

Keep it simple

Much of what we promote in the institute and our companies is glamorous. Stunning architectural projects, massive cantilevers, graceful curved bridges, and super long spans showcase the capabilities of our industry. Precast concrete can build elegant projects better than any other system, and they are easy to promote to the world. There is another side of our industry that doesn't get as much attention and plays a huge role in our success. Simple gray concrete in the form of slabs, panels, and hollow-core are the building blocks of our projects and our businesses.

Slabs and hollow-core are the most basic forms of prestressed concrete. The beauty in these systems comes from the simplicity of the design. A combination of only strand in tension and concrete in compression is as pure as prestressed concrete can get. From this purity comes great economy and capability.

A stack of partial-depth bridge deck panels may not seem as impressive as a spandrel with brick, two colors, a formliner, and a bullnose, but the beauty is there. Deck panels make bridge construction fast, easy, safe, and durable. After using panels to build a bridge, all other methods feel primitive. The many square miles of panels used in Texas alone every year are a strong testimonial to the economics, durability, and superiority of this simple system. Many states have been using panels for decades. If you haven't had a chance to incorporate panels into a project, please do so. You may never go back.

Hollow-core is another system that may not be as glamorous as others, but it can also deliver elegance. The slender profile makes for low floor-to-floor heights. The sound transmission qualities make for a pleasant structure to be in. The fire resistance of concrete keeps occupants safe. The rot and mold resistance inherent in our products keeps us healthy, while the durability ensures that the structure will be around for many generations. In addition, our friends in the contracting community appreciate that the strand will not zing out the end if it gets hit with a core.

A wise mentor taught me a long time ago a simple truth about our business: If it's gray, it pays. That really sunk in with me and helps me to appreciate the beauty in our simplest products.

As it takes a wide variety of people to make a vibrant society it also takes a wide variety of products to create a vibrant built environment. It is a privilege to work with precast concrete, the one material that can solely build the diverse, elegant, sustainable, and robust structures we all need to thrive.

Cheers, and enjoy the simple things! 🍷



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