

Special to component producers:

Alternatives to Standard Truss Plate Providers Software

By Todd Drummond, Owner
Todd Drummond Consulting, LLC



SUNAPEE, NH—2009 has been a difficult year for the component industry. In addition to poor component sales in most markets, further consolidation among truss plate/software providers have further constricted the already narrow field. The poor building market also has affected truss plate/software manufacturers. Of course, your sales representative for your particular software provider will adamantly disagree if you state that his or her service is adversely affected by continued staff layoffs. But you should consider whether the software's continued price increases and your increasing dependency on it are in your company's best interest. You might ask yourself whether you are dealing with honest suppliers or less-than-honest brokers who want to tie your hands so that you could never leave them, even if you wanted to.

I know what you are thinking. "In what world do you live, Drummond? What alternatives do we have?" We all question whether there are true alternatives for the average truss manufacturer regarding truss engineering and management software. I will answer your questions—but before I do, please understand this; ***I do not care which vendor you are currently using or plan to use.*** I am not receiving any kickbacks from software vendors or equipment manufacturers. My consulting services are unbiased and professional.

Having said that let me offer full disclosure; I do provide the Truss Shop Labor Tracking software (TSLT) which is a labor tracking and truss management program that works with all major truss softwares that are currently on the market. Our software manages the entire process from the quote and order stages for pricing and project tracking to the tracking of all the shop's labor for completion. The TSLT software is a full-featured truss management software program that even ties into QuickBooks® and Microsoft Outlook®.

Hence, yes, I am somewhat biased toward my own software. Nevertheless your particular truss engineering software vendor probably has its own version on which it wants you to depend. While using its software you cannot switch truss engineering vendors as you could with the software that I provide. By all means, you can decide how much leverage you have when bargaining with your vendor if all your particular needs are met by one vendor.

Among truss engineering software an independent vendor has slowly improved its truss layout and design. This vendor has been in the business for more than 30 years and it is dominant in the I-joint and beams structural analysis sector. Who might this be? Unsurprisingly it is Keymark Enterprises. Wait—before you exclaim, "Keymark has never produced a good truss engineering program compared to the dominate players," please consider this: when was the last time you closely examined its truss engineering software? If you have examined it carefully, do you think it is sufficient to meet your needs?

Did you know that Keymark is a full-service provider of truss plate software? Did you know that your engineering department can transfer loads from the roof all the way down to the floor system and that it can calculate the headers and other hardware with Keymark? The major truss software vendors have talked about 'whole house' designing but Keymark's software has offered this option for years. Recently Keymark has progressed significantly by developing better tools for the roof and floor truss industry. This effort is beginning to pay off; the program now offers truss layout and engineering that can fit your needs as well as your current vendor's software while also providing an element of freedom that you have never before experienced.

At this point some truss designers are rolling around on the floor having seizures because I dare propose an alternative to their current comfort-zone software. How dare I suggest an alternative to their current engineering software?! You might think that I am discussing their personal religious beliefs or their relatives' reputations. But those of you who are responsible for your company's profit or loss should consider; how much time have you wasted bargaining because any threat to leave your vendor was merely an empty gesture? Are you restrictively dependent on your current vendor and do you think that your sales representative knows this? Do yourself a favor and have a serious discussion with an already familiar vendor. Give Keymark a call and ask for a live demo. Then swap some cokes and pretend that Keymark is your best buddy just like your current vendor does and talk about the bottom line. What can Keymark do for you? How much will it cost? At the very least if your current vendor thinks that you might really switch vendors then it will probably lower its current pricing. True bargaining keeps brokers honest. (<http://www.keymark.com/>)

Of course I would be neglectful if I did not mention again the wonderful independent truss labor tracking and management software offered by Todd Drummond Consulting. It works with Keymark software and with all other major truss engineering software. With just a few clicks of your mouse you can view the estimated versus actual for your labor man-hours and the labor costs for each order processed. In this tight market margins are too tight to be guessing anymore. With TSLT you will know immediately and not have to wait till the end of the month to understand your total gross margins.

With Keymark and the TSLT software you will not be tied to a single vendor. To learn more, call 603.763.8857 or go to www.todd-drummond.com.

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