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The Latest

Since last newsletter a couple of months ago, not a whole lot has happened with us. We've just designed a project outside of Phoenix that uses a composite material that is provided by a company in Australia - [PHE Luxwood](#). It's a panelized material that provides the structure, sheathing, insulation, and exterior finish in one panel. It's similar to the structural insulated panel system that is commonly used here. The project is race car garages for [Podium Club @ Attesa](#), a motorsports club near Casa Grande, AZ. We're preparing to use the same product for the track tower. As we progress and get into construction, I'll write about this more extensively.

Last newsletter I used AI to write the article on the Phoenix Navigation Center. I thought it wrote a pretty good article, my older son disagreed and hated it. Your thoughts? Send me an [e-mail](#) about what you think. I've used it to write proposals, which saves some time, but it creates fairly wordy documents that don't really read like a human wrote them. I have tried using it to write computer code for our calculation sheets (we use MathCAD), and I found it less than satisfactory so far. It seems to be an interesting tool, but I don't think it's going to replace me in the near future anyway.

The other thing we've been doing is having some of our drawing done overseas (India). I tried this years ago using China as a source, and it worked fairly well. However, I no longer needed them when I changed my drafting software from AutoCAD to Softplan - Softplan automated a lot of the processes that I used the company in China for.

There are a number of problems with outsourcing to another country:

- You can't easily oversee what they are doing - you aren't there, and you're in a different time zone.
- They are not often familiar with our means and methods here, and they make mistakes that come from that.
- There is a lot of reworking the drawings, at least initially.
- I personally do my design as I draw, so having somebody draw something for me just repeats the effort I already put out.

So, we've been fairly limited with the work we've sent to India, but it does speed up our processes and we're still on the learning curve.

In this newsletter I'm not going to cover a project. We've had to do a lot of traveling for our jobs, and we'd like to share some of our experiences here that may help you. I hope you all have a good month and I will talk to you in the next newsletter, if not sooner.

Travel Tips Learned the Hard Way - So You Don't Have To



Traveling can be exciting, frustrating, and exhausting. There are a number of mistakes people make when traveling, and a number of things that can be done to make the trip easier. Let me go through them here:

- Use caution when booking through third party sites: Sites like Hotels.com, Kayak, and others are great for finding deals. The problem is your agreement is with them, not with who you have booked with. A lot of times you can't cancel your reservation. I've had to pay for flights and hotel reservations that I didn't use when my travel plans had to change. Also, I've had troubles when I had to make changes in my trip, like stay longer. For example, in the hotel I was in, I had to make a separate reservation for the additional days. If your trip is subject to change, beware! I book now through my credit card company, since they allow cancellations and offer rebates to my card.
- You can travel really cheap through the discount airlines like Spirit and Frontier: They are about as enjoyable as riding a city bus. Well, not quite as enjoyable. I've got really short legs, if they were any shorter they wouldn't reach the ground. My legs feel cramped in the seats in those airlines. The seats are also really narrow, and it gets irritating how they nickel and dime you for everything. I spend the extra money to fly the non-discount carriers, I use Delta and am in the frequent flyer program. The price difference is tempting though - just expect to pay for it in misery.
- The early and late flights are the cheapest: This is kind of agonizing though. Saving \$100 to hang out at an airport for hours in the evening waiting for your flight, and getting home at 1:00 AM may not be worth it. Also, the red eye flights at 7:00 AM can induce a day of pain when you've had to get up at 3:00 AM to make your flight. I'm thinking it's better to

spend the money.

- Don't stay at the super discount motel chains: In urban areas they are havens for prostitutes and drug dealers. I prefer Hampton Inns, the price isn't extreme, and they are well suited for business.
- For rental cars, cheap means aggravating: I made the mistake of renting a car off site from the airport. The time wasted ate up what discount I got. I've gotten rental cars from the really cheap providers at the airport, and sometimes it's OK, sometimes it's not. I had one memorable time where they had one customer service rep and I waited (no kidding) 2 hours in line. They gave me an electric car (that I didn't ask for), and after I pulled out of the airport I discovered it wasn't charged. I'll cover that fiasco next. Generally, the mid-priced places like National or Enterprise are reasonable.
- Don't rent an electric car: Electric cars are nice. Finding a charging station in an unfamiliar city is not. Google maps helps a bit, but it leads you to stations that don't exist anymore and to private stations, which does you no good. Once you get to a charging station, you may have to wait in line, and then it takes about 40 minutes to charge the car.
- Don't sucker for the added insurance for a rental car: Your credit card usually provides that (debit cards don't in most cases). Also, when they ask you if you want to upgrade your car, say no. Usually that means that there is no car that is available for you at the size you reserved, and if you say no, you will get the upgrade at no extra cost.
- Finding a restaurant to eat at is frustrating: I've tended to use Uber Eats, since it saves me driving around an unfamiliar area looking for a place to eat. Also, if I'm alone I'd rather eat in my hotel room.
- Don't overpack: If you forget something, you can always get it where you are going. Just about every place has a Wal-Mart. Dragging around a lot of luggage is very painful. Also, if you pack light, you don't have to check your bag, which saves time and aggravation.

I hope these tips help out. I wish you the best in your travels!

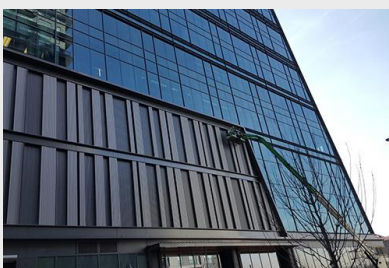


Structural Engineers

Runkle Consulting was founded in 2000 by George W. Runkle III, PE, SE. We provide structural design for structures fabricated from shipping containers, the structural design for building cladding, and forensic engineering services.

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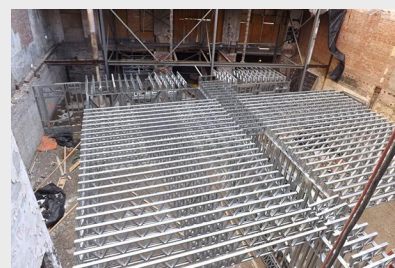
What We Do



Building Cladding



Shipping Container



Cold Formed Steel

Buildings

We have 15 years of experience in the structural engineering of exterior building panels, store fronts, and curtain walls for commercial and government buildings.

We provide design services for the design of buildings fabricated from repurposed shipping containers. Our services include the complete design package, architectural, structural, and MEP. Depending on the area, we may be able to help you find a fabricator to provide the containers.

Design

We have extensive experience in cold formed steel design. We can provide structural design services and shop drawings for your project.

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