

## editor's note



**I'M AMAZED WHENEVER SOMEONE ASKS ME WHERE I WORK AND THEN EXPRESSES SURPRISE THAT A DOMESTIC STEEL INDUSTRY STILL EXISTS.** And they're even more surprised when I tell them it is a true American success story.

At my son's soccer game the other day, my friend Eric told me he thought that all the steel mills had shut down a long time ago. I laughed and launched into one of my long and drawn-out stories that my kids so fear.

Do you remember the movie *Flashdance*, I asked? Back when that movie was made (in 1983) it took about 12 labor hours to make a ton of steel. Today? About 0.6 hours. New technology, combined with a new willingness by employees and management to work together, has created the world's most efficient steel producers. As a result, domestic steel mills employ hundreds of Americans and produce more than 93% of the hot-rolled shapes, including wide-flange, used in the USA.

Of course, it doesn't stop at production. There are more than 1,600 steel fabricators throughout the country. Some are small firms with just three or four employees; others are giants with nearly 1,000 workers. And then there are erectors and a vast horde of domestic suppliers, ranging from bolt manufacturers to coating suppliers.

But isn't it still cheaper to get steel from China, Eric persisted? No, I explained. The math is pretty simple. They buy scrap from the U.S., ship it to China, and then need to ship the finished steel back to the U.S. At roughly \$70 per ton each way, that's a big advantage for us. And since there's less than an hour's labor in that ton of steel, it is rare that domestic steel isn't preferred.

So the next time you're working on a steel building, don't just think of the final result. Also think about the hundreds of American jobs you're helping to maintain or create. And remember you're also part of this great American success story.

**SCOTT MELNICK**  
EDITOR

**MSC**  
MODERN STEEL CONSTRUCTION

### Editorial Offices

1 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 700  
Chicago, IL 60601  
312.670.2400 tel  
312.896.9022 fax

### Editorial Contacts

EDITOR & PUBLISHER  
Scott L. Melnick  
312.670.8314  
melnick@modernsteel.com

SENIOR EDITOR  
Geoff Weisenberger  
312.670.8316  
weisenberger@modernsteel.com

### ASSISTANT EDITOR

Tasha Weiss  
312.670.5439  
weiss@modernsteel.com

### DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING

Areti Carter  
312.670.5427  
aretic@modernsteel.com

### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Kristin Egan  
312.670.8313  
egan@modernsteel.com

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### Advertising Contact

Account Manager  
Louis Gurthet  
231.228.2274 tel  
231.228.7759 fax  
gurthet@modernsteel.com

For advertising information, con-  
tact Louis Gurthet or visit  
[www.modernsteel.com](http://www.modernsteel.com)

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admin@modernsteel.com

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