

Forming Virtual Connections in Indiana

Forest Products Industry Stays Connected Through New Web Site

The Challenge

Indiana's forest products community employs approximately 50,000 people who earn an average annual salary of \$31,000. The wood products sector has more growth potential than any other sector in Indiana's agricultural economy. However, it is difficult for those involved in wood products businesses to share information because their communities are generally geographically dispersed.

Community residents need tools to quickly exchange information and ideas with each other, especially when they are geographically dispersed. To promote the growth of Indiana's sustainable forest industry, it is essential that key institutions, industry, government, and academic entities in the State share information and collaborate with each other.

The Solution

Purdue University's Department of Forestry and Natural Resources developed an innovative, online directory of the primary, secondary, and related wood products companies in Indiana. To do this, they used funds from the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Wood Education and Resource Center.

The directory effectively created a Web-based community of manufacturers, suppliers, and sources of wood products information that is connecting Indiana's communities and helping develop its wood products economic sector. This interactive network increases marketing opportunities for small rural companies and large companies alike. It allows Indiana's forest products industries to reduce overlap and be more cost effective. The Web site also gives Indiana's forest products industries a global competitive advantage over similar companies by making them more visible.

Resulting Benefits

- Creates and strengthens relationships among wood products companies in Indiana
- Improves marketing and stimulates Indiana's forest agriculture economy
- Promotes Made in Indiana products and services
- Lists more than 1,600 companies statewide in the directory



The home page of Indiana's interactive Web site links partners and promotes economic development of the forest products industry.

Sharing Success

- Made promotion presentations at the Wood Summit in October 2006 and the Supply Chain workshop in November 2006
- Presented information about the Indiana Forest Products Web Community at 12 extension events
- Published an article in the Journal of Extension
- Produced a Purdue University news release in April 2009
- The Indiana Forest Products Web Community was launched in February 2009 and is available at <http://www.indianaforestproducts.com>. Nearly 150 participants attended presentations of the Web site at four seminars around Indiana. It was enthusiastically received at the Indiana Hardwood Lumberman Association's Annual meeting and won the President's Award in 2008. The popular Web site has given businesses statewide the opportunity to promote themselves and their products.



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