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Heidi Ellsworth:

Hello and welcome to Roofers Coffee Shop. My name is Heidi Ellsworth. And we are here within RLW, Read Listen Watch. We're bringing it to you how you like to learn. And today, I am with one of my dearest roofing friends in the world, Jennifer Ford-Smith of Johns Manville. Jennifer, welcome to the show.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Oh, thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited for the opportunity, Heidi. And you are one of my dearest friends in the roofing industry as well. And I'm excited to be able to get to do this with you.

Heidi Ellsworth:

We've been doing this for a while. I love it.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Yeah.

Heidi Ellsworth:

And today's topic is amazing. It's going to be all about training and what you're doing at Johns Manville. I know you've been leading a lot of initiatives. And so before we get to that, I'm going to do a little bit of housekeeping and then we're going to dive in, because there's just so much great information that you have. So, for everybody who is out there, thank you so much for being with us today.

And a few housekeeping things. First of all, all attendees are muted. So, if you have any questions, please go to your control panel and either ask questions or chat. And Megan Ellsworth is in the background. And she'll be chatting up and responding to any questions you have. And then we'll get those to Jennifer at the end of the RLW. It is being recorded and it will be On Demand on our Read Listen Watch segment of Roofers Coffee Shop. So be sure to share this and let everybody know. So we are ready to get going. This is going to be great.

So like I said, today, we are just honored to have Jennifer Ford-Smith as our guest. And she is the director of product management and marketing for roofing systems at Johns Manville. She's also led in sales. She has done so many amazing leadership positions at Johns Manville and has given so much to this industry. But she's also the chair of the EPDM Roofing Association. She's involved with National Women in Roofing, which we started together. She's part of the Roofing Alliance, NRCA committees, and has just been very, very instrumental in this industry. So really, again, Jennifer, thank you so much. And I'm super excited for us to talk about training and ongoing education.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Me too.

Heidi Ellsworth:

I know. So first of all, I put up at this slide, because this was your starting point. Learning is not a one-time event. What were you thinking? What is that all about?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Also, Heidi you know but others may not, I've been in the industry for 19 years now. And I think whether it's industry or just my personal life, I just feel like if you're not constantly learning and trying to learn something new could probably be a pretty boring life. And I think in the 19 years, certainly each event, each experience I had was a building block on the next. And there's so much to learn in this industry, that it's an iterative process. And it's really up to us and as individuals to put those building blocks in place.

And it's with relationship building, I've learned a lot from my colleagues in the industry. I've learned a lot by just going out and doing. I've gone up on roofs. I've worked with our technical organizations. So, that's what I really mean by that is that we all have the opportunity just to continuously learn, and there's so much to learn in this industry. And today we're going to talk about all the different places where you can learn more about the industry. And I think there's something for everybody.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yes. And the thing is, and I think you know, I've seen this a lot, is it's learning from each other, it's learning from the next generation that's coming up, and it's also when we bring so many great minds together within the roofing industry to put something together to help the industry overall that that's where we really see opportunity. And you've been part of this with the NRCA ProCertification. It is an amazing program. You and I were both involved in the early committees. We've been watching it. You're still incredibly involved with Johns Manville. So talking about a place to learn and to continue to grow all the education within your companies, share with us your perspective on the NRCA ProCertification.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Absolutely. So no matter who you talk to in the industry, the one thing that we hear from anybody, and whether it's manufacturer, contractor, distributor, we are all struggling with labor, and getting people wanting to come into this industry. And largely because there's a perception out there that unfortunately isn't the most glamorous industry to enter. We all love it. We've all been-

Heidi Ellsworth:

We love it.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

... in this industry for a long time, and we have great friendships, and we've had great careers, and there's great opportunity. But on the outside looking in, the perception has always been a struggle for us. And the NRCA tackles that head on. I'm a new director with the NRCA. They're always looking at ways on how to work on labor issues. And part of that is education and part of that is also building that career path for folks. So they have a number of programs. I'm going to talk about the ones I'm aware of and have participated in.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

ProCertification is really exciting. They've spent literally millions of dollars trying to develop this. And it is an aid in career development to really give people that visualization of where they can go next in the industry, to help improve the perception of the industry and get people talking positively about it, and it really targets the installer. They have other products that they provide from an education standpoint that target other people. This is very focused and targeted at the installer.

It's the first of its kind that we've ever seen. There's been a tremendous amount of investment. And it's verified by a third party. So they look at ISO standards and they have built this based on a national standard. So it's not just we came up with this idea and we're doing it within a vacuum of the roofing industry. There are standards out there on how to create certification programs and they abided by those directions to develop this program and get it verified by third party.

So that's exciting. They have 18 system disciplines that they really want to get out there. Right now they have three complete. There's other things that people who aren't installers can do to get involved in this program, which we'll talk about, but they have a one performance certification and five master certifications.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Wow. Okay. So I think there is so much with ProCertification. I mean, I'm looking at all the people that are attending today, thank you so much, that a number of you are involved. And we would like to know exactly how many. So, Megan is going to put up a poll for us. And we're just asking a simple question. Is this the first time you have heard of ProCertification? We just like to know. So this will take just a minute while the poll comes up. And I have to tell you, Jenny, it seems to me like it would be impossible for anyone not to know about ProCertification and what's going on there, but what we're hearing is this has been the case that people still don't know what it is.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Wow. I know. So we have some opportunity at the NRCA. And I'm on some of the committees there that maybe I can pass that along to get the word out a little bit better. And I'd welcome to hear from the audience too at the end, because I know we don't have this in as a polling question to understand how we can better communicate these types of programs to the folks out there to get in front of them.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Are we almost there? Yes. We're going to see the results, which came back at 23%, yes, have heard of it and 77% no. So, Jenny, you're right on target. We need to be continuing to get the message out. So I'm so glad we're talking about this today. I'm so glad we're getting this in front of people, because it's just such an amazing program and so much hard work has gone into it. So, why don't you explain how it

works and how they can get more involved.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

So a couple of things, again, focus on the experienced worker. So this isn't the person you just hired last month if you're a roofing contractor. It's somebody that has been a mechanic for you or working up on the roof for a number of years, and they want to get recognized for their talents and their workmanship and craftsmanship. So, it's for that experienced worker. There is an initial 45 assessment test to really test the knowledge to ensure that it is an experienced worker that's coming in. And then next, there's essentially a hands-on test that is performed with a qualified assessor.

And now here at JM, Todd Nathan has been very, very active in this program. We developed a lot of the content in conjunction with the NRCA and other manufacturers. We opened up our Rockdale facility in Illinois for people to come in and do that training. But we also trained, we have about 60 folks in the field that are tech reps. And they have all been qualified as an assessor, and certified as assessor.

So part of our Pinnacle program that we offer to our Pinnacle contractors is that if there are some of your crew that you would like to go through this program, they can come into your locations and provide that assessment and observe your team that is going through the program. And then once they're done with that, they give you a pass-fail. The assessor then notifies the NRCA. And then if you're not going through JM's Pinnacle program, there are plenty of other assessors out there. They're independent folks that went out and got that qualification on their own. They generally charge you a fee to come in and do that assessment for your team.

And so, that's kind of how that works. It's a pass-fail. And then once you pass, you get an ID card, you also get a QR code that you can use and market with. And you also can get a digital badge. So you don't have to carry your card around with you if you don't want to. And it's really important to understand that certification goes with the person. It's not the company. So, if you move on to another employer, you will always have that certification once you get it. And I mentioned, we haven't built out all of the programs yet. So if you're not an installer, let's say you're a manufacturer or distributor or you're consultant out there, and you're looking to get involved, the NRCA could really use some subject matter experts to help build out the remaining courses or become assessors. And you can go to nrca.net to get all the information about how to do that.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And if you have any questions on that, obviously, you can get to Jennifer, too. She can get you the right folks. Roofers Coffee Shop can get you the right folks. Because I know sometimes it's maybe a little intimidating, but you have all this great information, and you want to be part of it, and we can help you. So, I tell you what. This is something and I love that it goes with the person.

And really, if you have any questions about that, I know there's been a lot of contractors out there who've been a little bit worried about if we have our installers certified, are they going to leave? And we've just spent all this money. And it's not huge amounts, but it's a good investment to leave. And if you watched in past, Jenny, in the last conversations we've had with Roofing contractors, Kelly on Team Texas, they're all like, "No, it actually helps with retention." I think that is such an important part of this.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Agreed.

Heidi Ellsworth:

So let's find out. Let's find out what we have here. So we have another poll. So Megan is going to pop this up there. Have you participated in any way with ProCertification? If so, please tell us how in the chat. So obviously, 24% of you are going to say yes, and then we would love for you to go into the chat and just share with us how you participated. And we can kind of bring some of that up during our Q&A or as we go along. It is so important to be involved but also to share what your involvement has been with others to help get them excited, too. I'm sure, Jennifer, you're seeing a lot of this with your JM assessors, which is so cool. What are they hearing from contractors about this?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Oh, I'm getting really positive feedback. I think the toughest thing is the last year and a half. People are anxious to jump on board and get some of their folks through this. The toughest part has been social gatherings in the last year and a half. But generally, it's not like you do this with 25 people at a time. It's one or two or three or four people, because it is pretty intensive and hands on. But people are excited to go through that. I think people are excited to have that relationship with their employer.

Most in all cases, I would say that the employer to your point is providing the funding to get it done, even though they know that that certification goes with their employer. And contractors out there are using it to market with some of their owners and putting it in the specification that they want X percent of the contractor, the specification may call out in the future, you may start to see this that 30% of the workforce on that job site needs to have ProCertification. So that's a great learning tool.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Wow. Well, 33% have said yes. They participated in one way or the other and 67% not yet. So again, a lot of opportunity. And it's really good. So, okay, we have these installers. They're brilliant craftsmen and women. And they have gone through the program they've been certified. But how about all of these young, new, or just new people to the roofing industry we're bringing new people in all the time? Let's talk a little bit about the importance of training. And I tell you what. I know because I watched, NRCA does amazing training. Let's talk about that, Jenny.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Sure. Recently they've done and developed a program called TRAC. And this one is focused on anyone in the industry. So whether you're a manufacturer, specifier, roofer, whatever it might be, distributor, this content is pretty relevant to them. Because as you know, we all come into it like, what does that acronym mean? We've got acronyms coming out our ears, right?

Heidi Ellsworth:

Right, right.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

And it's overwhelming. And I've had a few new employees come in and tell me, how do I keep up with all these acronyms? And it's going back to that building blocks, you just got to put one block down at a time. This is a program that allows you to do that, because it has 15 modules. So, I was telling new employees when they're coming in on their onboarding in their first week, I said, you're going to hear a gazillion things and you're going to retain about 3% of it.

And there's all these resources out there that can help reinforce the learnings you came and learned in this last week. And this is one of them. So this is focused on new people to the industry, inexperienced employees. It's an online course. And they have low slope and steep slope content. But like I said, it's 15 modules so you can do it at your own time. And it's relatively cheap because you can use these materials unlimited. So if you have 50 employees, you want to do this, you pay the one-time fee, which it depends on what you can see on the next screen, but it depends on which program you pick.

But we're talking like 3 or 400 bucks, maybe on the high end, 199 on the low end, 148, I see there. So it's relatively cheap per employee, if you really leverage this within your organization. For foreman training, they have asphalt shingles. You can see them all up here, stuff around thermoplastic. So you can also customize it for what types of roofs your organization puts down. And I believe there's one more slide on this. Is there one more on this topic? Yeah, I think there is another slide on this topic, because it talks to the point that it also has a supervisor dashboard.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yes.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

So as a manager of people, you have the ability to see your employees' progress, because it's kind of self-administered. But you can also have good development discussions with them. After you see that they've finished a course, you can sit down with them and ask them questions on what they learned. If they thought it was an effective training, is there anything that didn't get answered that you could answer? So I think it really opens up that development discussion that you can have with your employees as well to make them feel valued.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And to be able to have those conversations on what you know, what you don't know, what more training you need, how it's working, I just think builds culture, builds the kind of culture you want in a company. So we're going to ask another poll question, Jenny. And then I think we're going to have that other slide that's going to follow up on that. So again, we're just curious, from everybody out there, have you used the TRAC program in your company? So, Jenny, as you are literally looking at the training that NRCA is doing with TRAC, it's making a big difference, because it's really that, first, you talked about your building blocks, the first building block, to moving installers and roofing craftsmen and women and professionals up into certification, right?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Absolutely. And we hear from our roofers but also our contractors, we hear it from manufacturers, you only have a short time to make that employee feel valued. And we generally always have that entry level role. And if someone's not feeling like they're getting developed or fostered through the process, then they're like, this company doesn't want to invest in me. And some of these entry level roles, a lot of times the folks on the roofs start with picking up trash and that kind of stuff. And they're like, "Man, this stinks."

But I think if you've coupled this and said, hey, this is just the start to get you into our organization, but in addition to that we're going to do something like TRAC so you can really learn roofing, understand what career path you might want to take, they'll start to feel a little bit more invested that, hey, they didn't hire me to pick up trash. They're actually investing in me and talking to me about a career path here in roofing. And I'm learning. And I can learn where I can go in my career. So, this is one way to reinforce that career path within the organization.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Right. And as we just had a comment come in, new employees. And from what I'm seeing on the poll right now, we have about 94% who have not been involved or have not used the TRAC program. Actually, I know that's kind of scary on one side but on the other I'm thrilled because you're able to share all this information. Just before we go off track, how can contractors... I know, we showed it in the pricing up there,

but let's go real tactical. What do they do to go ahead and get started with the TRAC?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Go to www.nrca.net. And they've got a great search engine up there, and they can search for TRAC. NRCA has both member or non-member content. This is available to non-members. So don't be nervous if you're not an NRCA member. But I'd also encourage you to become an NRCA member because they have a tremendous amount of resources on their website to help contractors, especially like legal advice during all of this supply management stuff that's going on and beyond, beyond just the education part. So, some of their content is very member-driven. So you have to be a member. Others is not, this is one that you can get as a non-member.

Heidi Ellsworth:

So for those of you out there who may or may not have had the honor to meet Amy Staska, Amy is the brains behind TRAC. She's the one who's helped led the department to put together all of the resources and to really pull this together, has worked with both Jenny and I. She just sent us a chat, and we're going to provide her email. Because Amy, you know what, I don't have it off the top of my head. So if you type it in, that would be great. And she's going to provide for the first dozen people on here, of that 94%, the first dozen people who email her at astaska@nrca.net, and Megan, you can put that into your chat so everybody can see that, astaska@nrca.net, you're going to get free two-week access to all the TRAC programs.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Wow.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, I know. And I got to just let everybody know that this was not planned. This just happened. We really aren't doing an infomercial or anything. It just happened. So thank you, Amy. That is really awesome. So let's move on and let's talk about some of the other things that are happening out there. There is a lot of trainings going on. We really started with the NRCA because they are undoubtedly the leaders in this. But what do you see, Jenny, out there across the country with different types of maybe traditional, non-traditional training?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Sure. I mean, for years and years and years, a lot of manufacturers, I say XYZ companies offer their universities, JM has a roofing institute that we promote. So that's more on the traditional side. It became more and more challenging during the COVID times. So we really kicked off this idea of work from home/learn from home. Especially folks that at the very beginning we weren't sure if even the roofing contractor employees could get up on roofs and initially, and there was a lot of concern about that.

And do you want your crews to not... If they're sitting idly or if you have to lay them off, could you give them something else to do, and learning was one of those, so you

could retain those crews because a lot of contractors were worried once they lost a person that they would never get that person back. So, we really focused on this work from home/learn from home, that was a trend that we saw. Certainly, webinars are popular. And they always have been and we've partnered with organizations to put on webinars.

Safety stand-ups are always important to our roofing contractors. And I know there's content out there for that. A local state associations have recognized the importance about employee development and retention. And so, you see a lot of them building out their educational programs. And then certainly on the traditional side trade shows, I always tell my employees, go to the IRE. It's not about the booth, at least for commercial roofing. It's not about the booth. It's about all the activities that happen outside the show floor.

And if you ever walk into one of those educational sessions at an IRE, generally, they're packed and they're standing room only. And it's a great opportunity to get training out there. But what I really have seen trending more than anything in the last year and a half is a lot of graphics. And a lot of times folks... I think I heard a statistic yesterday, I'm on the diversity and inclusion committee for the NRCA. I believe 70% of our workforce is Spanish or Latino. And I think graphics, multiple languages, we've gotten a request to convert some of our literature to Polish in the Chicago market.

So we're seeing trends and getting stuff out there in multiple languages. Videos are easy to follow. But a real exciting thing has been our online demos, because they're live and they're online. But generally, when you see a demo, you're sitting in the audience somewhere. But when you're doing it online, the cameraman can get right up close to what the demonstrator is doing. And so you get a great visual. But then you also have a live participant, an expert on the other side that you can ask questions to.

And a lot of folks are nervous to talk, publicly speak. And the chat has been an amazing way for people to open up and ask questions they might not otherwise do in a live in-person event. I mentioned the work from home/learn from home content. I've seen a tremendous amount of town halls start to come out, especially with the NRCA. And those have been really attended well. I think they've been getting 3 or 4,000 people every time Reed has gotten out there and done a town hall. So those have been pretty effective.

App development, so we're seeing a lot more apps. JM has an app called the Roof TechXpert. And it's to help educate people on when and when not to put adhesives down based off of ambient temperature and relative humidity. And that's a pretty popular app that's out there. And I'm sure others have similar things. A lot of

newsletters or news sites have been a way to get information out to people. And then I've seen a lot of blogs going out for education and training as well.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Well, I mean, that's our whole focus on the Coffee Shop. Our whole focus is training, information, continuing education, RLWs, where we really it is a generational thing and people are learning different. But you know what? Johns Manville really was a leader for... I mean, you got to tell me how long. Well, actually, maybe since 1972, but you have provided the BURSI program to the industry. Why don't you talk about what that does for training and education?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Sure. So we have both JM branded stuff in education. And that comes in many forms, like our tech people will come out or tech reps will come out and do training, hands-on training, all that kind of stuff, but we also have our CEU or accredited training, and that's BURSI. That's where it started. It was started in 1972. And today, it's called the Better Understanding of Roofing Institute. But what it really stood for in 1972 is like 90% or more of the market was built-up roofing at that time. And JM was the leader in built-up roofing.

And so, the acronym used to stand for built-up roofing systems institute. But when single-ply started taking a foothold in the marketplace, we certainly had to start adopting all that content. And now single-ply, it's the opposite, 77% of the market is single-ply. So we changed the name a number of years ago. I think it was before I started at JM, which was forever ago. But really, it's AIA certified. So we have to go through and certified the content every year.

And it's non-branded. So it's generic and it's intended to be designed for the design professional. But now we've evolved into having online content for that, and it can be customizable. So what we used to do is we used to do six to eight sessions of BURSI in Denver a year. So we do three to four in the spring and three to four in the fall. And then we had a roadshow version that our local teams could come out and do for architects and consultants.

We still have all of that. But each module has to be AIA-approved. And so, if built-up roofing is more important to you, we can certainly customize it and talk about that. If design requirement is more important, we can put a focus on that. So BURSI has been a great tool. We've had thousands if not tens of thousands of people go through it since 1972.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Wow. Wow. I tell you, I remember hearing about this when I first came into the industry, and that was forever ago, too. So, such a great program. So we want to ask another poll question. This is actually our last poll question. But we're kind of really interested in what education are you looking for that you can't find. We're going to talk about

some ways to find hard to get information, but we'd like to know what you think.

So, we put some of the things we thought, bilingual training, construction management, succession, quick hit videos, marketing and lead generation. And then, if you have others besides that, we would love for you to note those in the chat, so we could kind of see what you're looking for and maybe be able to help as we go forward. I have to tell you, Jennifer, the bilingual training is so important.

We just have had a company by the name of Better Employees out of Southern California who has joined the Coffee Shop. And they're doing leadership and soft skills in Spanish to really help grow the group. And I found out about it through Antis. And Antis was like, "We couldn't find this anywhere," until they finally found better employees. People have a hard time finding this kind of training, don't you think?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Absolutely. That's probably one of the... What we just saw on some of the polls, there's so much available out there. Sometimes it's information overload, and drilling down to finding what you actually need. But I think by learning from the polls here today, I think we can do a little bit better, marketing to get some of this stuff in front of folks, and nobody have those resources and a tool.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And I think that's what we're all just trying to do is make sure we bring these resources into one place, which we do on the Coffee Shop all the time, trying to make it easy for people to find. So let's see what they're looking for. This is really interesting. Okay. So I really thought that bilingual would be higher, but it's not. It's 15%. Construction management is at 54%. That's awesome. We're going to talk about that a little bit. Succession planning, 46%. Marketing and lead generation, 46%. And on top one, quick hit videos. Jenny, that was yours at 62%. That's really cool.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Yeah. That's interesting. I would agree with you about the bilingual training. That one is a surprise.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Wow. So okay, with construction management being at 54%, let's talk about the Roofing Alliance. This is perfect.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

All right. Well, the Roofing Alliance, it's been around since 1996. And really, there wasn't anywhere before 1996 where contractors, distributors, manufacturers, specifiers could all get together and work on roofing industries to issues together. We all kind of had our own little groups that we functioned in. And so the Alliance came together and it was really focused on technology and research, what was evolving. If there were concerns with certain products in the marketplace, they would do studies on. If there was OSHA concerns or questions, anything around that, they had this research arm and focus.

Education and training, which we're going to talk about today, philanthropy and then sustainability, are kind of their mission and goals. From the education and training standpoint, they have really stepped up and started looking at construction management schools and universities. They offer scholarships to anyone in the roofing industry. And you have to submit an application, tell your story, but they do review every one of them. I'm on that committee.

And we hear some interesting stories. And it's open to anybody that is a part of the Alliance. So it's open to manufacturers, contractors, and everybody for scholarships. And these are some of the schools that have participated with the Roofing Alliance. In recent years, they have developed these teams that come in and do a student competition where they get a real life job and they have to project manage a roofing project from soup to nuts.

And they generally have a mentor. I know Todd Nathan in our organization has been a mentor before to them. And then they report out at the IRE. And they get scholarships based on how they compete and win. So, they are still planning on coming to the IRE this year. The students are. They're not going to be doing the competition this year. And the reason I made Clemson a little bit bigger on this slide was because they've done something unique at Clemson, which I got to participate in and they have a professor that is passionate about the roofing industry.

And a lot of architectural schools and construction management schools don't even spend one day on roofing. And what I always heard is that roofing's new construction is 10% of the overall cost, but it's 90% of litigation. And so, a lot of folks are aware of all the things that can go wrong with a roof if it's not designed right or if it's not managed right. So Clemson created a whole curriculum that's a semester long. And I got invited just to give a roofing 101 overview at the beginning of this year semester in January. And so, I was excited to be a part of that and I'm excited that someone is taking a leadership role at the university level to really educate folks about our industry. And it's another way to really elevate the perception of the commercial roofing industry as well.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And so, for all of you folks out there who said construction management was really important for you for continuing education, this is a great way. I mean, all of these schools have amazing construction, management classes, and degrees. And so, if you are close to any of them, just getting involved, just getting involved with the students is so self-fulfilling. It's my favorite thing. I love the student competition. I think it's just so amazing. But also, it's an opportunity for you to send some of your employees to these kinds of classes and getting the scholarships through Roofing Alliance.

But I'm telling you, there's a lot of scholarships out there. Western States has them, MRCA, Midwest, NERCA, Florida, pretty much everybody has scholarships to help with this type of continuing education and here's all the schools that offer it, plus there's tons of community colleges. There's just a lot. And again, Roofing Alliance and the NRCA is doing a lot working with vocational schools to try to bring that resource to the roofing industry. Jenny, I love this. I love the students and what the Alliance is doing there. So let's talk a little bit about that on the next generation. Because really, we're kind of talking about how do we get that next generation in and how do we get them up and trained so that we have successors in the roofing industry.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Yeah. I think we are missing that. We're missing the folks wanting to come in to the industry. And so, a lot of organizations are being very intentional in their messaging to recruit the next generation and understanding what they care about. And so, one of the biggest things that I think people are talking about right now is very important is diversity and inclusion. When you come into our industry right now, at the owner level, I have heard this many times where people who aren't in a diverse group are leading and managing these companies. And so, if you don't feel like the industry doesn't look like you, a lot of folks are worried if am I going to be included, right?

Heidi Ellsworth:

Right.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

So there's a concerted effort. The NRCA really started, by the way, by National Women in Roofing, because we didn't have anything that really touched that. And National Women in Roofing has been around for many, many years. And they really started to push this dialogue. And now it's expanding just beyond women, which is awesome. We're talking about everything. And are we really representing the audiences that do all the work in our organizations and on our roofs.

So, it's great to see those conversations happening. I think it does help with outreach and imagery of our industries. And so, we're seeing a lot of companies. Even JM, we have a diversity inclusion committee now. And it's exciting to see how those things are attracting new talent into our organization. I know the NRCA has an industry image and outreach committee that is focused on doing just that, how do we build awareness about our industry and how do we really attract that top talent.

And then as many of you guys know, this industry is filled with multi-generations that pass on the company from parent to child or to another successor. And so, the NRCA came up with the FEI program, which is the Future Executives Institute. And that is a mini... I wouldn't even say it's a mini master's degree. It's a master's degree in roofing. And it's a significant commitment. I've not been through it but I believe it's a three-year commitment.

And the peer development that you get out of that is awesome. I see folks who went to class together and you see them at the IRE and they're so bonded and they have those relationships and they can bounce ideas off of each other. And they're the ones that are going to take over that company in the future. And that's why their companies invest so much into them. And then lastly is flexibility. I'm dealing with this myself. Especially with COVID in the last year and a half, people have been able to get the work done. If they're not actually installing the roof, many of our roles allow us to work from home. I think that's something that's really desired by the next generation. And really getting our heads around how do we manage the future as a result and offering that flexibility.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. I think it's so important. And I do just want to do a shoutout for FEI, too, because I have a lot of friends who've gone through it. And they are friends with their team to get a peer group from the year they graduate. And they stay friends forever. And they help each other out in their businesses and they meet at IRE. It's just phenomenal. So again, if you're looking for that succession planning, construction management, really how to, go to the NRCA and look for the Future Executives Institute.

And it is phenomenal to put your folks through. And it doesn't have to be just young people. It can be anybody, you just apply for it. And it's phenomenal. So we mentioned National Women in Roofing. And you and I both were there at the very beginning. And wow, talk about we've come along, baby. It has been amazing. So training and diversity, what are you seeing there?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

So National Women in Roofing Day is coming up this Sunday. I'm really excited about it. And while there's been a number of people, I think, drop out of the IRE, I feel like this group is still going to get a number of participants. And we expected it would be down. But last year's IRE, there were 4 or 500 people in the room. And people were getting engaged and leaning. And so, that just tells me as this group has grown from zero to thousands of people being a part of it, and having local chapters that there's a need for it.

People are craving it and they want to be a part of that change in our industry. So, there's a tremendous amount of training on diversity at the National Women in Roofing Day. That's the main topic this year. And there're some great presenters there as they've always had in years past. I know the NRCA, as an example, has a committee and they're looking at doing more and more events, and leveraging social media to really try to support the education and training on how important diversity is.

And Heidi, you said something interesting right when we started, but getting multiple people generations and diverse perspectives makes for better... There is actually a

payoff. And if you Google it, there is a statistic after statistic that the more diverse your team is, the better organizations do in decision-making and profitability and teamwork. And so, it really pays off to have a diverse team. And there's tremendous amount of information out there that supports that effort.

Companies are developing their own D&I measures, or they have discussions of committees, and it's really about leaning in and joining the conversation. I think it goes back to those building blocks. It's just constantly talking about it and getting in front of you. And then, as I mentioned earlier, understanding that 70% of our workers in this industry are Spanish-speaking or have a Latino background. So, making sure that we all understand that we have to communicate in different ways than we probably have been in the last century to reach that audience.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Really understanding with a multi-language to really understanding the culture and understanding also that people learn best in their first language. So, how are you teaching? Even if they are bilingual, are you teaching the first language? How does that work? I mean, there's just so much out there, so much more we could do for inclusiveness. And again, it's all about training. It's all about education. So, as we're looking at this, I've always been a huge advocate for contractors to work closely with their manufacturers. Manufacturers offer so many things like we were talking about with the videos or the marketing and lead generation. That's something that a lot of manufacturers do, I know JM does, to help their contractors. What are some other trainings or certification things that they should be aware of working with other manufacturers and JM?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Sure. So we have hands-on boot camps. We have a facility, as I mentioned, in Rockdale, Illinois. We have decks that are set up where people can literally... I personally went through it. I know what an 80-pound mop of hot asphalt feels like. And it was real hot asphalt when I went to the class. But it gives you a perspective of what to expect as well as the fine details. I mean, because the devil is in the details when you're talking about roofing, literally, and how to weld a boot in a corner and do it right.

And we have experts that are training our customers on how to do that. A lot of folks of, like I mentioned, developed online universities, we have JM University that can be shared both internally and externally as a resource. But we also have, like I mentioned, field techs that can do job starts. So if we've launched a new product and you're unfamiliar with it and you take that step without someone by your side to help you through it, we often will send one of our techs out to help do a job start to get your crews familiar with it.

And sometimes they have tips and tricks that can make your life easier. And I have a great example. Our local tech rep here in Colorado, she's also the head of the Colorado chapter of National Women in Roofing. She was on a big, big job. Fasteners are in short supply right now and JM approved a 20-year guarantee with five fasteners per board. And that's what the customer spec was. She noticed the customer was putting six fasteners per board, and called it out, saving them time and money, especially on that very special resource... Heidi and I were talking about fasteners being like diamonds, jewels in the industry right now, because they're short in supply.

So, our local tech reps can really give some good tips and tricks on those jobs starts. And they're willing to do that. To get involved in committees, JM gets involved in committees and that's how we help with the training out there because sometimes we're not reaching every customer, but we can reach them through participating in local chapters and trade associations. We also do in-process inspections. And that's really to make sure that our contractors are protected as well as JM.

And again, that's another place where you can get some tips from our local tech reps. And then, obviously, when we launched new products, we do a whole initiative and we have online content. We have videos typically. We have in the field training by our sales organization. So there's a number of ways that we try to reach out and train and offer support to our contractor base.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Sorry about that. Build your relationship with your sales reps out there and build a relationship up the ladder. Get to know a Jennifer Ford-Smith. Get to know these different folks who are involved, because you never know what all is going to come from that. I've had great success being on both sides of that. And training for recruitment, this is a biggie. And we really are needing to recruit but retain. So, what are you seeing here?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

I think everyone's Googling how to recruit now. So, I would encourage you to do that. There's a ton of job boards out there that you can put your job listings on, both industry, inside the industry, and both outside the industry. One I've seen the ladders you don't care about that. Indeed, I think a lot of folks have heard about that. We certainly have Roofers Coffee Shop. I think National Women in Roofing has a job board as well.

So first, I would say just training on understanding those resources that you have. There's a ton of online resources, job fairs, which I don't have listed here. JM has gone to a number of job fairs to try to recruit talent out of colleges. In-person courses certainly help on recruitment. Networking and social media have been great. I would tell you, I just had a conversation with a woman about how the pendulum is swinging

where companies are the best recruiting tool they have is that networking, hiring a friend of a friend or somebody that works here, hiring their relatives.

Getting to understand who your employees are and if they have friends and family that want to come join your organization. I know there's plenty of certification programs out there for recruiters, so finding a recruiter that maybe has gotten that certification is going to behoove your organizations. And then, again, industry associations is a great place to meet people. And they tend to have their own job boards or it gives you yet another way to network.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yes, they do. I know a lot of them really do. I'm going to keep going because we're real close, but I want to make sure we get in what we just kind of talked about two slides ago, but the importance of building relationships with your manufacturers.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Yeah. I think this summarizes everything. Roofing is a relationship business. I can't stress that enough. I have personal friends like Heidi and many, many more out there. And so, understanding that first is very important. You have to build those relationships. And I encourage you to do it with our sales team. We have a specifier services organization that can help you deal with architects. Or if you're an architect, if you need that resource, we have our tech services team.

I mentioned it several times, they can help you with tips and tricks. They'll come out and help you with in-process inspections. They're there to help provide a service, not just protect JM's guarantees. We have co-op marketing opportunities. We love to do job profiles. And I know many of our contractors love to see their work out on social media. And so, we're always looking for those opportunities, just because we haven't asked you, we may not know you're interested.

So please, please be proactive and reach out. We'll have sponsorships. We have best of success every year that we participate in. And we'd love to sponsor folks to go to that. But also engage in the industry. I can't tell you. I'm the person I am in this industry, because on my very first IRE, I walked in like a little lost sheep. And I'll never forget Jeff Craff from (OMG 00:51:31) put his arm around me and he walked me into a group of people and made the introductions. And from there, my relationships have thrived. So, don't be afraid to engage. Lean in, introduce yourself, because everybody is a friend in this industry.

Heidi Ellsworth:

That is the truth. That is the truth. It is amazing the friendships that I've formed over the years. And I think everybody wants to help everybody else succeed and grow in their careers or their businesses or whatever it is. So, reaching out and engaging makes such a difference. I would love to ask everybody out there, do you have any questions? I have a few that have come in. But please be sure to make some

notations in here so that we can go on and get all your questions in before we go. We did have one kind of a tactical question. And it's funny, because it was friends, who you know, Ryan Rickards.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

At least he's trying to get me.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, probably. But Ryan wants to know how the... When we first time we asked a ProCertification question, it was 76% voted no and then only 24% on the next slide that was also talking about a ProCertification. We had people joined. Ryan, just so we had some different people joining. And I think it changed some of those dynamics and the numbers.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Well, I think two of them, one was had you heard about it? And then of those that kind of heard about it, had they participated in any way?

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. So it changed all of that. So it was good. It was good analytics, Ryan. Trust us. And then I just want to reinforce like we've talked about before that Amy Staska is on here. And be sure to email her. You need to email her, not us. Email her and you'll get in on the TRAC, which is great. And so this was one of the questions I had come in earlier, Jenny, was you talked about the JM field techs being able to do the assessors for ProCertification. How does that work and how would our audience or contractors get a hold of JM to get those assessors?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

So it works for our Pinnacle contractor. So JM has Pinnacle summit peak, so it's a multi-tier contractor program. And our Pinnacle and 5280, which is our top 15 contractors have this available to them as a part of the program. And they would just need to reach out to their local sales team, and that person can work with Todd Nathan, who manages our field technical organization. And we would work out all the details or they're welcome to reach out to me as well directly. And I can put them in touch with Todd to organize that.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Perfect. And if they're not in the Pinnacle or not with JM, then they just can go to the NRCA website to find uncertified assessors, right?

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Correct.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. So that's how you do it. It's great. They are great folks. And the other thing that we want to point out is, you know what, with everything changing every day with IRE, I'm not 100% sure but I'm pretty sure there will be certification opportunities going on at IRE. They usually have a big tent. They have a place where you can come in. You can show your skills. You can go through the test, and you can get certified. So, that would be something that you would want to look at. Also, we have another question

here. Are there any training classes you would recommend as a refresher course for experienced roofers, Jennifer? And this is from Marty Stout.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

So I would recommend TRAC, because I think, well, it's for new people. I think it covers a lot of information, things that we may have lost along the way. And then I would encourage you to look at different manufacturers' websites. And they have a ton of different content out there depending on what your needs are. And if you want to learn more, like I said about TPO, there's a ton of TPO videos as an example that JM has on YouTube. But you can also ask access to that YouTube channel through our website. At jmroofing.news, we have a ton of brochures and training materials on that. And like I said, it's all about what you want and want to learn about. And I'm pretty sure if you go to any manufacturer's websites, you're going to find the content that you're looking for.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And I know Marty really well. He's one of our RCS influencers. Thank you, Marty. Also Marty, we should connect you with Amy, because she's always looking for folks like you. She's always developing new training for 101, 201, 301, 401 masters. I'm sure she's probably rolling over right now like, "Heidi, quit talking." But you can get with her and she can help you find a lot of that stuff, too. And Amy also did say ProStar will actually be on the trade show floor this time. So if you're going to IRE, you can find ProStar on the floor and get more information. Jen, this is it. We're done. I think I plugged you Jennifer, Jenny, and Jen this whole hour.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

And they all work. Well, I tell people that I'm the youngest of five and I was lucky enough to be called one of the four others. And two of them are boys. So, my mom would just put me on the list. Yes.

Heidi Ellsworth:

So, thank you for being here today. Thank you for your wisdom. And thank you for everything you do for the industry. You are such an inspiration. Thank you.

Jennifer Ford-Smith:

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Heidi Ellsworth:

It was awesome. And thank you all for being here today and for listening and for being a part of this webinar and for everyone in the future who is watching this On Demand. And please continue to reach out to the NRCA and all these great opportunities to get more training and education in the industry. That is what makes us strong. And that's really what Roofing Respect is all about. I also would like to invite all of you to come to our next RLW, which will be September 1st, same time, 11:00 Pacific. And it's going to be with Mark McDonald of Sherwin-Williams.

And we've had him on here before. He is awesome, really great. And they're going to be talking about how contractors are growing their businesses with the benefits

of metal. So really how the homeowners are demanding it, metal is on the rise, and how you can make that part of your business. So, great one, September 1st, 11:00 on Sherwin-Williams. And I want to thank you all. This will be On Demand. It will be On Demand within the next 24 hours.

Please share it. Please share it within your company. And as always, please be sure to go to our YouTube channel and subscribe. We are going to be live at IRE next week. We will be talking to so many people. And Jennifer will be one of them. At the trade show and also at National Women in Roofing Day, we'll be bringing that to you live on our YouTube channel also. So Roofers Coffee Shop YouTube, subscribe, don't miss this thing. And we'll see you in September. Have a great day.