



MBMA Looks to Growth Markets

Posted on April 2nd, 2013 by Dealer in [Product News](#) [✉ Email This Post](#)

With 2013 in full swing, the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA), Cleveland, Ohio, expects certain markets to have an increased use of metal building systems during this year. The dealership market is an area that has been strong for metal building usage, and it is on target for increased growth.

“Our members regularly report growing markets to the MBMA, and they are seeing a surge in automobile dealership projects,” said Charles Praeger, the assistant general manager of the MBMA. “This is great news for dealership owners, who not only are building again after a slowed construction season but also are doing so economically and efficiently with metal building systems.”

Building owners have learned that metal building systems can be more flexible and economical than conventional construction. A metal building systems manufacturer with single-source capability can offer a faster, consistent and more efficient building process. The structure not only goes together quickly but lowers life-cycle costs, as well. Additional savings can be achieved because metal buildings are constructed year-round—and in typically one-third the time of conventional construction. The strength of steel also adds durability, stability, fire resistance and a longer life to a building.

The versatility of a metal building system allows auto dealerships to create their visible corporate brand. Aided by manufacturers’ computerized engineering and manufacturing customization methodologies and tools, virtually any design can be created on the inside and outside. Inside, clear spans allow large spaces like atriums and maintenance bays. The high-performance, flexible structural steel frame of a metal building system bears the load of a building. Therefore, the outside can be finished with wood, glass, brick, masonry, EIFS or factory-insulated panels. Manufacturers will work with building owners to meet building life safety, fire and energy codes and to ensure that the appropriate exterior finish is selected for each project.

The increased usage of metal building systems may be due to owners’ recognizing another attribute—green building. “Metal building systems are made with steel, which has a higher recycled content and recyclability than concrete,” said Jeff Carmean, chairman of the MBMA. “What is added to the framing makes the building even more green. For instance, metal wall panels can create R-16 to R-32 insulation values. Cool metal roofs, with their superior coating technology, have increased solar reflectivity and improved emissivity, thereby decreasing a building’s energy consumption.” Because of all of this, metal building systems contribute to LEED points and accreditation from other sustainability programs.

Brothers Dave and Bill Labrum quickly learned about these and other benefits when using a metal building system to replace an 80-year-old dealership in Roosevelt, Utah. The L&L Motor Co.'s architect, James B. Glascock, Salt Lake City, had never worked with these particular building systems. He noted, "Once we understood how the systems worked and what flexibility we had within those types of systems, we took that and ran with it."

The team indeed took off with the design inside and out. A tall, curved entrance welcomes customers into a two-story reception area and showroom. A mezzanine overlooks this space with conference rooms and offices. Compared to its previous space, the service area boasts 22,400 square feet with additional lifts and service bays. One 20,000-pound and two 30,000-pound lifts were incorporated to accommodate maintenance on trucks from a nearby oil field.

Metal walls were added to the steel framing, and metal roofing was used for the curved canopy and multilevel areas. The roofs have an R-30 insulation value, and the walls are R-19. "Metal walls and roofs are always a great pairing with metal building steel framing systems," Praeger said. "A variety of material, color and coating options make metal standing-seam roofs one of a kind for each project. These coatings truly can bring a corporate image to life while helping the metal roof and wall systems to perform unlike any other material."

The project cost the brothers \$5 million. Research revealed that they were building wisely. "We did some checking, [and] going with systems construction rather than a block building probably saved us a little over \$1 million," Dave explained. The already successful business soon saw some new records that made the project even more worth it. Dave added: "We've set new records almost every month in the service area. We had a sales growth in one month of \$2.5 million. Our service revenue more than doubled, and our parts revenue has increased 150 percent or more."

With Americans increasing their spending on new and used automobiles, dealerships have seen improved profits, as exemplified by the dramatic increases at L&L Motor. Dealer owners would be wise to reinvest some profits into their structures to increase performance and functionality for their customers. "Every dealer has their own brand that needs to be expressed within very specific space needs," Carmean said. "Metal building systems provide this with added cost savings, sustainability and ease of construction. I am excited to watch the growth of this market in 2013, and I look forward to seeing the remarkable structures MBMA members help to create as America keeps building."

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