



### Benchmarking for Success

**D**oes this sound familiar? You spend every waking minute at the office striving to improve your business operations and market share, but you lack sufficient data to determine how you stack up against your competitors. In essence, you're flying blind.

Or, you're at the other end of the spectrum, drowning in so much data you can't determine where to begin, or which charts, graphs and spreadsheets to focus on. You feel like you're drinking from a fire hose.

In other words, too much information can be just as debilitating as too little, especially if you don't have an adequate means of organizing it. There's good news. Help is on the way.

When several of my industry brethren and I set out to form the Window and Door Dealers Alliance roughly two years ago, one of our cornerstone objectives was to gather and disseminate best practices—both in the form of qualitative (e.g., the sharing of success stories) and quantitative (e.g., financial, operational and administrative statistics) data. We were determined to provide timely, accurate and relevant information so business owners like you and me would be in the best possible position to make sound decisions for our companies.

The most important byproduct of this organizational emphasis is now available—the WDDA Benchmark Service. For the first time, window and door dealers will be armed with real-world data against which virtually every important aspect of their business can be measured, or benchmarked. Here are just a few of the critical areas we are tracking:

➤ Revenue Growth—How do your quarterly results stack up to your peers?

➤ Revenue Per Employee—Is your operation as productive as it could be?

➤ Gross Margin—Are you squeezing enough profit out of every dollar?

➤ Closed Sales Rate—How effective is your sales team?

➤ Operating Expense %—Are your costs under control?

➤ Returns—Is your staff incentivized to do the best possible job estimating?

This is just a small sub-set of the many data points we are gathering

on timely and accurate data, delivered from a reliable source?

As you can tell, I'm excited about the prospects for this important new service developed by and for members of the WDDA. In many ways, this benchmarking exercise represents a great leap forward in business sophistication for window and door dealers.

Companies armed with this data will have a tangible competitive edge in the marketplace. In the short term,

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and making available through this groundbreaking benchmark service. And in keeping with our organization-wide commitment to continuous improvement, we'll be refining and evolving the data as it grows in usage throughout our industry. The data will be available on both a regional and national level, so you can compare your results to peers on either, or both, measures.

Of course, all company-specific data is kept confidential. In fact, we've teamed with Frazier & Deeter, a leading accounting firm, to ensure both confidentiality and accuracy. They are also organizing the data for ease-of-access and maximum clarity.

You and I make important decisions every day based on the information we have at our fingertips. Wouldn't it be nice to know that the judgments we're making are based

it could mean a substantial boost in operating profits. Over the longer term, it could mean the difference between success and failure. I encourage you to contact us at [dwalker@wddalliance.org](mailto:dwalker@wddalliance.org) for more information about how to access the WDDA Benchmark Service. Keep in mind, this service is provided exclusively to WDDA members.

It's about time window and door dealers had access to the same information tools that other industries have used for years to manage their businesses. I hope you'll join me in using it, since the database gets more valuable with every new participant. ☐

*Jim Lett is president and CEO of ABE Doors & Windows based in Allentown, Pa., and an active member of the Window & Door Dealers Alliance Advisory Committee.*