The year 2001 has indeed been a period of great accomplishments for PCI, and the success of this past convention in Reno was just one indication of the great year that it has been. To conclude our reporting activities, I would like to share some of my personal thoughts with you as your Chairman and to summarize our activities at PCI during the past year.

When a new Chairman assumes his position, he is given the opportunity to promote his vision or focus for PCI for the coming year. Under the guidance of our last two chairmen, Bill Richardson and Bill Whitcher, PCI has embarked on a new marketing initiative to raise the awareness of the design community to the infinite possibilities offered by our products, services and systems.

To undertake this challenge, PCI has created a whole new synergy of activity in the form of market planning groups, promotion teams and Fast Teams. There are at least 100 people actively involved in this process.

This year I have had the chance to see this process up close. It starts with your Market Plans Committee members. They orchestrate the strategies and oversee the various programs. There are 20 promotion teams staffed by experts from each of these market areas who are responsible for feeding market problems and opportunities to the planning group. And, then, there are Fast Teams that are drawn from every facet of the PCI organization, namely, research and development, technical, membership, and administrative.

It has truly been impressive to watch this organization pool its talents and resources to produce a result that is far greater than the sum of its parts. The effort is much more than just a marketing initiative. It is a framework for achieving success, and is focused on creating better tomorrows for all of us.

At the heart of this system is the mechanism that makes it possible: your volunteerism. It’s your willingness to share your time, talent, experience and expertise that makes it all work. I am very proud to be a part of this powerful group.

My focus as Chairman was also the theme for our 2001 Convention, namely, “Quality – Delivering the Promise.” I have challenged our membership — our producers, associates and professionals — to raise the bar in our quality standards and exceed the level of quality our customers are expecting. Some of my Chairman’s Messages during the year have focused on the importance of this theme.

In response to my call, the PCI Plant Certification Committee has organized Fast Teams to evaluate the entire plant auditing process, as well as the audit grading system and the method in which grades are given to the producer.

As of January 2002, all plants will be operating under the guidelines set forth in their Quality Systems Manual. These manuals, which have been prepared and approved under rigorous guidelines provided by PCI, form the basis for the plant audit.

All future proposed changes and modifications to the Plant Certification Program will now be tested against the program’s guiding principles. Until the committee met last April, these principles were inferred but not confirmed in writing. The Plant Certification Program’s basic guiding principles are listed in the Summer 2001 issue of the PCI Newsletter, and it will serve as an excellent reference for effecting any necessary changes to the Plant Certification Program. Another recent initiative in the plant quality control area has been the publication of the Safety and Loss Prevention Manual. This manual was developed under the direction of Joe Dugan, chairman of the Safety Committee.

Our focus on constant improvement is tied directly to customer satisfaction. A Fast Team organized by the Management Activities Committee met last April during Committee Days and developed an outline for a Customer Satisfaction Survey. This survey was distributed at our Board of Directors meeting last June and has been made available to all PCI members. While specifically designed for Producer Members, much of the material can be adapted for use by our Associate and Professional membership as well.

The biggest challenge facing our industry is in our relationship with our customers, i.e., in understanding their needs and wants and measuring how well we are satisfying their requirements. The results of a Customer Satisfaction Survey provide the scorecard of their satisfaction level of our products and services. Of greater importance, however, is whether the satisfaction rating is instrumental in creating or losing business. Our objective needs to go beyond a
positive customer satisfaction report to achieving customer retention and customer loyalty. Most companies are aware that keeping current customers happy is more profitable than acquiring new clients.

Integral with the quality of our products is the response time and quality of our shop and erection drawings. We recognize that if we could automate the drawing, engineering and production processes, we could eliminate duplicate data entries and considerably reduce errors and cycle time. Equally important, we could eliminate the drawing process as a factor in production delays.

A consortium of producers, professionals and associate members has been formed with the objective of creating interoperability with the design community while at the same time writing production application software that is interoperable with our internal systems. When this new software becomes available, it will shorten the time considerably between contract and delivery of product.

Our Professional Member Committee has developed a marketing program for increasing professional membership in PCI. The committee has created a recruiting brochure to attract new members. In addition, the Career Path Brochure for the industry is now available as a hard copy and on CD-ROM. This brochure should be very helpful to professors in persuading graduating students to seek careers in the precast/prestressed concrete industry.

This past summer an Intern Program was developed for PCI members, enabling students to post their résumé and job needs on the PCI Web site. I hope that both producers and professionals are taking advantage of the program and have taken that first step of introducing the next generation to our industry.

This year we also initiated the Big Beam Contest, with 15 teams from seven universities participating. Each team of four to six students worked with a local precaster to design, build and test a 15-foot long beam. As a result of the enthusiasm generated, one of the schools re-evaluated their curriculum and added a course on prestressed concrete design. The goal, of course, is to have every major civil engineering department in the nation offer a course on prestressed concrete as a normal part of their curriculum.

The main focus of the Student Education Committee effort continues to be the free distribution of the PCI Design Handbook and the Hollow-Core and Architectural Design Manuals. This past year, well over 3000 books were given to students.

Our Technical Activities Committee has also been very active this year. The Sixth Edition of the PCI Design Handbook is well under way. Major changes are going to be in three areas: the first change is to update the Handbook to anticipated changes to the 2002 Edition of the ACI Code; the second big change will be to document solutions and designs that meet the new seismic design guidelines; and the third will be to reflect the outcome of our headed research program that is currently under way at Wiss, Janney, Elstner and Associates.

Two additional areas where TAC has been active are the Standard Connection Details Manual and the first ever PCI Seismic Design Manual. Standardization of details could enable designers to pick load capacities from load tables, thus decreasing design time and allowing more architects and first time users to apply our design material with confidence. The Seismic Design Manual will provide the users with the existing seismic design solutions that many of our expert precast specialty design engineers are already using.

We have had a very active and productive year at PCI. I would like to express my appreciation to Tom Battles and his very talented staff for all their accomplishments. And again, I’d like to acknowledge the efforts that all of you have made to enable PCI and our industry to grow and attain greater market share.

In addition, I would like to thank the members of the Executive Committee and the entire Board of Directors for your efforts in helping keep our strategic plan on course.

Finally, I would like to thank the Petricca family and all my fellow employees at Unistress for providing the much needed backup and support during my year-long activities at PCI.

Serving PCI as your Board Chairman has been an exhilarating and humbling experience for me. I hope that during this past year, I have helped to strengthen PCI and our remarkable industry.

signature

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