Oct 7, 2020 BWA Board Update Report:

Since June 30th the Coved19 crisis has continued to dictate how the BWA conducts business. We were very quick to pivot our delivery to online format first fiscal quarter, with very positive results. Part of this strategy included opening up our events to non-members across the country, and leveraging our relationship with Kleiser Media (Woodworking Canada Magazine) to promote our events via eblasts, and online presence with their digital magazine and print version. This has resulted in engagement across the country with some new members as a result and positive exposure. It has also enabled us to add to our database of potential member contacts. We did notice, as things with Covid settled down that numbers at events did taper off. Due to summertime our # and frequency of events was reduced.

**# of BWA Online Roundtable Events and Training events since June 30th : 5**

* July 15th – BWA Online Roundtable Event Mental Health First Aid – 29 members attended.
* September 1st – BWA Doubleheader Health & Safety Online Workshop – 6 members attended with ticket sales $1181.70
* June 24-Nov 25- Ongoing Weekly – BWA 12 week online Leadership training with 8 companies and approx.. $3000 commission to BWA
* Sep 29th: Leadership Series (12 weeks – **Fall** Series Start date Bi-weekly)
* Oct 1st: Manufacturing Matters London BWA Panel

**Total # Attending Online Roundtable Events: 75**

**Upcoming Events**

* Oct 15th: Finishing Speaker Panel Event
* Oct 29th: Export Round Table
* Nov (middle): Plant Focus Tour @CCW
* Dec (first week): Lean training

Jan 28th: Leadership Series (12 weeks – **Winter** Series Start date Bi-weekly) \*\*\*date is a placeholder

**New Plant Tour Approach**

Associate members are being engaged to approach non-members to host BWA events as a way to promote the BWA and see the value. These would be virtual plant tours with video and zoom debrief forums. Also, the NGen project video portion will offer the host to create a self promo video while BWA is on location for a fee.

**Membership Development:**

**Number of new members Since June 30th: List names: 1**

* SalesCanada Inc.

**Number of new members since April 1: List company names  
April 1 – June 30: 5   
July 1 – Sept 30: 1   
Total: 6**

* Buddsteel
* White Oaks Custom Cabinetry
* Ottawa Valley Home Improvement
* Convoy Customs
* Brycon

**Number of non-renewals: Since June 30th-List names: 5**

* Premium Mulch Products
* Doma Doors
* Imaginite Technologies
* Dundalk Leisurecraft
* Commonwealth Plywood

**Number of non-renewals since April 1: Totals:   
April 1 – June 30: 3   
July 1 – Sept 30: 5   
Total: 9**

* Railmaster
* Woodcrafters
* Wrightcraft Woodworking Inc.

**Current # of manufacturing members:  # and % of total**

76 – 62%

**Current # of associate members: # and % of total**

47 – 38%

**Current total members:**

123

**Membership Development Report**

New leads developed from the latest event outreach are being followed up for new memberships. There are 5 imminent new prospects to join soon. It needs to be noted that for some prospects it takes over a year to close the sale.

Membership development is challenging at this time. Many companies are watching their budgets. Also, many companies are reluctant to engage an organization at a time when they cant meet face-to-face due to Covid19; where the personal connection through networking takes place.

We’ve also gotten feedback when asked what are their thoughts for online events (via Zoom) and in conversation they say that they can’t network on a zoom meeting.

At the time of the Covid Roundtables that generated leads we did not have a defined forward outlook of events into the fall yet established (i.e. plant tours, physical networking, manufacturing related seminars, training) which was a challenge. More events are now established and scheduled. Ideas proposed at member visits such as utilizing multiple break out rooms to network in micro-size groups, the feedback is becoming more positive and it will be shared moving forward with prospects also.

The challenge with online events is engagement is not enough to have members present for our events to arrive early or stay at end of event to network.  We need to make the online platform a place they are comfortable speaking knowing it is confidential, secure, and enables one-to-one networking.  They need a platform and events that let them speak their minds and connect with other members where micro conversations can be had without 30 others listening.  I believe we are getting closer to achieving this.

Also, the Plant Tour initiative engaging our Associates may assist in generating more tours and increase member interest in engagement as well as prospecting.  There needs to be an active push to make this happen and more regularly.

With the addition of the BWA Safety Excellence Program with rebates and CME partnership and other initiatives it will pick up.

Covid continues to keep companies cautious about taking risks expenditures not related directly to production.

**Funding Programs**

In January of this year the BWA made applications for several sources of project funding, since none were guaranteed, including NRCan at that time.

* NRCan Investments in Forest Industry Transformation (IFIT) Program- Industry 4.0 Digital Adoption Project: Calls for proposals were released in August by and the BWA created and submitted a “project of projects”. The BWA has been working with NRCan over the past 2 years to accept a proposal from the BWA. The BWA project involves 11 BWA companies with a total spend of $8.5 million @ 50% less 10% for the BWA for admin. (40% funding to companies). This project will run to March 31, 2021. If approved, it will inject the BWA with significant funds (approx. $400k) to invest in more staffing infrastructure for membership development. If approved It is likely that NRCan will come back with a smaller amount counter offer; at which time we will re-tool the funding model for participating companies to make it fair.
* NRcan Expanded Market Opportunities (EMO) program continues to fund the BWA via Export Readiness Project. The 3 themes include: Events, Individual Company Export Strategies, and a US market analysis. The BWA will be submitting another application in December for next year, which will continue the export readiness theme for the BWA.
* NOTE on EMO:

Recently the BWA partnered with BC Wood and Quebec on a request to NRCan for some EMO funding relief due to Covid19 and the impact on membership and event revenues. We combined our metrics to enforce the importance of our sector nationally. The three provinces represent 83% of the value-added wood industry ($18billion, 4200 firms, 73,400 employees). This is a milestone for the BWA to represent our industry to gov partners. Our ask would be to support infrastructure salaries for 1 year, and beyond that at a percentage. So far we have not had an official response on the request.; but that it remains under consideration.

* The BWA NGen Supercluster Capacity Building project was approved. Theme is BWA digital pivot to online engagement titled: **Bluewater Wood Alliance (BWA) Cluster - Digital Transformation Program (DTP) Capacity Building Project - COVID19 Response.** Funding is $134,597k @ 50% less 2.5% admin fee. This will be leveraged to fund remainder of staffing costs not covered by NRCan and also support investment in digital capacity. The BWA will be working with digital marketing company Candybox Marketing to address digital gaps, digital transformation, and outreach. This will include the BWA branding exercise and digital branding transformation, website optimization, and video creation..
* Project applications to the Southwestern Development Fund (SWODF) and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Rural Economic Development Program (RED) were both denied.

**Partnerships/Synergies/New Programs**:

**CME- BWA Safety Excellence Rebate Program (SEP)**

As presented at the Oct 7 board meeting, the BWA has sought a partnership with Canada Manufacturers and Exporters in order to deliver a BWA branded WSIB Safety Excellence Rebate Program. This will provide opportunities for rebates for BWA member companies on their premiums, and allows the BWA to brand their own group utilizing the CME SEP consultant. This will serve the BWA well to attract and retain membership.

This entails the BWA becoming a member of the CME Manufacturing Coalition (5k per year subscription) which gives BWA access to CME member rate on the SEP and other CME membership benefits.

This is being presented at the Oct 7 board meeting for approval, with execution and launch asap.

**BWA Buying Group**

The buying group committee met last June and decided that they would put out another call for purchasing data. Two more companies have come forward since and purchases are around $50 million.

The next meeting of the buying group is October 29. The task will be to begin narrowing down suppliers for product groupings. It should be noted that the buying group will have a digital presence one established, and also for all companies participating in the IFIT project it will be a condition that they have submitted their data for the group since the BWA supply chain will be involved with the project.

Mike Baker

Executive Director

Bluewater Wood Alliance