

TRACKS

COVER STORY

Bringing the Trailer Industry's Voice to Capitol Hill

Page 10

CONVENTION

Booth Selection for 2027 Convention & Trade Show Now Open to All

Page 30

EDUCATION

NATM Takes the Stage: Introducing NATM Dealer Summit at NATDA

Page 37

MEMBERSHIP

NMMA, NATM Partnership Makes for Smooth Sailing for Boat Trailer Certification

Page 56



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The LIGHTLID Roof enables natural light inside the trailer for better visibility while retaining durability and weather resistance. Photo provided by UFP Factory Built Cargo.

Taking the Skeleton Out of the Closet

UFP Factory Built Cargo Team Works to Educate Buyers and Bring Greater Transparency to Core Material Distinctions

By Wanda Kenton Smith

When buyers are in the market for a new cargo trailer, what they “see” is often what they get. The natural tendency is to simply check out easy visual cues like paint finish, exterior color options, cabinetry, lighting, ramp rating or load capacity, among other characteristics like trim packages or accessory bundles. Unfortunately, even experienced buyers may lack knowledge about the quality, source, and brand of core components at work beneath the surface, failing to grasp the significance of the cargo trailer’s structural foundation, which ultimately defines its true, long-term value.

“We are working to educate buyers about all the critical components that comprise the trailer’s skeletal system,” said UFP Factory Built’s National Director of Sales Michael Sauserman. “Everything from the roof system to floor assembly, wall panels, ramp and door construction all work together to deliver rigidity, moisture resistance, fastener

retention and fatigue performance over time. These key core structural components and systems — including how they are sourced and built — really matter.”

Sauserman points to commonly used core materials including wood-based panels such as plywood and oriented strand board (OSB) used in floors and walls, along with engineered structural panels (ESP) which have been developed to provide greater consistency, improved strength and enhanced moisture resistance. Metals — including steel and aluminum — are also part of this core mix, used in chassis, reinforcements and exterior skins, adding strength and durability. Aluminum composite panels and SuperStratum™ panels represent more advanced composite materials that are favored in applications where rot, corrosion, and demanding operating conditions are at play. A translucent roof system like LightLID™ is also emerging as a key functional upgrade, delivering natural light in



TOP: (From left) UFP Factory Built’s Michael Sauserman and MC Chandrani share insights on the importance of core component education at the NATM Convention & Trade Show. BELOW: Educational posters inside a cargo trailer allows customers to be better educated about all parts of their trailer. Photo provided by UFP Factory Built Cargo.

enclosed trailers while maintaining durability and resistance to punctures, UV exposure, and harsh environmental conditions.

“Each of these structural components serves a distinct function and contribute to the overall integrity of the trailer,” he explained. “But who’s talking about these core factors and explaining why they should be major considerations?”

Sauserman believes some of the key innovative advancements in the cargo space should be a greater focal point for customers.

“As an industry, we should be talking about key advancements that are now readily available that improve and enhance the ownership experience,” he said. “There are so many core component innovations today that are delivering real solutions and improvements, greater structural performance and functional or aesthetic benefits. These components should command higher priority in our industry’s sales narrative.”

A Call for Greater Core Education

Sauserman recommends both OEMs and retailers in the cargo space work together to better educate the public about the importance, function and bottom-line benefits of structural core materials.

“Explaining the engineered construction of your product in clear layman’s terms will help customers better understand technical differentiation and other nuances that aren’t intrinsic or easy to understand,” he explained. “Working to develop concise and repeatable messaging that connects core components to durability and reliability is key to raising the bar on education, while spotlighting the benefits of reduced repairs and warranty claims, higher resale values and improved cargo protection. These important advantages will resonate with customers.”

To this end, the UFP Factory Built team is leading the charge to make the structural core more visible, valued and central to the product story. Through the recent launch of its BRAV™ brand, the UFP Factory Built cargo division is fully supporting its valued OEM partners by providing tools to communicate the crucial importance of structural core integrity. Its approach embraces a mix of touchpoints including branded core components, educational tools, performance-focused messaging and a partnership model.

Branded Core Components

At UFP Factory Built, no longer are roof systems, floor and wall panels, ramp floor panels and doors simply listed in the specs as raw materials. Instead, these

Continued on Page 51

Continued from Page 49

significant core components are presented as engineered structural solutions, expressly designed to enhance the long-term durability and service life of the product.

Taking this fresh approach shifts the core positioning from a simple commodity-based platform to the upgraded orchestration of top-quality components, all selectively sourced and integrated into product design and engineering by a trusted leader with 70+ years in delivering proven core structural solutions.

Educational Tools

UFP Factory Built understands consumer behavior constraints with its inherent reliance on visual markers. As a result, its marketing team has created a custom toolkit to support OEM partners. Ready resources include strategically positioned BRAWN decals for positioning within the cargo trailer; a variety of catchy point-of-sale materials for the showroom/sales venue; sales sheets and training collateral including video tutorials; plus, dedicated digital assets including landing pages featuring detailed specs of the key components used in the construction of quality cargo trailers.

In addition, the team also launched BRAWN TALK, an industry education and media platform featuring expert-led articles and videos to explore the materials, finishes and structural decisions shaping performance, durability, and the long-term customer experience. According to UFP Factory Built Brand Director MC (Mitul) Chandrani, the platform examines real-world trade-offs, application considerations and the broader implications of how products are built.

“Our goal in providing this campaign toolkit is to help equip OEMs to better educate their buyers about the true value proposition of the products they represent and sell,” said Chandrani. “Through our research, we know that many buyers mistakenly assume all trailers are structurally similar, which is inaccurate. The result is that decision-making is often skewed toward cosmetic and accessory features rather than the pivotal role and

resulting benefits associated with structural engineering.”

Performance-Focused Messaging

Chandrani also explained that instead of leading with ambiguity and technical jargon that the customer often fails to understand, UFP Factory Direct has focused on succinct, straightforward messaging to connect the dots between the direct benefits of what stronger and more stable core systems actually deliver: greater rigidity; reduced flex and fatigue; enhanced moisture resistance and improved, long-term durability.

“At the end of the day, the buyer needs to consider not only the exterior features, but ALL of the substantial and consequential skeletal components that deliver performance over the long haul,” he said.

Partnership Model

Through BRAWN, UFP Factory Built works upstream with its OEM engineering teams to optimize wall, floor and roof designs for greater production efficiency and field performance. Its ongoing structural core innovations, enhancements and marketing outreach initiatives led Sauserman to believe its OEM customers should anticipate greater brand recognition and resulting consumer demand, coupled with bottom-line benefits including better performance and decreased warranty exposure.

“As an industry it’s up to us to change the conversation and to move our messaging to educate and better resonate with the customer,” said Sauserman. “They don’t know what they don’t know ... it’s up to us to educate and inform them about what’s under the skin. No doubt, most will appreciate and value companies that help them make more knowledgeable buying decisions, resulting in better return on their investment.” ■

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