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A Bright Past, a Brilliant Future

The past year has been an exciting time of change and momentum at PCI. Having celebrated our 50th anniversary as an industry in 2004, we take a renewed vigor in forging into the next 50 years.

One of the cornerstones of this effort is our industry-branding program, which began its rollout at the PCI Convention last October. To many, "branding" means developing a logo for the company letterhead; our branding program is much broader than that. The culmination of a year's worth of research and creative development, this strategic process is designed to grow market share for PCI members by more effectively influencing decision-makers in the construction field.

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This program will initially target architects, and subsequently engineers, with the objective of opening more minds to the idea of collaborating with precasters in the conceptual design stage of a project. This will manifest itself this year in a series of bold, high-impact ads that will run in trade magazines. *Ascent* magazine will also be redesigned in both look and content, and the new PCI website will offer visitors a fresh, intuitive look and experience based on their needs.

Along with spreading our message to the building community, the branding program is also designed to set goals for ourselves by challenging us to live up to our own "brand promise." After all, at age 51, we are still a relatively young and dynamic industry, and a renewed emphasis on the innovative spirit that drove us in the past will be key to taking us to the next level in the future.

That spirit is alive and well at PCI headquarters, where the staff works tirelessly with volunteers to move the Institute forward and improve its operations. A new production department has implemented procedures that streamline the editorial and production processes and improve the quality and consistency of our published material. Communications functions, including member services and product sales, have also been consolidated. Our new computer system is operational, with the last few modules now being phased into operations. And, yes, PCI has a new logo that symbolizes our industry's ability to fuse aesthetics and engineering to realize the design aspirations of its customers.

PCI technical committees and staff also continue their work on lauded PCI technical publications. The new look of the *PCI Journal* cover is the first step in a redesign process. Under the guidance of its new editor-in-chief, Emily Lorenz, the respected, high-quality content of the *Journal* will be reorganized and its graphic style updated to make it more accessible and reader-friendly. The 6th Edition of the *PCI Design Handbook* (MNL-120) is selling fast, and the PCI Design Handbook Seminar series launched late last year will continue in locations around the country. Revisions to other key publications are also in the works, including the *Manual for Quality Control for Plants and Production of Architectural Precast Concrete Products* (MNL-117), *Architectural Precast Concrete* (MNL-122), *Design for Fire Resistance of Precast Prestressed Concrete* (MNL-124), and the *Erectors' Manual: Standards and Guidelines for the Erection of Precast Concrete Products* (MNL-132).

Another cornerstone of PCI strategy going forward is a commitment to developing both education and technology for the industry's future. We will continue our free distribution of publications to students, expand our very popular student design competitions, and sponsor more professors participating in PCI technical activities. Starting this year, we will also launch a professional continuing education program, including a new joint PCI-ACI parking structure seminar, and will

introduce educational offerings for plant operations personnel at the 2006 MCPX trade show.

A strong Research and Development program has always been a PCI hallmark, and will be a critical factor going forward to enable our industry to live up to its brand promise. A PCI producer/associate-sponsored testing program will provide important information on the bonding of prestressing strand in self-consolidating concrete. As a result of a PCI-sponsored research program on design criteria for headed studs, important code changes have been submitted for incorporation into ACI 318 building code requirements. NSF and PCI are jointly providing $1.5 million for the largest seismic test of a precast concrete structure ever conducted, using the nation's largest shake table to test a half-scale, three-story precast structure for diaphragm performance. Actual precast concrete parking structures have been instrumented to measure movement and expansion, which will lead to more accurate procedures for connection design and expansion joint spacing. These are only a few of over a dozen research projects sponsored by PCI.

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This year PCI will regroup its academic, professional education, and strategic research activities under the banner of the PCI Foundation, allowing better coordination with universities and laboratories in implementing these programs. Operational training and education, as well as technology development, will remain programs of the Institute.

There is a great deal going on in transportation as well. PCI and FHWA cosponsored another very successful National Bridge Conference in conjunction with the PCI Convention in Palm Springs, at which a video showcasing exciting new developments in precast concrete highway pavements was unveiled. Last year PCI cosponsored, presented, and exhibited at a number of transportation-related conferences, including the FHWA Conference on Accelerated Construction.

We took PCI to a new level in 2005, and we expect the upcoming year to be just as exciting. It is a time of change, yes, but we think of it as a time of progress and innovation. All of us at PCI look forward to building on this year's bold initiatives to help PCI members prosper in 2006.

In the pages that follow, we offer highlights of two of the year's most exciting activities—the TechnoQuest tour to Italy and the 51st annual PCI Convention/Exhibition and National Bridge Conference. Other important events that occurred in 2005 at PCI headquarters include:

January 2005	PCI forms production department to centralize all document processing, layout, and printing.
Spring 2005	Branding consultant (Arends) hired.
May 2005	Events, marketing, communication, and membership functions unified under PCI Marketing and Communications Department.
Summer 2005	Arends conducts focus group studies of architects' preferences for precast concrete.
September 2005	Gary Munstermann retires from PCI after 33 years.
October 2005	Presentation of new PCI logo to the Board of Directors and PCI membership at the PCI Convention in Palm Springs, Calif.
December 2005	Graphic standards for new brand finalized. *PCI Journal* cover redesigned.