

# editor's note

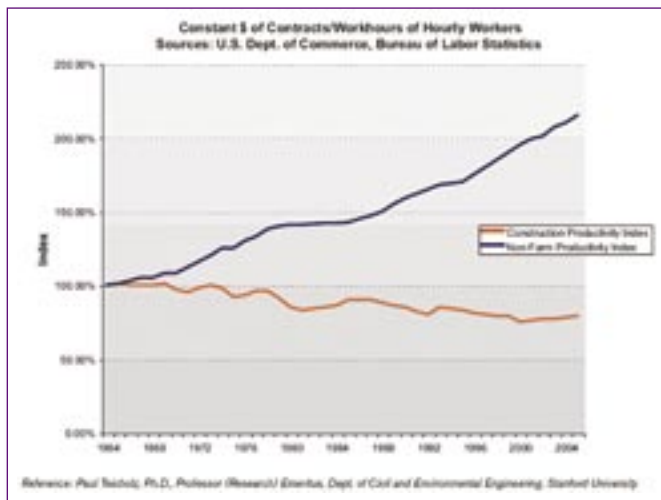


**THE BUZZ ABOUT BIM HAS NEVER BEEN LOUDER.** At the recent ZweigWhite Structural Engineers Building Conference, it seemed as though every speaker talked about Building Information Models (or Modeling—there's a subtle difference).

And at the upcoming NASCC: The Steel Conference there's at least three technical sessions focusing on the practical aspects of BIM, plus a four-hour short course for fabricators—though much of the information will also be useful for engineers and detailers (for more information, visit [www.aisc.org/nascc](http://www.aisc.org/nascc)).

Why has BIM moved from a background hum to the front of everyone's attention? Money!

The most repeated slide in any BIM presentation is a graph comparing productivity in U.S. manufacturing and the U.S. construction industry. And the picture ain't pretty. Since 1964, manufacturing has had a more than 100% increase—while the construction industry has actually shown a decline in productivity. By some reports, more than a quarter of the \$650 billion spent on construction in the U.S. is wasted, in part by poor productivity.



BIM is a tool that promises improvement. Weeks—not days, weeks—are cut from projects. Change orders are reduced to practically nil. As documented in articles in this magazine, *ENR*, *Architectural Record*, *Structural Engineer*, and *Structure*, costs savings are substantially reduced.

The most telling comments I've heard, though, come from Charles Thornton, a founding principal at Thornton Tomasetti. Whether you like Charlie or not, whether you think he's a brilliant engineer or not, it's impossible to argue that he's

not one of the greatest businessmen in the field of structural engineering. And his contention is that BIM is not just a moneymaker for the owner and contractor, but also for the designer. When asked how, he laid out a simple plan:

"Get the steel contractor in the room ahead of time. Find out how much time will be saved. Have the contractor tell the owner to pay you more [to produce the information required] to save that time." And how much should you charge? He offered a simple formula of a 1% bonus in fees for every week that is estimated to be saved through providing the 3D model to the fabricator/detailer.

Obviously that's a simplification. But if you're not already in the BIM world and are wondering how to get started, I urge you to attend The Steel Conference this April. The BIM sessions are designed as practical guides. And the networking opportunities allow you to discuss how those in the forefront are already working. It's a chance to talk with people like Jim Jacobi from Walter P Moore, Mark Holland from Paxton Vierling Steel, Jack Petersen from Martin/Martin, Larry Kruth from Douglas Steel Fabricating Corp., Dave Ruby from Ruby + Associates, Gail Wikstrom from J.E. Dunn, Mike Eckstein from Canron Steel, Ralph Remple from Martin/Martin, Rex Lewis from Puma Steel, Derek Cunz from M.A. Mortenson, Hugh Dobbie from Dowco Consultants, and Tom Faraone from AISC. These people are working in the

BIM world now—and their companies are benefiting. Registration for The Steel Conference is easy and costs have been kept low. Please visit [www.aisc.org/nascc](http://www.aisc.org/nascc) for more information or if you need a brochure mailed to you, call 312.670.2400.

I look forward to seeing you in New Orleans!

**SCOTT MELNICK**  
EDITOR

# MSC

MODERN STEEL CONSTRUCTION

## Editorial Offices

One E. Wacker Dr., Suite 700  
Chicago, IL 60601  
312.670.2400 tel  
312.670.5403 fax

## Editorial Contacts

EDITOR & PUBLISHER  
Scott L. Melnick  
312.670.8314  
melnick@modernsteel.com

MANAGING EDITOR  
Keith A. Grubb, P.E., S.E.  
312.670.8318  
grubb@modernsteel.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Geoff Weisenberger  
312.670.8316  
weisenberger@modernsteel.com

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## Advertising Contact

Account Manager  
Louis Gurthet  
231.228.2274 tel  
231.228.7759 fax  
gurthet@modernsteel.com

For advertising information, contact Louis Gurthet or visit [www.modernsteel.com](http://www.modernsteel.com)

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admin@modernsteel.com

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717.394.7350  
w.betsy@verizon.net