Kamloops, BC, Brett is the business development manager, focused on growth through new customer acquisition and wallet share from current customers. He has been in the building supply industry for over 30 years and has held both regional and national positions in his career.

"I'm at the point in my career that I want to give back to the industry that has provided me with so much in my life," says Sigurdson. "I've always prided myself on delivering an exceptional level of service to each customer by listening to concerns and answering questions, and I'm ready to give back in a similar fashion for the industry."

Brett has managed sales teams, provided coaching and leadership in both dealer and direct channels of sales, and has many long-standing relationships in the industry. He works closely with senior leadership on forecasting accurate sales numbers, and with product management teams to provide industry intel and forecasts for new products.

"With his years in the industry, work experience with multinational clients and buying groups, and a wealth of knowledge of industry events and trade shows across North America and in Japan, Brett will be a remarkable asset to the WRLA board of directors," says Liz Kovach, WRLA president.

Reach out to Brett at bsigurdson@allweatherwindows.com or 778-214-2416.

HERE IS THE WRLA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FOR THE 2021-22 YEAR:

JOEL SEIBERT, Mountain View Building Materials, Chair

WENDELL GILLERT, Allied Home Hardware, 1st Vice Chair

ANDREW REIMER, All-Fab Building Components, 2nd Vice Chair & Chair of Government Relations Committee

MARK KUZMA, Taiga Building Products, Associate Advisor

TOM BELL, Past Chair

ALLAN HALL, Heritage Co-Op, Director & Chair of Show Committee

SCOTT MCKEE, McMunn & Yates, Director & Chair of Education Committee

WADE LAURENT, The Ultimate Deck Shop, Director

LEN REGIER, Fries Tallman Lumber, Director

DON WYGEIRA, UFA, Director

ED STOL, Penhold Building Supplies, Director

SHEILA CARR, Mountain View Building Materials, Director

SHAWN SCHWARTZ, Schwartz Home Hardware, Director

MICAH FLAIG, Lumberworld, Director & Chair of BuildUP Committee

BRETT SIGURDSON, All Weather Windows, Director



EXCLUSIVE SAVINGS

Just for being a WRLA member, you can save on a variety of products and services from pet insurance and phone plans to hotel rooms and travel packages (one day!) through HUB International. Plus, you can get cash back on online purchases in WRLA's discount marketplace. New perks are added regularly so check back often!

To learn more, visit: wrla.org/save (under "Additional Insurance, Travel & Communication Programs")

GENERATE CASH FLOW FOR YOUR BUSINESS



To help ease stress and create more business success, WRLA has partnered with American Express to help give our members some wiggle room.

Unlike Visa and Mastercard, American Express is unsecured, meaning the limit on your American Express Small Business card does not impact your overall borrowing limits. Longer payment structure with up to 55 interest-free days allow your business to take more time to pay for key purchases.

Increase your cash flow quickly. Contact Scott Steffensen, business development manager for American Express at 204-417-3053 or scott.steffensen@aexp.com and let him know you're a WRLA member.



NEW WRLA COMMERCE & BUSINESS WEBINAR

Building business skills and improve your game – and your company! WRLA is offering a new monthly series of fast-paced, one-hour business webinars delivered by one of the top, no-nonsense business consultants in Western Canada, Pete Baran. Discover new ways to successfully steer your business through these crazy times and come out ahead. These sessions are perfectly designed for general managers, but sales managers could also benefit! The cost is \$500 for 11 sessions.

READ PETE BARAN'S EXPERT OPINION ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE INDUSTRY ON PAGE 24.

To learn more and register for the series, visit wrla.org/webinars or contact WRLA President, Liz Kovach at lkovach@wrla.org.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Email us at marketing@wrla.org or reach out via social media.



ADVOCACY UPDATE

Thank you to everyone that attended the first Political Power Hour session as part of the WRLA Showcase. We were delighted to assemble Ministers from the Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments to provide an overview of their government's focus and, of course, field questions from the industry.

The burning question from WRLA members continues to be "will there be consideration for a home renovation tax credit in Alberta and Manitoba?". The program that the Government of Saskatchewan implemented has been well received by constituents as well as local businesses and we acknowledged that had this session been hosted in person, Minister Eyre would have received a standing ovation! Following this positive discussion, Minister Schweitzer and Minister Eichler had requested the WRLA resubmit their proposal for review. This has been completed and we will continue to update members on progress and next steps.

Next up, the WRLA was invited to participate in a roundtable discussion with Minister Jim Carr, Special Representative for the Prairies. A variety of organizations that represent businesses in the Saskatoon region were invited to participate, provide candid feedback on the success of the federal response to the pandemic, highlight gaps that still exist and make asks to be reviewed by the federal government. WRLA members were surveyed and provided excellent feedback that was addressed with Minister Carr. Follow-up discussion is to ensue and we will keep you updated.

Get full details at wrla.org/advocacy

RENEWAL SEASON IS COMING!

It's almost time to renew your WRLA membership. Membership renewals start April 1, 2021. Respond promptly to ensure your business is listed in the annual WRLA 2021-22 Directory and Product Source Guide.

Contact wrla@wrla.org to update your business and contact information.



2022 SHOW

The 2021 show is over, which means it's planning time for the 2022 show! The 2022 WRLA Building & Hardware Showcase dates are set for January 19-21, 2022 in Winnipeg. Hotel information will be available soon. We look forward to seeing you in person in 2022!

Correction Re: Shopify Trial

Our apologies as we incorrectly stated WRLA members could receive a 90-day trial period with Shopify. The trial period is for two weeks. (The 90-day trial period was a limited-time offer in 2020.)



			
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MEMBER CORNER



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ACCOLADES FROM MEMBERS

We get warm fuzzies when we hear how appreciative our members are. We are here for you and it's great to know you see the work we do for members and the industry.

Just wanted to drop you a quick note to let you know that all your engagement efforts are not going unnoticed. Your LinkedIn presence is a constant and all the work you've put into education initiatives looks really amazing. It's a grind right now but keep up the great work and give you and your crew a well-deserved pat on the back.

Chris Hogan, Rockwool

Thank you so much for providing all of these free webinars to us! I enjoyed today's quite a bit (Social Media Company Guidelines with Charmaine Jennings of Strategic Charm). As a one-person team, I never really considered creating social media guidelines for our businesses but after today I have decided to make it a priority for the near future.

Jenny Jeffery, J&H Builder's Warehouse/J&H Homes

I just wanted to say this (WRLA webinar "How to Create Content Your People are Searching For" with Kelly Thibodeau of Squarely Social) was extremely helpful! My company is starting up our blog this week and this couldn't have come at a more perfect time. Thanks!

Jane Carsky, Bissett Fasteners

I have been involved with the WRLA on and off in my 40 years in the construction industry, starting with Beaver Lumber. WRLA does great things for the lumber yards in Western Canada and we would like to be a part of that.

Doug Rutherford, Mac Skylights/Mac Plastics, when submitting his application to join WRLA

THAT'S THE SPIRIT!

CanWel Building Materials Group Ltd. had fun with theme days during the showcase, including cowboy/country and pyjama days.



Above: Ryan Harbour, Joel Kakoske, Mike Krahn, Kyle Korchinski, Elsie Fontaine, Lucie Eliasova, Bryan Lamirande and Tannis Akehurst.



THOSE WE'VE LOST

As we were not able to do an in-person presentation to honour those we lost recently, we wanted to recognize those who left us too early.

- **Fern Liknes**, Woodland Lumber
- **Doug Morris**, Taiga Building Products
- **Cam White**, Taiga Building Products

Our thoughts go out to their friends and family.



**TOUGH
TOOLS YOU
CAN TRUST**



- **HEAVY-DUTY PERFORMANCE**
- **BUILT TO LAST**
- **JOBSITE TESTED**



BUILD UP CHILDREN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Susan Rosnau

Nowadays, more and more customers are looking to the values of a company before they spend their hard-earned money. Customers want to know that brands stand for something that is worthwhile, that the brand supports their community and that they are focused on more than just the bottom line. As one of the largest buying groups in the lumber and building supply industry, TIMBER MART has made it easy for their members to meet this need and give back to the communities their dealers call home. The company created their charitable foundation, Timberkids, with a focus on improving the health and well-being of Canadian children in the local communities where TIMBER MART members do business. Timberkids strives to support groups that are as inclusive as possible, benefit the most children and that make a grassroots difference in their communities. Over the last five years, Timberkids has donated over \$1 million to Canadian children's charities, which has positively impacted hundreds of TIMBER MART members' causes and local communities.

Through Timberkids' Dealer Donation Matching program, Timberkids matches a TIMBER MART dealer's donation of up to \$4,000 per year, per store towards a local registered children's charity of their choice. Through members' participation, they bring about the opportunity to market their own brand and connect with their communities where they do business.

"We have always been a strong supporter of local youth causes in our community and regularly use the Timberkids dealer matching program to make the biggest impact possible within our community," says Travis Lutes, owner of Lutes TIMBER MART in Brooks, Alberta.

To add some fun to the mix, Timberkids hosts annual golf tournaments in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada, as well as a fishing derby in Western Canada to bring TIMBER MART members and vendors together and raise funds for the foundation. Over the last five years, these events have brought together hundreds of dealers and vendors from across Canada and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations.

"I've attended the Timberkids golf tournament in Atlantic Canada for many years and have seen the event prosper more each year with dealers and vendors," says Brian Bowers, owner of Pleasant Supplies TIMBER MART in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and chair of the TIMBER MART national board. "It's a great event that we look forward to attending every year, not only for the fun and camaraderie but also for the good it does – and continues to do – for children across the country."

Adding to the already generous support, Timberkids will be launching the new Give Back To Local Day this summer. Participating marketing members of the group will have the opportunity to

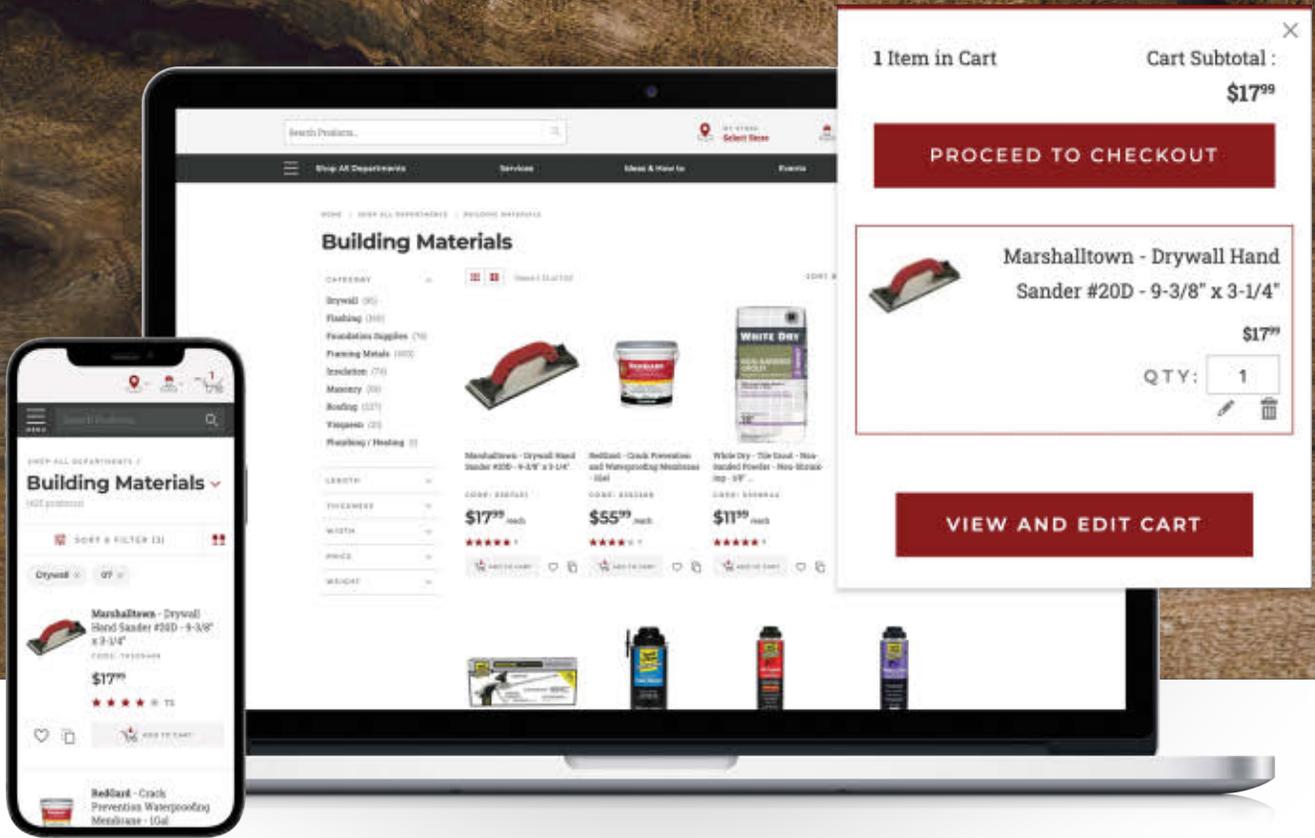
choose a day of their choice between June 1 and September 5 when they can donate a portion of their sales to a local children's charity and have their funds matched by Timberkids, up to a maximum of \$500 per store.

"With COVID measures limiting our ability to do physical fundraising events, we wanted to create another opportunity where dealers could do business and give back to their local communities at the same time," says Phil Otto, chair of the Timberkids board. "The Timberkids Give Back To Local Day will do just that and we look forward to seeing them hosted throughout the summer months across Canada."



TIMBER MART members and vendors at the 2019 Timberkids Fishing Derby held at V.J.'s Fishing Lodge in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

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2021 PREDICTIONS FROM A BUILDING MATERIALS RECRUITER

Stephen Borer

The year 2020 was a roller coaster for recruitment in the building materials industry. Quarter one was the busiest, hottest recruitment market I have personally ever worked in over 25 years of experience. Quarter two fell off a cliff and died. Quarter three and four built momentum and, at the end of 2020, we saw signs of going back to high levels of activity similar to the beginning of 2020.

As we say goodbye and good riddance to 2020, all eyes are on what 2021 will bring.

At the time of writing, it seems that the building materials industry is still busy. Our business clients in the industry have recruitment needs and are actively hiring. However, there is still a lack of confidence in the stability of the market in 2021, and this has widely translated into an additional stage or two in the interview process of potential candidates. That being said, organizations are still hiring, they are still planning and they are still pushing forward.

“Adapt, adjust and keep driving forward” seems to be the strategy that many of our customers in the building materials industry are taking.

The mistake some companies are making though is assuming that candidates are no longer in demand and that they can take their time to make hiring decisions. In many cases, such as sales representatives in the Lower Mainland, Edmonton or Kelowna, or product managers just about anywhere, this simply is not the case. Take too long and you will lose the candidate to a competitive opportunity.

It is a delicate balance for employers right now. There is little doubt that if organizations don't continue to hire to fulfill their needs and the market remains strong, they will be left behind. On the flip side, if they over hire and a recession does hit, they may have regrets. Talent is not expendable. It remembers. A good employer brand does not get turned on and off. If you mistreat employees for commercial gain, the market has a long memory. The talent on the market is arguably better than before. Some unlucky people have found themselves having to exit struggling businesses and many more have found themselves questioning their situation during the lockdown. The pandemic seems to have unsettled many employees and made them more open to an attractive approach.

The pressure that firms experienced in quarter one 2020, where there were barely any available candidates, does feel like it is building again, but this aforementioned “unsettling of candidates” does at least mean there are candidates reachable through networking and headhunting.

We are not back to an environment where companies can pick and choose. Talent always finds a home and is never available for long. There remains a need to be hunting for that talent and working hard to attract it to your organization.

Right now, hiring is very much on many of our business customers' agendas. The industry-wide succession issues have not gone away, house prices continue to rise and wage/cost considerations remain prevalent. All the signs remain for continued high demand and low supply of qualified talent throughout the industry across 2021.

Stephen Borer is a partner at DMC Recruitment. DMC provides executive search and contingent recruitment solutions to building materials companies across Canada and the US. Email: sborer@dmcrecruitment.com



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whoogenboom@cloverdalepaint.com

 **Cloverdale Paint**



THE LITTLE INNOVATION WHICH POWERED E-COMMERCE

Paul Sloane

It is clear that the internet has transformed how we shop. More people are buying more products and services online than ever before. High-street retailers and big brands are suffering at the hands of online merchants large and small. There is one often overlooked innovation that has enabled this trend: buyer/seller feedback.

A key component of any business transaction is trust. Hundreds of years ago you would typically trade only with someone you could meet face to face. Say you were a small business in Boston making shirts in 1800 and someone from Washington wrote to you wanting to order 20 shirts, how would you react? Washington was many days ride away and you knew no one there. If you sent the goods, would you ever get paid? If you asked for upfront payment, how will the buyer know that you will deliver? How can you trust a complete stranger? Much better to trade locally and swap the goods for the money with people you can see face to face.

Of course, traders took action to build trust using banks, distribution partners and retailers, but there was still considerable risk that you would ship goods and not be paid or pay for goods and not receive them.

Fast forward to 1995 and there is an emerging online auction company called AuctionWeb based in San Jose. Its founder was a French-born Iranian computer programmer called Pierre Omidyar. The internet allows someone with something to sell to find someone who wants it on the other side of the country, but how can you trust a complete stranger? In 1997, two years after it

was launched, the company introduced the idea of buyer/seller feedback. Both parties rated the other after a transaction. It was a simple but brilliant concept that allowed sellers in particular to build a ratings history and engender trust – a key component of business. It was this fundamental advance that enabled the dramatic growth of the company, which in the same year of 1997, changed its name from AuctionWeb to eBay.

Online feedback is now so commonplace that we take it for granted. It is fundamental to all sorts of businesses. Think of Airbnb. Would you rent a room from a stranger without references? Probably not.

We tend to think of e-commerce innovations in terms of big technology advances like PayPal or Blockchain. We tend to think of the value of service innovations in terms of faster service or reduced cost. Buyer/seller feedback was technically simple. Its benefit lies in improving an intangible – trust. Buyers use feedback ratings to judge whether to use an Uber driver, whether to use a TaskRabbit worker, whether to select a hotel on Trip Advisor or a book on Amazon.

By 2018, eBay had revenues of \$10 billion with 170 million users and one billion items listed. And all because of an innovative feature that increased trust between buyer and seller.

Paul Sloane of Destination Innovation is an author, expert and the UK's top inspirational speaker on lateral thinking and innovation. destination-innovation.com

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DOING GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CUSTOMERS AND YOUR BUSINESS

Efficiency Manitoba

There's no doubt that the past year has been challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic is not only affecting the physical health of Canadians, but continues to strain the well-being of our economy and job market. Efficiency Manitoba understands this and is ready to contribute to economic recovery efforts.

Efficiency Manitoba is a new Crown corporation dedicated to helping Manitobans save energy, money and the environment. They achieve this by offering programs and incentives to homeowners and businesses when they make energy efficiency upgrades. Delivering these programs is made possible through the engagement and participation of skilled contractors, builders, retailers and consultants. By working with the private sector, Efficiency Manitoba creates opportunities for job creation and economic growth.

PROGRAMS TO HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS SAVE

Efficiency Manitoba currently works with over 500 suppliers to facilitate energy efficiency upgrades throughout Manitoba. Registered suppliers offer a wide range of Efficiency Manitoba programs, including the following:

- **The Home Insulation program** provides a rebate to homeowners who upgrade their insulation. Homeowners work with a registered supplier to either purchase insulation materials or have the insulation installed.
- **The New Homes program** enables Manitobans to work with consultants and builders to design and construct new homes that are energy-efficient. Efficiency Manitoba provides energy-efficient certification and a rebate when construction is complete.
- **The Building Envelope program** provides financial incentives to businesses that work with a registered supplier to install energy-efficient roof and wall insulation, doors, windows and curtain wall system upgrades.
- **The New Buildings program** enables Manitoba businesses and institutions to work with consultants and builders to design and construct energy-efficient new buildings. Efficiency Manitoba provides incentives for energy modelling or on a per-square-foot basis.



HOW TO BECOME A REGISTERED EFFICIENCY MANITOBA SUPPLIER

Joining Efficiency Manitoba's supplier network provides your business with many benefits. You'll be registered to offer Efficiency Manitoba's energy efficiency programs, helping your customers save energy and money. You'll also be included in a searchable online list of registered suppliers, bringing more visibility to your business. Plus, it's free to register and take part.

Getting started is simple. Visit efficiencyMB.ca/supplier to fill out and submit a supplier agreement. Once you're approved, you can start helping your customers make energy-efficient choices. It makes good sense for you, your customers and the future of Manitoba.

More information about these programs and others is available at efficiencyMB.ca.



Not a Manitoba-based business?

Watch for articles on sustainability programs from other provinces in future issues of *Yardstick*.

TOP 10 CANADIAN CONSTRUCTION TRENDS TO WATCH FOR IN 2021

Mary Van Buren

1 RHETORIC OR REALITY: WILL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT DOLLARS FLOW IN TIME?

Billions of dollars have been earmarked through Infrastructure Canada's Investing in Canada Plan, yet there are still billions that are uncommitted since 2018. With a severely hard-hit economy, will the feds, provinces and municipalities be able to set aside politics and get funds flowing and people working? Mixing infrastructure stimulus with unrelated social policy goals will delay projects, interfering with economic recovery and getting people back to work.

2 IMPROVED HYGIENE STANDARDS ARE HERE TO STAY

While COVID-19 has been devastating in so many ways, one positive outcome is the increased hygiene on job sites across Canada. Improved handwashing and bathroom facilities have addressed some of the downsides of working on job sites and may result in reduced spread of other common germs, like colds and flus.

3 PRIVATE SECTOR STALLS

Investor confidence has taken a beating in the commercial sector, as some businesses promise to significantly reduce their footprints. And, while the square foot per office worker was already declining, will it need to increase again to accommodate a smaller workforce while respecting physical distancing? Project tendering began to slow down in the third quarter of 2020, which will have a significant impact on the design and engineering community first, followed by the construction industry late 2021, unless this gap is filled with government work or a return to private sector investor confidence.

4 WORKFORCE SHORTAGE WORSENS

The Canadian Construction Association continues to advocate for a dedicated commitment to infrastructure investment. With governments slow to launch economic stimulus in the form of infrastructure investment, placements for apprentices are most at risk. This will sharpen the already significant shortfall in skilled workers, such that recovery will be slower. Skilled tradespeople simply cannot be created overnight.



5 RISKY BUSINESS

Construction firms have long shouldered the majority of project risk. Throughout COVID-19, contractors took a leap of faith that owners would reimburse extraordinary costs related to COVID-19. While some owners have been flexible and fair, others have not. P3 models, seen as a panacea for large infrastructure projects, have not been as well received by contractors who have been charged with a disproportionate share of the risk. While vaccines may be coming, COVID-19's continued impact, lower investor confidence and contractors burning through their backlog could mean 2021 could be a make or break year for many. The small and medium-sized contractors who carry much of the upfront costs of projects are most at risk.





6 RISE OF PROTECTIONISM

Provinces with struggling economies and municipalities with limited funds may look inward, erecting trade barriers to narrowly focus on their constituents. This short-term thinking is already happening in British Columbia, with its Community Benefits agreements, which are Project Labour Agreements (PLA), as well as with Saskatchewan's stated preference for Saskatchewan-based firms to win bids. Economists suggest that policies that impose trade barriers are harmful to the economy. Interprovincial trade barriers are inefficient, and do not support a fair, transparent and competitive procurement processes. It is essential that we stand united and work together to benefit all Canadians during recovery.

7 GREENING OF INFRASTRUCTURE

The federal government will continue to advance its sustainability strategy, which may lead to more projects in urban areas. We also need to tend to our infrastructure deficit. Highways, roads, bridges, ports and other forms of transportation infrastructure are integral to maintaining the quality of life Canadians enjoy. They are not only essential for personal commuting and travel, but also allow for movement of goods and services that underpin the economy.

The Canadian Trucking Alliance estimates, for instance, that over 90 percent of all consumer products and foodstuffs are shipped by truck. According to the 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report, nearly 40 percent of roads and bridges are in fair, poor or very poor condition and 30 percent of tracks for public transit require investment in the next decade. About 25 percent of Canada's potable water infrastructure, including water mains, reservoirs and dams, and 30 percent of its wastewater infrastructure, including sewers and treatment plants, is in fair, poor or very poor condition. These needed infrastructure investments are an opportunity to reshape our communities in a more sustainable manner.

8 DIGITAL ACCELERATION

The consumer appetite for digital commerce radically increased during the shutdowns, altering business priorities and operations. E-commerce activities advanced 10 years in three months, according to a report by the McKinsey Institute. The construction industry also appreciated the value of connecting through technology during the pandemic, complying with physical distancing while managing projects remotely. The added benefit has been improved data on projects, the modernization of procurement, such as e-ticketing in the cement industry and a demand for permitting to go digital.

9 FEDERAL PROMPT PAYMENT IS LAUNCHED

The federal government has been working to bring the legislation into implementation. Understandably delayed by COVID-19, the industry is counting on this to be in place for 2021. With the uncertainty of projects and liquidity concerns, this will send a positive message.

10 SUPPLY CHAIN RE-THINK

While the supply chain was surprisingly resilient during 2020, it was not without its risks. From lumber to windows to cement, contractors had to deal with uncertainty in receiving materials and increasing costs. This may ramp up investments in modularization, as well as prompt calls for governments across the country to support those industries that supply "made in Canada" materials.

Mary Van Buren is president of the Canadian Construction Association. This article first appeared in the December 2020 edition of On-Site, Canada's Construction Magazine, as one component of the 2021 Construction Forecast. To read through the complete outlook, visit www.on-sitemag.com/construction-forecast.

IT'S GOOD TO BE A WOOD PRODUCT PRODUCER

According to the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), this year is looking like a "fat pitch" with wood product prices at record levels. While 2020 was one for the record books, RBC anticipates 2021 could be even better due to very strong housing markets and limited capacity to increase production. Below, RBC highlights some of their key themes for the year:

1. Get ready for another year of record prices.

The bottom line is that prices are already at record levels in what is usually the seasonally slowest time of the year. With dealer inventories at a low level and overall demand likely to be higher year over year due to very strong new residential construction markets, we think 2021 could be another record year.

2. Expect heightened merger & acquisition (M&A) activity.

The pace of M&A has already picked up, with West Fraser entering an agreement to acquire Norbord. Given that wood product producers already have strong balance sheets and are likely to generate record cash flows over the next few months, we think M&A will be an increasingly utilized option.

3. Mass timber should continue to grow.

In our view, the long-term incremental demand from mass timber construction remains underappreciated by investors. We expect 2021 to be a pivotal year, with the introduction of new standards allowing taller wood buildings likely to spur additional investment in the industry. We think Canfor or Weyerhaeuser are best positioned to benefit.





WAKE ME WHEN IT'S OVER

THE CONTINUING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LUMBER AND BUILDING SUPPLY INDUSTRY

Pete Baran

C COVID-19 burst into 2020 fast and hard, upsetting virtually all industries in some significant way. Most businesses expected COVID-19 to be over by now, or at least over enough to go back to business as usual. That is not going to happen, at least not in 2021. Everyone running an independent business needs to understand why and what to expect. Read on to find out what you need to know to get through it successfully.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

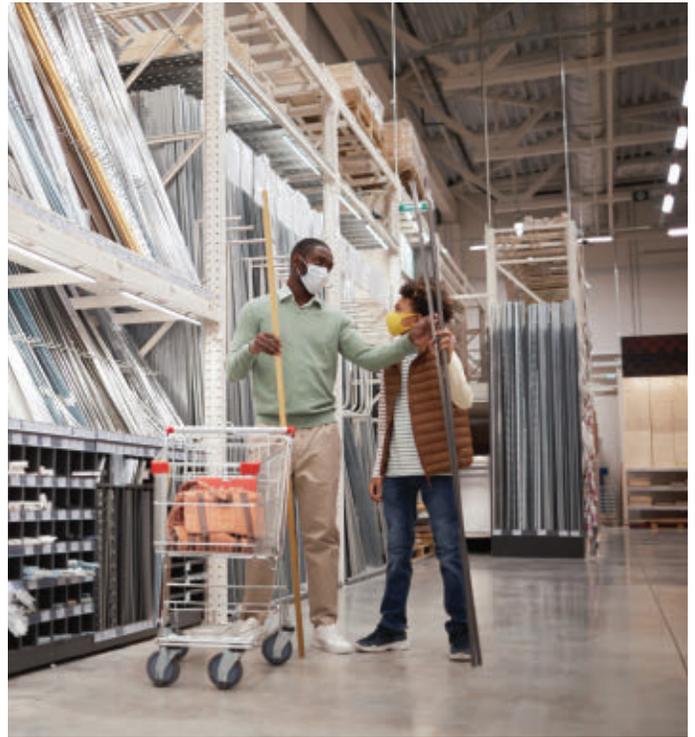
The virus really put 2020 in a spin. For the first few weeks, it looked like it might be a disaster for lumber retailers. Although the construction industry was spared complete shutdown by becoming an essential service, customers initially stopped buying. Supply chains for lumber products were disrupted as ports closed and suppliers worked out how to manage the risk and logistics of doing business with COVID-19.

The industry was already on the way to having a challenging year even before COVID-19 came along. Bad fire years, mill disruptions and shortages in the US, coupled with growing US housing demand, had already reduced supply availability in Canada.

Then something unexpected happened. Canadian demand for building materials went through the roof.

With lockdowns, Canadians found themselves spending a lot more time at home. At the same time, the Canadian government decided to pump over \$322 billion into additional financial support payments, averaging over \$10,000 per adult. With nowhere to go and nothing to do, many decided to reno their homes with the extra money. Even with record prices, many commodity and specialty items sold out.

Big retailers benefited. Home Depot stock skyrocketed from a bottom of \$152/share in March 2020 to a high of \$291/share by September. But many smaller lumber retailers also did well if they priced their product right in the face of rising wholesale prices, low supply and high demand.



ECONOMIC TRENDS IN 2021

THERE ARE THREE MAIN ECONOMIC TRENDS THAT WILL LIKELY IMPACT LUMBER RETAILERS IN 2021.

1 According to Russ Permann, CEO of Taiga Building Products, lumber supply is still going to be a challenge this year. The US new housing market is structurally under-supplied, causing Canada to continue to compete for supply. The COVID-19 restrictions placed on the supply chain will further challenge the speed of supply. Although the situation may improve later in 2021, commodity supply is likely to remain tight for most of the coming season.

2 Government COVID-19 subsidy programs are tapering off with many scheduled to end completely mid-year. Household incomes will soon get tighter again. Businesses will need to stand on their own without extra government help. Some businesses will not make it. However, on balance, most economists are predicting a small economic recovery for 2021.

3 With travel, sports and entertainment still under onerous restrictions, many consumers may still find themselves with spare cash to spend. In addition, according to Statistics Canada, 25 percent of all business expect at least 10 percent of their workers to remain working from home after the pandemic, with many more working at home part-time. The home seems to be a good bet for additional spending in 2021.

2021 AND BEYOND

1 The lawsuits are coming. Several have already been filed in the US. Under Occupational Health and Safety regulations, employers have a duty of care to keep their employees safe from workplace hazards. This includes pandemics. Many businesses do not realize employees who catch COVID-19 at work can sue for damages. If a cluster of employees in your business get COVID-19, this may not be as difficult to prove as you think.

2 Governments will now focus on hospitalizations when deciding whether to impose or lift restrictions on business activity. Why? If hospitals get overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases, both COVID-19 patients and others are put at risk, including patients due to car accidents, heart attacks and cancer.

3 Many of your customers have safety concerns about catching COVID-19. An EnviroNics survey in November found 39 percent of Canadians said COVID-19 was their top concern. It made the list for many more.

4 Vaccinations will not get us back to normal yet. We have a lot of hurdles to overcome before we can again pack into a bar on Friday night with friends, have a big wedding or go to a hockey game.

Many businesspeople are surprised about this last point. New vaccines will help with time but are unlikely to end the pandemic soon. Like lumber, demand for the vaccines outside of Canada is creating uncertain supply here. The best estimate is that it may take into the third quarter of 2021 or later to get enough supply for most Canadians to receive shots, but it could be even longer.

Vaccinating the higher-risk, older half of Canadians first could reduce hospitalizations by up to 70-80 percent. But with only half of Canadians vaccinated, COVID-19 would likely continue to spread and mutate.

However, just like masks, not everyone wants to get a COVID-19 shot. A recent Angus Reid poll shows 40 percent of Canadians do not want to be vaccinated. Even if enough Canadians get vaccinated, it is unknown how long the protection will last. No one knows if we will need annual shots like the flu, raising the possibility of regular outbreaks again well into 2022.

What makes this even more uncertain is that we are in a global situation where new, highly contagious variations are emerging all over the world. Our vaccines could eventually become useless against some new strain.

However, simple things still work. The more protected we are from inhaling a virus that someone just exhaled, the less likely we are to be infected. Keeping clean our hands and objects we touch helps. And of course, keeping sick people away from healthy people is important. These simple facts will continue to guide health policies and affect how we run our businesses in 2021 – masks, sanitization and distancing.

Overall, it is very likely we are going to have COVID-19 disrupting our lives, our lumber supply chains, our customers and our businesses for some time to come. Businesses need to prepare for this probability.





**OPEN
BUSINESS AS
NEW NORMAL**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are too many things happening that can either help or hurt you, depending on how well prepared you are to respond smartly. Here are six strategies to help keep your business running during 2021:

1 PAY ATTENTION

The situation in 2021 is going to change and change quickly. Taiga's Permann said he looks to changes in the travel industry as an advanced indicator of a coming recovery. In your own business, you may want to closely track your volume of quotes and orders on a daily and weekly basis to watch the trends and make better decisions.

2 FOCUS ON GENERATING CASH

This is a year where it will be important to improve the profit on every sale. You may not be able to make up for poor margins with big volumes; supply may not be available when you want it. Your businesses will need to pay more attention to margins and modify sales incentive plans to generate more profitable sales.

3 HARDEN SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Workplace safety should always be important, and this is not the time to ease up on safety protocols. Make sure you have a written COVID-19 policy and add it to your safety manual. Taiga reorganized employees into teams and then minimized interaction between them to keep the teams distanced from each other.

4 PROTECT AGAINST LEGAL RISKS

You need to prove that you are following health orders and your own protocols. If your policy states that employees with symptoms stay home, you should keep a daily log to prove you are checking. The good news is that there is an app to help you at www.sitesafe.app.

5 INVEST IN CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE

Customers want to know that your business is safe to buy from. Now is the time to prove it. Replace those worn temporary plastic screens and broken hand-sanitizer bottles. Install contactless options instead of relying on wiping down equipment. Offer additional delivery and curbside pickup options, matched with mobile and web ordering apps, if you aren't already. You will need them longer than you think!

6 SUPPLY CERTAINTY

You cannot sell what you cannot get. With longer lead times, extra communication is key. Stay up to date with suppliers to understand changing lead times and availabilities. Clearly communicate what is happening with your best customers so they can adjust their order timing to meet the needs of their projects. This year, that will often mean planning further ahead than usual.

These are not business-as-usual times and 2021 is likely going to be another unusual year. If you pay attention to these changes, you can prepare for the opportunities that will put you ahead of your competition. As the US Navy Seals say, "It's time to get comfortable with being uncomfortable!"

Pete Baran, owner of both Blueneck Consulting and Site-Safe Software, is a successful former Fortune 500 executive who now shares simple and effective secrets with business owners to improve and grow their operations.

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RANSOMWARE IS COSTING COMPANIES BILLIONS

AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM OF CYBERCRIMINALS

Ian Thornton-Trump

OK, so the worst has happened. The office systems started running really slowly and files you regularly use are coming back “not found” or “file corrupted.” Rebooting the PC did not seem to fix the problem...

This scenario is something, which over the past two years, has impacted hundreds of Canadian businesses and critical infrastructure providers, including multiple hospitals and police departments, as well as municipal, provincial and territorial governments.

All indications are these ransomware campaigns – where your files are encrypted by malware and the organization needs to pay a ransom to get them unlocked – will persist and unfortunately get worse. A Government of Canada assessment predicts a pretty grim future for organizations: Ransomware researchers estimate that the average ransom demand increased by 33 percent since quarter four 2019 to \$111,605 CAD in quarter one 2020 due to the impact of targeted ransomware operations. The average ransom demand spiked in December 2019 at \$257,756 CAD and we assess that 2020 will very likely see one or more months exceed this figure. At the more extreme end of the spectrum are ransom events that cost companies millions of dollars, which have become increasingly common. In October 2019, a Canadian insurance company paid \$1.3M CAD to recover 20 servers and 1,000 workstations.



So, if things are getting worse and ransomware ransoms are becoming a very large and significant impact to an organization's profit and revenue, what does an organization need to do to survive?

Of course, the best survival technique when it comes to a ransomware attack is to not get hit by the cybercriminal's malware in the first place. Interestingly, Canada has developed a robust set of baseline controls, which are effective in mitigating cyber-attacks, especially ransomware attacks. Details are available online (<https://cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/baseline-cyber-security-controls-small-and-medium-organizations>) but unfortunately, for non-IT and non-cyber security professionals, the language used to define these security controls is rather inaccessible.

Of course, the best survival technique when it comes to a ransomware attack is to not get hit by the cybercriminal's malware in the first place.



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Here then is a translation from what the government control states should be in place and what that means in practical terms (i.e. “Quick Wins” an organization can implement).

SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT CONTROL	QUICK WINS
3.1 Develop an Incident Response Plan	Discuss your ransomware concerns with your IT provider, insurance agent and/or in-house staff. Ask “What are we going to do if...?”
3.2 Automatically Patch Operating Systems and Applications	Operating systems and applications are frequently updated by the vendor. These updates can include performance improvements and security fixes. Keeping the computers up to date is one of the most effective ways of protecting your organization from a ransomware attack. Generally, the best practice is to apply these updates once a month.
3.3 Enable Security Software	Anti-virus (AV) or End-Point Detection & Response (EDR) should be installed on all systems and be regularly maintained. Email filtering (see page 35) should be deployed for all email users.
3.4 Securely Configure Devices	Nearly all network connected devices in your organization have default passwords and have unneeded features installed. Change these passwords and remove services that are not required (you may need a professional security consultant to identify these situations).
3.5 Use Strong User Authentication	Easy-to-guess passwords and password reuse are a huge security issue, especially with internet-exposed systems like Remote Desktop, Outlook web access and VPN. Secure these with a robust password and multifactor authentication where possible. A free service called “Have I been Pwned” can be very helpful with this (see page 35).
3.6 Provide Employee Awareness Training	Being aware of how organizations and employees are attacked by cybercriminals is important as they have new techniques (and resurrect old ones) so stay up to date on the latest attacks. Talk to your IT staff/provider or insurance provider to put together a brief user awareness training program.
3.7 Backup and Encrypt Data	Daily data backups are a critical part of recovery from ransomware. Ideally there should be two different types of backup: a local one and a cloud based, off-site one. Encryption of backups is recommended so they can’t be stolen and used by malicious actors without the unlock key.
3.8 Secure Mobility	Phones, tablets and any device that has access to corporate data needs to be kept up to date with the latest operating system version and latest applications. They should be encrypted (especially laptops) and secured with a minimum six-character PIN code, biometric authentication or longer password for laptops.
3.9 Establish Basic Perimeter Defences	Chances are already good that your organization has a firewall between the internet and your internal network but is it effectively helping protect your organization? Does it block potentially hostile inbound and outbound connections? (You may need a professional security consultant to assist in a firewall audit.)
3.10 Secure Cloud and Outsourced IT Services	Many organizations rely on hosted software solutions and other services which may have unused security features such as Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) (see page 35). Investigate how you can secure your cloud services using security features readily available.
3.11 Secure Websites	Your organization’s public website and any web service that can give access to the internal network is an absolute priority for security. Unfortunately, websites can be very complex and keeping them up to date may not eliminate all vulnerabilities. Sadly, cybercriminals know this and are frequently trying to break into vulnerable websites to carry out malicious attacks on visitors and gain access to sensitive information. (You may need a professional security consultant to assist in a website penetration test.)
3.12 Implement Access Control and Authorization	It’s important that users be restricted to the data and systems appropriate to their organizational role. Simply giving everyone administrative privileges eliminates any confidentiality of information. Generic logins such as “sales” should be avoided as it may be impossible to audit activities of a group of users.
3.13 Secure Portable Media	Portable media such as USB sticks, external hard drives and even wireless credit card readers should be physically secured as the devices may contain unencrypted data that is sensitive. Due to the massive storage potential of these devices, an entire copy of an organization’s data stores may be present.

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The additional “quick wins” – Email Filtering, Have I been Pwnd and Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) – mentioned below are effective ways of preventing and detecting attacks on your organization. According to a news article from CTV:

“Ninety percent of successful [attacks] are initiated through things like email, malicious attachments, improperly secured remote access solutions, internet-facing services that need to be patched, or aren’t protected by two-factor authentication. An attack typically encrypts as much of a victim’s data as possible.”

1 EMAIL FILTERING

A service that inspects each email coming into or coming out of your organization for malicious codes or links. This service works transparently and is effective in preventing the delivery of malicious email into the organization – often the first step to a cyber-attack.

2 HAVE I BEEN PWND

<https://haveibeenpwned.com> is a website where organizations and users can determine if their email accounts, sensitive data and potentially even passwords have been leaked. This is a “early warning” service to determine if the organization may be compromised by poor or reused passwords, or if individual users may be targeted by phishing emails based upon the data.

3 MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION (MFA)

A critical and highly effective technique of defeating account takeover and compromised accounts in cloud services. According to Microsoft, “By providing an extra barrier and layer of security that makes it incredibly difficult for attackers to get past, MFA can block over 99.9 percent of account compromise attacks. With MFA, knowing or cracking the password won’t be enough to gain access.”



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KEY RANSOMWARE VARIANTS AND OPERATIONS

CRYPTO LOCKER	Ransomware created by Russian cybercriminal Evgeniy Bogachev in 2013, considered the first modern ransomware variant, distributed by the GameOverZeus malware, whose operators included Bogachev and Evil Corp members.
EVIL CORP	A Russia-based organized cybercriminal group responsible for the Dridex malware and multiple ransomware campaigns since 2015. In December 2019, Evil Corp members were indicted and sanctioned by the US for their ongoing cybercriminal activities and for providing assistance to a Russian intelligence service.
FIN6	An organized cybercriminal group, likely Russian-speaking, reportedly linked to multiple Ryuk and Megacortex infections since 2018, but active since 2015.
MAZE	A ransomware variant whose operators are known to leak victim data for non-payment. Active since at least November 2019.
MEGA CORTEX	A ransomware variant discovered in 2019 observed targeting Industrial Control Systems processes, reportedly linked to Trickbot and FIN6 operations.
RYUK	A ransomware variant known to target large enterprises, hospitals and critical infrastructure, and demand extremely large ransoms. Active since August 2018. Ryuk is affiliated with multiple Russian-speaking cybercriminals, including the operators of Trickbot.
SAMSAM	A ransomware variant used by Iranian cybercriminals that compromised multiple municipalities, hospitals, universities and businesses in Canada, the US, the UK, and other countries primarily during 2015-2018.
SODINOKIBI	A ransomware variant, whose Russian-speaking developers hire other cybercriminals to distribute and deploy their ransomware.
TRICKBOT	A banking trojan used to steal financial data and online banking credentials. Trickbot is affiliated with multiple Russian-speaking cybercriminals and is a primary distributor of the Ryuk ransomware.

Ian Thornton-Trump CD is an ITIL certified IT professional with 25 years of experience in IT security and information technology. He is the Chief Technology Officer for Octopi Managed Services Inc. Octopi works with small and medium businesses to implement, maintain and improve cyber security for all organizations. To learn more, visit <https://octopitech.com> or contact the team to discuss your concerns at sales@octopitech.com or 1-844-628-6741. Octopi has a special discount program for members of the WRLA.

BLACK MARKET

FOR YOUR DATA

Listen to a WRLA webinar with Ian Thornton-Trump on the black market for your data and how cybercriminals use public data breach information to target victims and break into organizations. This is a non-technical presentation suitable for anyone interested in immediately taking steps to protect themselves and their business from cyber-attacks at work, at home or while travelling.

Listen at wrla.org/webinars (under "Past Webinars")



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AS SOLID AS A ROCK

Photo by Andy Holmes

Between a rock and a hard place. Rocky times. Hit rock bottom. Somehow the word “rock” has been given many negative connotations over the years, but Mother Nature proves that rocks can be beautiful. Here at Maligne Canyon Trail in Jasper, Alberta, the rocks are a majestic part of the landscape, carefully sheltering the plunging waterfall and housing trees and greenery. Rocks are strong, solid and steady. All the things we need in our lives – personal and business – right now. In countless ways, 2020 was difficult, and 2021 is still anyone’s guess, but if we can hold steady, we will come out the other side stronger than ever.

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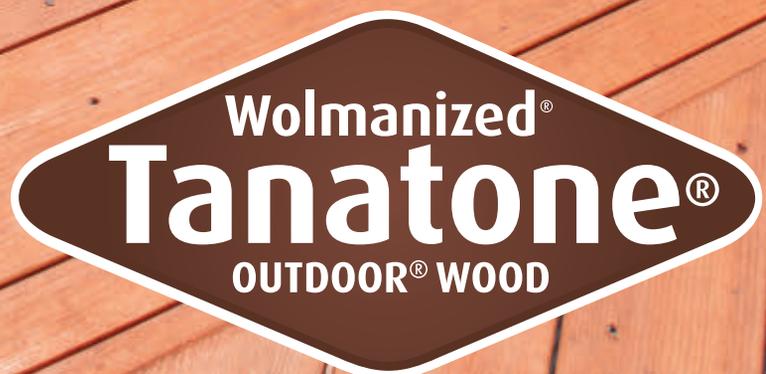
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