

# PLANT TOUR TOOLKIT

## A Guide to Hosting Plant Tours & Building Relationships



Truss plant tours give those outside the component manufacturing industry a chance to understand the business and the benefits of using building components. From building inspectors and fire marshals, to high school students and elected officials, plant tours help manufacturers develop mutually beneficial relationships. If you need any information, or would like some help planning or coordinating a plant tour, please contact SBCA staff.

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# WHY HOST A PLANT TOUR?

You may have already considered inviting people in for a plant tour, and if so, you likely already have a sense of the potential benefits. However, having a specific goal for what you want to get out of your tour will guide your planning and interaction. It will also help SBCA staff provide directed assistance and help guide them in developing a plan that suits your purpose. No matter which group of professionals you choose to host, the relationships you develop can benefit your business and the industry as a whole!

## PROFESSIONALS TO INVITE:



### Architects, Engineers and Specifiers

Inviting these professionals will better ensure they have the best information when creating and engineering a project. A plant tour can also solidify your position as the local expert on structural building components.

### Building Officials and Code Inspectors

It is incredibly important to make sure your local building officials understand what goes into designing and manufacturing building components and how they operate once constructed. Building officials are your last line of defense and can be a valuable ally when problems arise in the field.

### Builders, Contractors and Framers

Bringing your customers into the plant provides them with a tremendous opportunity to see how your high-quality products are made with precision and care.

### Fire Service Professionals

They can be your worst enemies – or your best friends. Ensuring local fire officials understand how resilient wood trusses are, and how to approach them in the event of a fire, can go a long way for your business and the industry.

### Industry Suppliers

Everyone likes to see their products in action. Inviting suppliers in to see first-hand how their products are being used will only foster better relationships and make it easier to work with them down the road.

### Students, Teachers and Educators

Show some future employees the truss industry, developing relationships with local educators to help mold young minds and shape their future toward work in the component industry.

### Elected Officials

Having an ally on your local city council, in your state legislature, or in Washington, D.C. is important as regulations and laws come up which may have a negative effect on your business.

### Component Manufacturers

While you may not initially think that bringing other CMs into your plant is a good idea, showing them your operations can be good for your local market and the overall industry. Your company will do better when other companies are, too.

## GATHER A TEAM:



### Ownership

The owner of the plant can provide a great overview of the company, as well as a historical perspective about when the company was founded, why it was founded, and who put the sweat in to get it operational.

### Management

The manager can provide a great overview of the company, while also detailing the day-to-day operations and the individuals involved with every aspect of the plant.

Depending on the size of the tour, you may want to broaden the group of people from your company you would like to involve. A few suggestions include:

### New Employees

A new employee can provide new perspective and a fresh face, especially if you are giving a tour to students.

### Different Departments

- Design
- Delivery
- Material Handling
- Production Line
- Sales

## PLAN THE EVENT:



### Inviting Tour Attendees

Invitations can take the form of a written letter, an email, or even a phone call. The invitation medium often depends upon the size of the group, so you should work with your group's primary contact and SBCA staff to decide which invitation process will work the best.

### RSVPs

Depending on the groups you are trying to reach, the type of event you are hosting, or when you will be hosting the tour, you may want to consider RSVPs. RSVPs will make sure you have enough materials and safety equipment, as well as help you organize smaller tour groups ahead of time. Designate one person at your plant to field and document RSVPs for your event.

### Using a Checklist

Develop your own, or Download the checklist from [sbcindustry.com](http://sbcindustry.com). Either way, sit down with your newly formed team and walk through what needs to be done, who will do it, and when it will be done.

### Selecting a Date and Time

- Review your calendar and upcoming jobs. If possible, choose a range of dates when you believe that you will have a good job being manufactured that will really showcase your operations.
- As you get closer to the tour date (e.g., within two weeks), review your jobs. Consider making production adjustments to choose a couple that showcase the capabilities of your truss design department.

## ORGANIZE THE TOUR:



### Structure the Tour

It is important for the lead tour guide to be aware of how the plant flows and to prepare an appropriate tour path. You may consider posting signs for each station along your path to help everyone understand each station along the tour and to help the tour proceed smoothly for your employees.

### Choosing the Lead Tour Guide

It is important to choose someone from your staff who will rise to the challenge of hosting the tour group. Make sure you have back-up tour guides, too. You should not always rely on one person to give the tours.

### Determining Tour Size

An ideal count for each tour would be five attendees to one guide. For larger groups, arrange your tour so there are quiet locations for the group to meet at the beginning and the end.

### Doing a Walk-Through

If the group is large, or you have new employees, it would be beneficial to walk through the tour so everyone helping with the tour is on the same page.

### Tour Materials

You know who will be attending your tour. Now what do you want to say to them, and what information do you want them to leave with? Check out the SBCA website for downloadable information. If you have any specific requests, please reach out to SBCA staff.

### Put a Tour Kit Together

Whether you've hosted your first or your 40th plant tour, hopefully you will continue to reach out and invite more groups and individuals to future tours. Put a box together where you can keep materials that will help you stay ready for the next tour.

Some items to consider:

- Nametags
- Safety Glasses
- Safety Vests
- Company Fact Sheets
- Industry Fact Sheets
- Company Swag
- Job Applications
- Hard hats

## DURING THE TOUR:



### Getting the Tour Started

- Make sure everyone is wearing personal protective equipment.
- Start in a quiet area and consider discussing: your company, employees, market, delivery area, products. If possible, show them a video of the industry.
- Make sure you tell them what you will show them. Providing an overview of the plant and the process will help them understand as you walk through the plant.

### Effectively Directing Your Audience

Make sure you know what you will say, and everyone is on the same page. Don't be afraid to over-communicate. Whether it's one group or many, make sure you know where you are going to end up and how long you will spend at each area. Make sure you provide enough time at each location, but don't worry about moving the group along.

### Safety and Quality Assurance

Make sure that you adhere to all safety regulations, including having enough eye and hearing protection for all of the attendees to wear as they walk on the production floor.

### Offering Refreshments

If possible, it is always a nice gesture to offer a small refreshment to the group after the tour is complete.

### Wrapping Up

Finish the tour in a large location that allows for the opportunity to answer questions, show a video, or provide other information that highlights the benefits of structural building components.



## FOLLOW UP:



Thanking everyone who participated is a nice way to ensure a lasting impression. You may consider sending a note, email, or making a phone call. Calling or sending a note also provides you with another opportunity to convey helpful information to your group. When following up, you should consider including:

- Answers to any requests for more information
- Additional comments you would like to make
- A recap of key points from the tour
- A reminder that you and SBCA are available to answer their questions at any time
- An invitation to future tours or educational workshops

In addition to the general "thank you" to all attendees, you should personally thank the person with whom you have worked the most. A personal call to your group's contact will reinforce the goodwill you have just established.

And remember, SBCA staff is able to help in the creation or circulation of "thank you" letters as well as follow-up phone calls. For letter templates, be sure to check out the CM Toolbox.

As you plan your tour, please contact SBCA anytime if you have any questions or need guidance. Phone: 608-310-6736 | Email: [advocacy@sbcindustry.com](mailto:advocacy@sbcindustry.com) | Website: [sbcindustry.com](http://sbcindustry.com)