

It's the Really Little Things That Make the Difference

One of our projects this last summer is a new warehouse space. It is fairly conventional in construction for our part of the world – a steel-clad building. This is fairly common all across the country and most likely you are familiar. Posts of either steel or wood make up the backbone of the structure, while purlins (also of wood or steel) are fastened to the frame that we attach the outer sheeting to. And what holds all the sheeting on the roof and sides? Very small screws.

Since we have been handling the construction in house, I have been pitching in wherever I can on the construction and have found myself with a driver in hand and a pouch full of these amazing little screws. The work is a little monotonous and I find myself daydreaming as I often do. My thoughts have turned to all these screws. What really strikes me is that by themselves, or even in a small group, they are not that strong of a fastener. If I put up a fourteen-foot sheet of steel on the wall and only use two or three screws to hold it, I could easily pull it down. A little breeze would bend the sheet, tear around the screws, and ruin it just like that. Yet when we apply many screws, it becomes very difficult to damage the sheet, and it will stay in place like it's supposed to.

But wait, there's more! When the structure is first erected with the rafters and all the purlins on, it is fairly strong. However, by its nature the whole thing has a little wobble to it. If you are standing up in the rafters you can feel it sway a little from work being done, or even from the wind. Once the sheeting starts going on the roof however, the mechanical action of all of those fasteners working together with the sheeting makes the structure very rigid. Once the roof and walls are clad with sheeting, what had been a structure that had noticeable "give" to it is now super-strong and ready to withstand mother nature's elements. From a distance you cannot even see the fasteners, but that is what is holding it all together.

That's how our business works. There might be some elements of it that get a lot of attention, or maybe even some individuals. But the glue, the strength, and what really makes it all work and stay together is the collective application of all the "little" things – people's efforts that go unnoticed from a distance. These are the most important things. So, as you look around today at your business, make sure and notice the small things that are so vital but easy to take for granted.

Back to the screws, you may be wondering as I was, how many are being used? On this structure alone we are approaching twelve thousand and are not done yet. We have several buildings using this construction method and by my estimation there are well over one hundred fifty thousand of these screws working together to hold up our structures. As I imagine what this means to our economy across the nation – the infrastructure that

depends on them – it is absolutely staggering to think about the scale which we have implemented these little marvels on. What I can tell you for sure is my arm is feeling it. I'm going to go find an ice pack. Cheers!