

**Question of the Day:** I am an architect and would like to get truss design software so that I can do my own designs and then bid out the truss package to the lowest bidder. Why won't any of the design software providers give me their software?

**By: Stan Sias, Simpson Strong-Tie National Manager, Plated Truss Industry**

The component manufacturing industry in North America has worked hard over the last fifty plus years to not let truss manufacturing slip into a commodity marketplace. Many component manufacturers (CMs) take great pride in their ability to manage their raw materials and their individual truss designs to take the greatest advantage of available strength (and costs) on which to base their design efficiency and optimization.

The talents of the truss technicians and designers, especially when taking into account the desires of the building designer and the installation contractor, can turn a project into either a nightmare or a pleasant experience that assures continued business. Skilled truss technicians know their inventory and their manufacturing shops' strengths and limitations, and work to maximize the efficiency of each. They know their industry design standards and the building code inside and out and put both to work in their efforts.

They also know that the job of the installer is made exponentially easier if they don't have to buy and install extra lateral restraints and diagonal bracing. They communicate with the contractors and provide them with the least expensive solution to install, while meeting all the stated design criteria for the given project. Contractors understand that time and material is money and anything that they don't have to buy and install, particularly inside the roof framing, is greatly appreciated.

On the other hand, when a building designer says, "Here, bid this just as I have it designed with no revisions!," the CM is relegated to simply a manufacturer for lowest price. There is no value to add and there is little profit with which to try and survive. Innovation is lost and sooner or later they lose interest and/or go broke.

Most component manufacturers have worked hard to get to where they are today and are darned proud of it. Many have just come off the worst economic times of their careers and have no interest in working hard for no profit. The latest and greatest equipment and design software will simply sit idle without skilled truss technicians to provide the most economic solutions for the building designers and builders.

Who can blame the CM for trying to protect the investment they have in their most precious resource...their people, and their collective intellectual property. After all, though we call them component manufacturers, the best are really good listeners, skilled in the standards and really want to provide the best solution, not just another set of trusses.