

Natural disasters: what's our role?



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BXNews is published by the
Builders Exchange Network
as a service to members.

Our website is: www.bx-net.org

Submissions, articles and other
information for content is compiled
from members of the organization.

Suggestions for topics, member news
or article submissions can be sent to:
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



How are your relationships?

How good are your relationships with the buyers of construction services in your region?

Can you name the heads of facilities and procurement officers at your top 10 public buyers? At your city, hospitals, universities, school boards, state/province, military, electrical, highway branch, etc.?

If you can't, then you need to prioritize building those relationships.

As BXNet members, we need to position our exchanges, plan rooms and associations on two fronts: as the key consultative bodies for the contracting and design community, and as the best forums for listing bid opportunities to the entire construction market (including prime bidders, subcontractors and suppliers).

In my early years at OCA, I found myself in the awkward position of making my first contact with several buyers when members identified a problem with those owners' bid materials: shifting excessive risk onto the contractor, accepting late bids, accepting qualified bids, and so on.

As you can imagine, those first meetings weren't what you'd describe as friendly and relaxed.

I've learned a lot since then. We've done a few things here in Ottawa to change the context of those first face-to-face meetings.

The first is to host a half-day industry forum session. We invite buyers, designers and bidders at the end of every year to talk about not just issues of common interest and concern, but also what's coming down the pipe in the next year to 18 months. That's a great way for our members to gain a little insight about work volumes in the year ahead, and for them to connect with key buyers.

Second, we create a small delegation of industry leaders – not more than four people – to attend high-level leadership meetings with targeted buyers. The goal here is to build relationships, and to have open discussions on issues like construction delivery, competitiveness and procurement trends. My advice: keep these meetings short – one hour is plenty – and go to the buyer's place of business. Above all, don't leave without finding out their construction spending plans for the coming year.

Third and finally, hold short information sessions at your office where buyers' procurement people can learn about what you do and how you do it. Let them meet your staff, see your operations and learn firsthand about the electronic planroom. (Pro tip: earn bonus points by showing them exactly how you're handling a new project of theirs!)

Relationship building takes time, but take it from me: it's worth the effort. When tender problems happen, it's so much easier to meet directly with people you know to discuss these situations than it is to work with strangers. More critically, these relationships are key to ensuring a smooth and steady flow of work into your plan room. And I don't have to tell you how important that is!

Good luck.

On Reporter Training, the AGM—and disasters

It's hard to believe that summer's just about behind us and—for those of us in parts north, anyway—the weather's about to turn cold. That said, the change in season brings excitement.



It's our pleasure to officially announce that BXNet's Reporter Training is officially a go. We have scheduled the session for November 16 and 17 at the offices of the Builders Exchange of Kentucky in Louisville.

(Special thanks to Lynn Stetson and her staff for volunteering the space!) As usual, the training will be led by Brenda Romano, BXNet's president-to-be, and the COO of the Virtual Builders Exchange in San Antonio, Texas.

For those that don't know, BXNet Reporter Training is the perfect introduction to the functions of a plan room/builder exchange/local construction association. It digs into the role of these groups, and how they can best serve construction stakeholders and decision makers. It's a lively two-day session that yields big value. A must for anyone that's been on the job for a year or less.

By the way, if you work closely with any exchanges or plan rooms that aren't BXNet members, please let them know that they can also send their reporters for training—for a small fee.



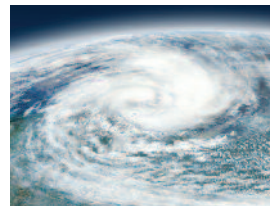
On the subject of events, plans for the 2018 BXNet Annual General Meeting in San Antonio are well underway. In addition to focused sessions on marketing, technology and planroom issues, we've asked

some prominent Texas construction companies to say a few words about how they use plan rooms and exchanges—and what our members can do better to serve.



If you haven't already, block out the time from February 6 to 8 and plan to attend. This conference promises to be one of the best in years. And if you'd like to volunteer to speak on any of our panel sessions (we have plenty more planned), or have ideas of your own about things we should discuss, drop us a note at info@bx-net.org.

While we're on the subject, watch your mailbox for dues renewal notices (and more information about reporter training and the annual meeting). Those will be mailed out later this month.



Finally, Angela and I would like to take a moment to wish all the best to those BXNet members that have been affected by what has been a terrible series of weather events this summer.

Between hurricanes Harvey and Irma that have devastated almost all of the southern United States seaboard, and the wildfires that are blazing out of control in the Pacific Northwest and western Canada, this summer's weather has grabbed attention for all the wrong reasons. We're wishing everyone a safe and speedy return to normal.

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Be sure to visit the "Vault" at www.bx-net.org to view copies of the BXNet newsletters, slides from past Annual Meeting presentations, articles of interest, sample documents and much more!

USERNAME: ibmember PASSWORD: 2015BXnet

Why re-invent the wheel? Have sample documents or information you think would be helpful to your fellow members? Simply email it to info@bx-net.org to be uploaded into the vault.



Join us for REPORTER TRAINING



By popular demand, the Builders Exchange Network is once again running Reporter Training.

This year's session will be held at the Builders Exchange of Kentucky in Louisville on November 16 and 17.

Led by Brenda Romano of the Virtual Builders Exchange, the training is ideal for new reporters and those that could use a refresher on the basics of project procurement in the construction industry, and the role of builders exchanges and plan rooms in bringing together buyers and bidders.

Topics covered include:

- Exchanges 101: who are we, what do we do, why do we do it, who do we serve?
- Construction industry overview: who are the industry's key players, and what do they need from their exchanges?
- Particular perspectives: looking at the bid process from the discrete points of view of owners, architects, prime contractors and subcontractors
- What's our role in the bid process: pre-bid, active bidding, apparent low bidders
- How relationships create leads
- Reporting on pre-bid
- Reporters as professionals
- Goal setting
- and more!



Brenda Romano

Registration for staff of BXNet-member associations, exchanges and plan rooms is \$150 (US funds) per person.

By special offer, BXNet is opening Reporter Training to non-members this year. Registration is \$500 per attendee, but if your exchange joins BXNet by November 1, you pay the member rate of \$150.

BXNet has arranged a block of rooms at the Louisville Marriott East for November 15 and 16 at a special rate of \$159/night.

Email info@bx-net.org for more information and to book your space. Don't delay. Registration is limited to just 20 people!



Join us in **San Antonio**



Plans for the 2018 BXNet annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas are taking shape!

Your feedback has helped us build an agenda for the conference that touches on several important issues, including marketing, technology, and plansroom challenges and solutions.

Here are some of the sessions we have planned:

Exchange Your Exchange: Our opening get-to-know-you session where members introduce themselves, and tell us what they want help with and what they do well.

Executive Speed Dating: Members break off into groups and discuss best practices and solutions to challenges on a series of subjects (e.g., human resources, succession, plan room volume, technology, etc.). Afterwards, they'll present their findings to the group.

Plansroom Q&As: A moderated panel discussion where managers and staff from plan rooms field questions from the audience on nagging problems and concerns—from building new leads to automating processes.

Marketing: What are the best practices that our members have when it comes to selling their services to prospective members and project providers? Who are your target audiences? What do each need to hear? And how can you create a compelling value proposition? We'll talk marketing.

Technology Trends: What are the latest developments in plan room technology and in the industry more broadly? How can LCAs, exchanges and plan rooms serve their members better and more efficiently?

What I wish I knew about becoming an ED: A primer session where those new to the executive director role share a few of the surprises they encountered on the job in their first months. Food for thought for any manager that wants to develop a strong succession plan and educate his or her board of directors accordingly.

Look for these sessions and more as we develop the agenda for what promises to be one of the best BXNet conferences on record!

If you or any of your staff has any ideas for other program sessions, or would like to speak as part of these or any other panel discussions, let us know. Simply contact BXNet managers James Raiswell and Angela Tristram at info@bx-net.org or 855-719-0733 to discuss.

Let's get social

Great meetings are just part of the program we have planned. Outside business hours, we'll take in all the fantastic sounds and sights of the city. Play golf at one of San Antonio's top-rated courses, enjoy a private dinner and tour at The Alamo, cruise the San Antonio River, and for those that want to stay and play an extra day, we'll have tickets available to the San Antonio Rodeo on the final day of the conference!

Who's going?

Already, quite a few of your fellow BXNet members have signed on to attend.

If your exchange, association or plan room would like to sponsor this year's conference, plenty of opportunities remain. Email or call the BXNet offices to discuss.

Stay at the Valencia

BXNet has reserved a block of rooms for members at the Hotel Valencia Riverwalk in downtown San Antonio. Rated one of the best hotels in the United States by *U.S. News and World Report*, the hotel will be our conference venue, and it's located minutes away from some of downtown's best sights: the river and The Alamo.

Conference registration for BXNet members is \$400, and the deluxe hotel room rate is \$189 plus taxes.



Join us for a lively and informative series of sessions next February in the heart of Texas!



Marketing essentials

for exchanges (and plan rooms)



Know your target audiences

One of the subjects that will be front and center at the 2018 BXNet Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas next February is marketing. More than a few members have asked what they can do to market their services better, who they can (and should) market to, and how. On the surface, that's a lot to consider, but the thinking can be made a lot simpler when you break down marketing into a few component parts.

Let's begin with a look at audiences.

Few enterprises ever became truly successful by serving just one audience. Fewer still succeeded by serving all audiences. The key to success in marketing is knowing what audiences to serve (and knowing what audiences to *not* serve), and then developing a particular set of messages that each of those audiences needs to hear to be compelled to use your services.

The typical builder exchange, plan room or local construction association serves three main audiences: contractors (general/prime contractors, trade contractors

and suppliers), designers (architects and engineers) and owners (and project management companies). It's clear from even this simple list that our three audiences have different needs and goals. What the owner needs and wants from an exchange (high project visibility, informed staff, ease of communication with the exchange) is very different from what a contractor wants (a large volume of projects, clear flow of addenda, targeted updates with news about new opportunities).

To be most effective, your exchange must serve all three. A one-size-fits-all approach won't work.

Your job in marketing is to look at the groups of customers that you serve. Put yourself in their shoes and understand what they want and need from your exchange, and then tailor your services and express your messages to match. If you know, for example, that most of the owners that post projects to your plan room are from the public sector, then you need to think about what they hope to achieve. Yes, they're after the lowest price on their project, but how do you as an exchange satisfy that need? One of the ways you

do so is by talking about the size of your membership. Your message therefore might be, "every project posted in our exchange reaches 700 general and trade contractors in the region." This tells the owner that his or her project is likely to be seen—and bid on—by a fair number of those companies, which in turn will bring down the cost of procurement.

Owners will also want to know that when they work with your team, they're working with informed staff that understand the construction procurement chain. They'll also want to know what other services you bring to the table. Is it easy to reach someone at your offices? Do you provide lists of the companies that viewed (but did not necessarily bid on) the project documents?

Designers and contractors row different boats. Designers will want some assurance that your staff is well trained in the process of scanning and posting project documents, and issues addenda in a timely fashion. Trade contractors will want the assurance that there's a steady flow of projects coming into the plan room and that they're

notified when new work in their field is posted. Prime contractors also want to see a steady flow of tender opportunities, but they'll also be interested in pre-bid project information.

All this sounds like very granular and very time-consuming work. And it is to some degree, but the fact remains that knowing who your target audiences are, and what needs they have in the marketplace is time well spent. Knowing your audiences' profiles is a critical first step toward positioning your association, exchange or plan room to respond perfectly to their discrete needs. (And by the way, messaging of this type is never permanent. It should always be re-examined and refreshed so that it remains current and applicable.)

Put another way: if your exchange is still presenting just one message (The heartbeat of construction in the county. Founded in 1912!) to its principal audiences, you run the risk of being overtaken by your competitors.

Welcome

to our newest member!

Omaha Builders Exchange

Omaha Builders Exchange is a 127-year-old non-profit organization in continuous service to the Nebraska and western Iowa construction industry since 1889. OBE is owned and managed by its members. We serve hundreds of businesses and firms as members, representing all trades and construction-related professions.

After more than 25 years of outsourcing the job to an independent contractor, our Board of Directors resumed direct management of the OBE Plan Room on July 1, 2016.

The OBE Plan Room is the only physical plan room service in the area. And now, with the new OBE Online Planroom, our members get the best of both worlds: digital plans online and full-size prints! Architects, design professionals and project owners who distribute their plans to OBE experience broad exposure to bidders, potentially lowering the cost of their projects.

www.omahaplanroom.com





DISASTER

planning and recovery – what's our role?

The summer of 2017 may go down as one of the worst in recent memory when it comes to weather systems.

A record heat wave rolled through much of the southwest United States for 10 days in June. Parts of Nevada, California and Arizona hit or surpassed their all-time hottest temperatures that month.

In July, wildfires began popping up across the Pacific Northwest and into parts of southern Canada. Now into September, dozens of fires have laid waste to countless acres of forest land, and turned the skies across Washington and Montana a shade of orange-brown. Air quality in what is normally a pristine part of the country is now measuring more highly polluted than Beijing, China. Visibility is greatly reduced, and the prospect of relief is almost out of sight. It could be well into the fall months – when the snow starts to fly – before emergency crews are able to make real headway on relief efforts.

These stories have almost been forgotten in the media in the wake of hurricanes Harvey and Irma that cut huge swaths of damage across Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and even as far inland as parts of Tennessee. Hundreds of thousands of people have in some way been affected.

The obvious question raised by these natural disasters is, “are you prepared for an emergency?”

Planning for an emergency isn't an exact science. You never know whether you're ready to respond until the worst happens. That said, there are steps any organization can take to develop a comprehensive response that helps restore operations in as timely a fashion as possible, post-disaster.

BXTN documents everything

The Builders Exchange of Tennessee drafted a detailed Emergency Response Manual in 2012 when the exchange opened a second office in Nashville. The document dives deep into a number of categories (communications, services, financial information, technical information and supporting organizations) so that the exchange's officers and senior employees can refer to it quickly to, for example, contact staff members and board officers to confirm their safety, find alternate office locations, draw on bank accounts, credit cards and lines of credit, start insurance claims, and restore critical IT systems and processes.

Jason Anderson, BXTN's information technology & member services director, explains that the document was created as part of the exchange's succession plan—so that valuable information about business continuity didn't live in the mind of just one person—and has since has gone on to be much more comprehensive.

The great flood at Great Falls

You don't have to tell Krista Smith, the manager of the Great Falls Builders Exchange in Montana, about the need to preserve business continuity post-disaster. In the summer of 2016, a flash flood during what was an especially rainy season in her region poured more than 18 inches of water into her exchange offices. Krista got wind of the troubles that night during her holidays. She raced back to the office to see what could be salvaged and began the process of restoring operations.

In a couple of important regards, Great Falls was lucky. First, no one was on site during the flooding, which meant that none of the exchange staff were at risk. Second, as chance had it, all the exchange's key business data was either backed up, stored off site, or housed on computers that were high enough off the floor to not be affected by the water.

"We sent a note to the members that night advising them that we would be closed until at least the following day," she explains, "but actually we were back providing services to the members by 10 a.m. the next day. We ran the exchange operations out of my house. The electronic plan room remained online, and the local architects society that owns our exchange offered to let us use their offices for large-format printing."

Working in the construction industry helped Great Falls restore operations quickly. Although the exchange offices were extensively damaged by the flood, and flood insurance was not available, members pitched in to help rebuild. Without that help, clean up and reconstruction could have taken as many as four or five months. Great Falls was back up and running in less than two.

Doors open in Missoula

Today in Montana, water isn't the enemy. Fire is. Forest fires are blazing all over western Montana. At least four are within a 30-mile radius of downtown Missoula.

Jami Wright of the Missoula Plans Exchange says her exchange is ready in the event of a disaster, whether that be to their operations or to their members' businesses.

"Certainly, we have a plan to protect all our key systems



Check out BXTN's preparedness manual

If emergency planning is on your mind, check out BXTN's Emergency Response Manual. Jason Anderson has graciously agreed to share a version of the document with fellow BXNet members. Simply send Jason an email to connect: jason@bxtn.org.

and assets," she says. "Data are backed up and stored off site, so everything is accessible in the event of a disaster."

If their members need it, the exchange has offered its own offices as a temporary place to do business. The exchange has free WiFi and a large training center that members can use for as long as they need if things turn for the worst.

"The only thing we don't have a plan for is the thick smoke in these parts," Jami adds. "It's bordering on a health hazard."

What's our role?

Experts predict that more intense storms and extreme weather systems will become the norm as climate change affects us all. If that's the case, what role do builders exchanges, local construction associations and plan rooms play in the preparedness and recovery process?

Obviously, keeping your own house in order is critical. Essential systems and assets need to be protected. Computer files must always be backed up and stored off site to create redundancy. Staff and directors need to be made aware of what to do in the event of an emergency. And that includes providing current phone numbers and home addresses, so people can reach out to one another to confirm their safety, post-disaster.

There's a role to be played in helping members, too. Great Falls learned the value of a helping hand; Missoula has offered its own. If exchanges and associations can help their members by offering temporary office space, and some kind of return to normalcy, then at least that's one fewer thing anyone has to worry about in difficult times.

BXNet
Builders Exchange Network
2018
**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**

Tuesday to Thursday.
February 6 to 8, 2018

Hotel Valencia, San Antonio, Texas

PROGRAM:

Tuesday Feb 6

BX Net Board of Directors
Afternoon Options - City Tour or Golf
Opening Welcome Reception

Wednesday & Thursday

8:30 am to 4:00 pm
Educational Program
Wednesday evening social function



*U.S. News &
World Report's
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San Antonio, 2017*



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