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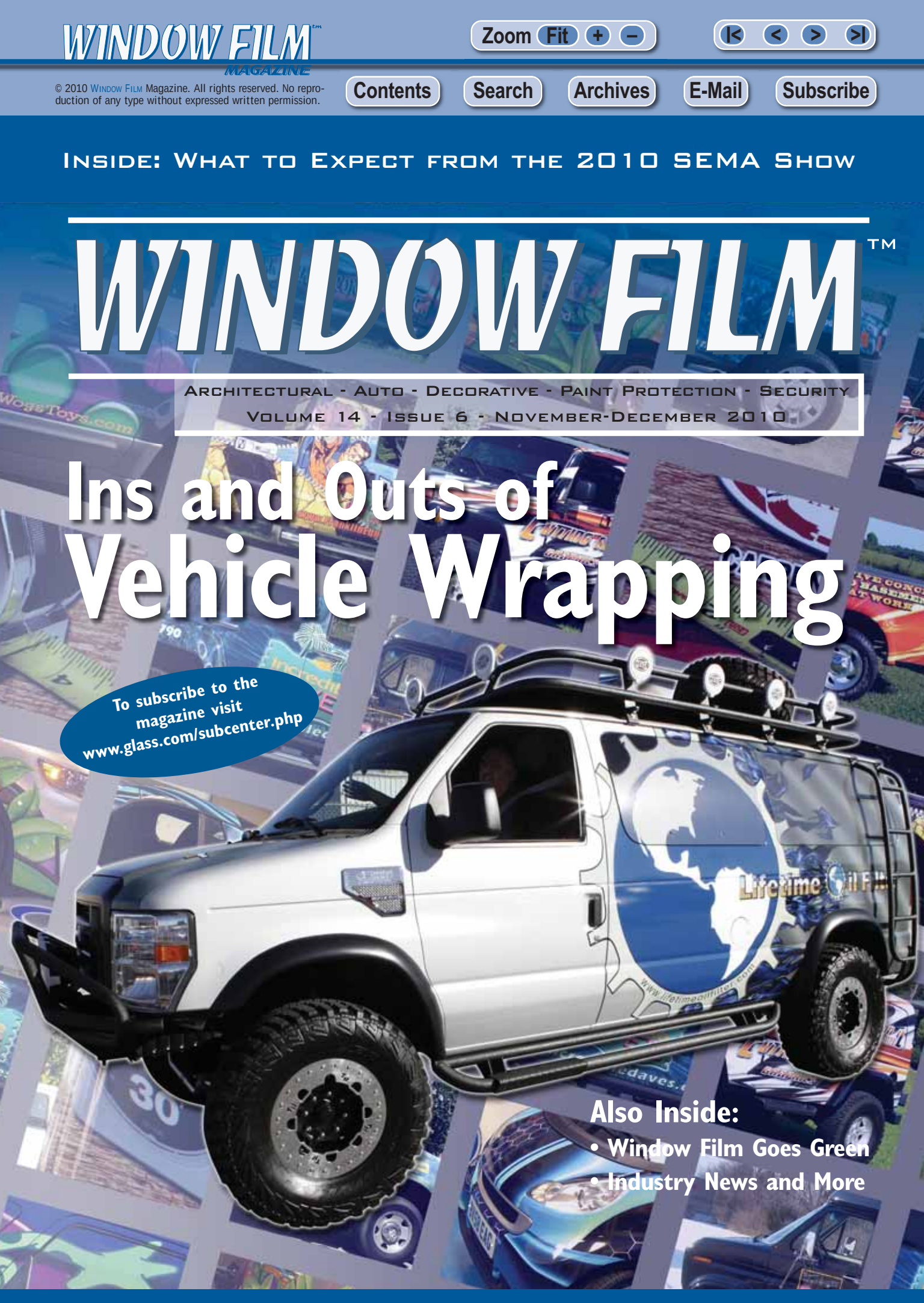
Inside: What to Expect from the 2010 SEMA Show

WINDOW FILM™

Architectural - Auto - Decorative - Paint Protection - Security
Volume 14 - Issue 6 - November-December 2010

Ins and Outs of Vehicle Wrapping



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- Window Film Goes Green
- Industry News and More

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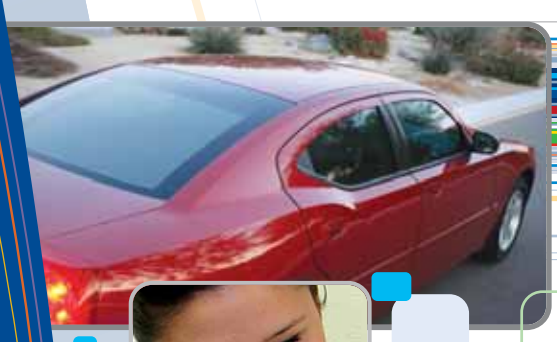

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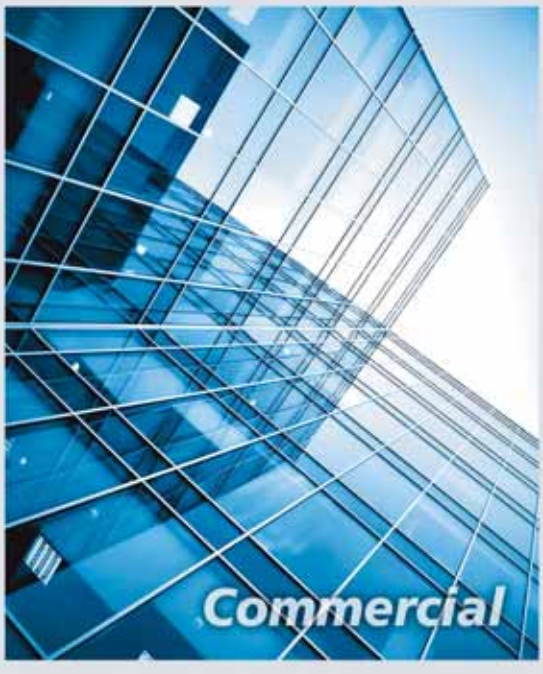

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Vehicle wrapping could be an ideal add-on for window film installers. Turn to page 20 to learn more.

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A Publication for the Entire Film Industry

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ASK THE EXPERT

BY DONNA WELLS

Carving a Niche

Hello and welcome back to "Ask the Expert." I hope you have been enjoying my articles as much as I have enjoyed writing them. I appreciate those of you who have taken the time to send in questions and I hope my perspective on business and the window film industry has enlightened you.

Today's question is from someone who is relatively new to the industry:

"How do you find your niche in the window film industry?"

Excellent question. Our industry has many niches to choose from and deciding which path to follow can be confusing and cumbersome. Though I cannot decide for you which path is the correct one, let me help steer you through some of the curves within our industry.

Know Your Business

First you have to decide whether you want to work with automotive professionals or with homeowners, contractors and architects. The answer to this question is where your niche begins.

Most people enter through the automotive venue. Let's face it, for a few hundred dollars you can own your very own automotive window film company. Assuming automotive is the way you choose to go, now you have to decide how you can make a living as an automotive window film company. Understanding your market is the key factor in any niche. You will want to join organizations that highlight small businesses and the automotive industry in particular. Your local Better Business Bureau, Tops in Professional Sales Leads Groups, the International Window Film Association and the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) are excellent choices. As you become involved with groups such as these you will be able to meet other individuals who share your same interests, allowing you to exchange business philosophies, marketing strategies and gain insight into your niche.

"Keep in mind that you don't want to niche yourself into a pigeon hole. You want to have some flexibility in order to accommodate what the public market is looking for during various times of the year."

Other Options

Let's say you want to go the other way and enter the window film industry through the residential/commercial (i.e., flat glass) niche of the market. This will require a little more experience, education and finesse. For example, in some states this niche of the market requires you to obtain a contractor's license, bonding and commercial insurance. Once all of the legal paperwork is in place, you need to decide which niche of the flat glass market you would like to specialize in. Whether it is residential or commercial, these markets do have some overlap. You will again need to get involved with various groups of individuals who share your same interests, such as the American Institute of Architects, the American Society of Interior Design, as well as local construction groups. All of these groups have regional and national conventions as well as local monthly functions.

Don't Niche Yourself

Keep in mind that you don't want to niche yourself into a pigeon hole. You want to have some flexibility in order to accommodate what the public market is looking for during various times of the year. No matter how much marketing you are doing, if your niche is too narrow your phone may not ring and your door may not swing open.

One last note regarding SEMA. I have been attending the SEMA Show for more than 20 years and have not been involved in automotive window film sales for years. The reason I go (and recommend you go as well), is it gives me the opportunity to connect with others from a multitude of industries, which allows me to grow my business. Most window film manufactures attend SEMA and attending will give you a chance to speak to middle and upper management who you might not otherwise get a chance to meet. (*Turn to page 24 for a preview of just some of what you can expect to find at this year's SEMA show.*) **WF**

Got a Question for Donna?

Please e-mail it to us at erogers@glass.com. Individual names and company names will be withheld upon request.

Donna Wells has worked in the window film industry since the 1980s and is currently sole proprietor of Image Imagination in Huntington Beach, Calif. Ms. Wells' opinions are solely her own and not necessarily those of this magazine.

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OPEN 24/7

BY MANNY HONDROULIS

Managing Prospects with Databases

So far we have discussed how PowerPoint and Excel can have an impact on our window film businesses. Now we turn our attention to Access, another component of the Microsoft Office Suite. Access is database software. An overly simplified explanation of a database is that it stores information that a user inputs where it can be retrieved at will in various ways. Imagine storing all of your prospects and customers into a database and being able to analyze that data to learn how and why your prospects became customers. With that information you can determine which marketing strategies worked, what percentage of your leads were commercial versus residential and, for example, what percentage of prospects inquired about window film for energy savings versus security benefits. In addition, you can also modify your marketing strategy accordingly.

Database Components

Think of a spreadsheet and how it is made of rows and columns (*see related article about Microsoft Excel on page 10 in the September-October issue*). Well, the same can be true for a database. Each row of a database is a record and each column of a database represents different aspects of a record.

Let's walk through the components of a simplified database that tracks your prospects.

Imagine that a prospect is a record. Each row of data (think in terms of the spreadsheet) represents a prospect and each column represents different aspects of that prospect. The type of information you would store in this database would be detailed contact information (name, address, company, title, telephone number, e-mail), demographic (gender, marital status), reasons for buying (safety, sun control, glare, fading, lower utility bills) and so on and so forth.

Filling in the Details

So, how do you enter the data described above in a database? You can simply input the data in the rows and columns of the database or you can use a form to do it. A form is created in Access and allows you to input data into the database in a user-friendly way. In the non-digital world, a form is something that you hand out to collect information or fill out to give information. It may consist of fill in the blanks, check boxes, multiple choice questions and so on. Imagine a form of a database as the same thing. You're presented with a form on your screen and the information you input into the form is then uploaded into the database. In this case, each prospect would require a different form. Your form might ask for the following information:

- Prospect's name;
- Prospect's address;
- Prospect's contact information (telephone, e-mail, fax, etc);
- How did the prospect learn about you? (Yellow Pages, post card, Internet search, trade show, etc.);
- Why did the prospect contact you? (smash-and-grab, windstorm, furniture fade, glare, reduce utility bills, control winter heat loss, etc.);
- Application type (residential, commercial, government, automotive);
- Glass type (single pane, double pane, clear, tinted, annealed, laminated, tempered, etc.); and
- Film type.

Retrieving Data

Now that all of the information is in the database, how do you retrieve it? You retrieve the information by creating queries. A query enables you to tell Access what data you want to retrieve and why. For example, let's say there is a string of burglaries in some nearby housing developments. You may want to market to your prospects who have previously expressed an interest in window film for residential applications. Rather than scrolling through the contents of your entire database, you simply set up a query that retrieves a list of prospects that have been tagged as residential customers interested in window film for smash-and-grab crimes. At that point you can send a mailer or make some friendly calls to those prospects advertising the safety and security benefits of your window film against unwanted entry.

Hopefully you can see how having detailed information that can be retrieved in numerous ways can help you market your business. The hardest part about using a database is creating it. The most mundane part is entering the data. But once you get over that, the rest is smooth sailing to a more effective marketing strategy. WF

Manny Hondroulis is marketing manager for Energy Performance Distribution in Baltimore. Mr. Hondroulis' opinions are solely his own and not necessarily those of this magazine.

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NEWSWORTHY

THE LATEST INDUSTRY NEWS

President Signs Small Business Jobs and Credit Act into Law

President Obama signed the Small Business Jobs and Credit Act into law in late September. The bill is designed to help small business owners access private capital to finance expansions and hire new workers, and would reward small business investors—in a long-term attempt to help small businesses compete with large corporations.

Industry groups, such as the International Window Film Association, feel that the law could be beneficial for small companies, but have concerns.

"While this should provide funds to the long list of companies waiting for loans (two to three year backlog due to lack of funds) thru the Small Business Administration, it remains to be seen just how much credit, and under what terms, will be made available to very small companies with ten or fewer employees. Just as the TARP package and AARP stimulus did not result in increased lending to small businesses and individuals except for default mortgage reworks, this may or may not have any impact on funding availability to small businesses like window film dealers and distributors. It may take as long as four to six months before there is any clarity to these questions."

The Small Business Lending Fund Act will establish a $30 billion fund to boost lending to small businesses looking to expand their operations by providing additional capital to community banks, according to information from Rep. Barney Frank (D – Mass.).

CONSUMER NEWS

Fla. Attorney General Issues Window Film Warning

The Florida Attorney General, Bill McCollum, has issued a warning to Florida residents—about

COMPANY NEWS

Riverside Sells Commonwealth; CLC/SunTek Partners with Two New Owners

The Riverside Co. in Cleveland, which purchased SunTek Holding Co. (Commonwealth Laminating and Coating Inc. [CLC]) in 2006, has sold its interest in the company. Jennifer Phillips Shorr, CLC vice president of sales and marketing, told Window Film magazine that the company has now partnered with two new investors, Transportation Resource Partners, which is associated with the Penske Automotive Group, and Fenway Partners.

"These two firms will replace Riverside and put CLC in a financial position to double in size over the next three to five years," says Shorr. "CLC/SunTek's current management team, including Steve Phillips, our president/chief executive officer, will all remain in place. This is a very exciting time for all employees and we will continue to focus on providing the trade with innovative and competitive products, as well as exceptional customer service."

"Riverside played a crucial role in a remarkable expansion at CLC that allowed us to take market share and prepare for the future in the midst of one of the worst economic downturns in modern history," says Steve Phillips. "Riverside's capital, support and appetite for growth allowed us to expand our production capacity while increasing our number of distribution centers and broadening our manufacturing capabilities. Riverside has been an exceptional partner."

Shorr adds, "The Riverside Company has been the principle investor in CLC/SunTek for the past four and half years. They have done a terrific job supporting our strong growth and expansion in both North America and other parts of the world."

Stephen Dyke, Riverside partner, adds, "CLC was a great company when we invested in it in 2006, and we're leaving it in an even better position today. Our efforts to increase revenues by investing in growth at CLC have paid off. Today, CLC offers more products to more markets while still retaining its hard-earned reputation for exceptional quality and value. The company is very well positioned to continue its strong growth trajectory for years to come."

The announcement notes that under Riverside's stewardship, CLC made capital investments that significantly boosted the company's production capacity and invested in a new dyed film line that improved product quality and strengthened its competitive position. The company expanded its international presence during Riverside's ownership period and expanded its product line, including flat glass applications in residential and commercial buildings.

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window film protection. In a release from his office, McCollum stated that consumers need to be aware that window film has not been approved by the Florida Building Code for hurricane protection of a residential structure.

The Attorney General's office claims Florida window film companies were reportedly saying that homeowners could receive an insurance discount by installing window film. Since window film has not met the regulations for approval, insurance companies may not offer such discounts.

New Questions Are Raised by Social Media and Websites

The window film industry has experienced new cases of misinformation on the World Wide Web in the recent months.

In July, Window Film magazine published a story about dubious "information" published on the Internet that was purportedly written by a "home professional."

The page says, "Thinking about window film as a way to buff up your windows' efficiency? If your windows are already low emissivity (low-E), then don't waste your time, window film won't make much of a difference … And remember this: films are hard to remove, and because they can heat up the glass they may damage your dual-pane windows."

However, the website doesn't note that this is an "Ask the Pro" section. To the consumer's eye it just looks like factual information.

The information is sourced as "courtesy of the U.S. Green Building Council." After contacting the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) we received a statement about the origin of the article.

"The information came from USGBC's GreenHomeGuide.com's 'Ask a Pro' section. The Ask a Pro section is really just a blog where home professionals post answers to questions that come in. The responses are not the opinion of USGBC and do not reflect any position of USGBC. As far as USGBC's position on window film, we don't have an official one but I can tell you that window film is a valid strategy to achieve various LEED credits and points," says the statement.

In addition to this, a question on the Internet on Angie's List was brought to Window Film magazine's attention. The question, asked by independent consultant Roger Linville (who is listed on Linked In as being employed by glass manufacturer PPG until 2009 and is now an independent consultant) asked, "Our front windows face southwest. We have no shade trees in the front yard, so we are expecting the front rooms to get hot this summer. We also have condensation between the panes. We plan to replace the glass, but I am getting conflicting advice. Should I get low-E glass and rely on it to block the infrared heat waves, or get clear glass and have an infrared-reflective film applied? Which will give me the best results?"

The answer to Linville's questions came from Todd Overpeck at Glass Doctor who recommended low-E glass and not film. Within the response to the question it states, "Overpeck says adding tinted film to a clear glass window is a lower-cost alternative, because it blocks the sun, but does not stop the heat. Since the film doesn't stop the heat from escaping, you don't get the energy savings and your home is colder in winter," he says. "Another advantage to low-E glass is that it's clearer than the reflective film."

It was surprising that after working for PPG for over 28 years as the marketing communications manager Linville didn't know the answer. WF

PEOPLE NEWS

Solutia Names New President and General Manager of Performance Films Division

Solutia Inc. has named **Mike Donnelly** as president and general manager of its Performance Films division. Donnelly most recently served as the president and general manager of Solutia's Technical Specialties division and replaces Ray Kollar who had only been in this role with Solutia since May 2009. While company officials confirmed that Kollar is no longer with the company, they declined to provide further details surrounding the personnel change.

Mike Donnelly

Donnelly joined Solutia as part of the Flexsys leadership team in connection with Solutia's 2007 acquisition of Flexsys, where he had been an integral part of the business' growth and performance since its inception. He brings nearly 40 years of manufacturing, business and leadership expertise to Performance Films and will continue to be based at Solutia's global headquarters in St. Louis.

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NOTEWORTHY

NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

DigiGlass Window Film Obtains Class "O" Fire Rating

British Isles-based DigiGlass' Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) printed window film has earned a class "O" fire rating. The company says such a rating recognizes the product as one that can be legally installed onto all public surfaces and is the first "O" rating in the United Kingdom.

The process to obtain the rating began when DigiGlass was asked about installing printed window film on passenger trains. The customer wanted there to be certification that would ensure that the installation would comply with all safety regulations.

In order to do so the company set out to reach the class "O" rating, which would verify to the public that the safety, security and branding potential of these printed window films would be useful in situations where fire safety is important to the public and the customer, such as the passenger trains.

www.digiglass.com

HanitaTek Updates i-Phone Application

Updates have been released to HanitaTek Window Films' InfoZone mobile app for the iPhone and iPod Touch. The updates are designed to make it possible for installers to choose metric units of measurement and designate which roll widths the film usage estimator will consider.

The company says the updates to the app were a result of recommendations and requests from installers who have downloaded and use the app.

www.hanitatek.com WF

Roland's Newest Print Job

Roland DGA Corp., based in Irvine, Calif., has released its latest inkjet printer/cutter. The 54-inch VersaUV LEC-540 UV-LED wide-format machine is the third model in the company's VersaUV series. The company says it is faster than previous models and can print configurations of CMYK, white and clear; CMYK, white and white; and CMYK, clear and clear. The machine has the capability to contour cut almost any substrate up to 1 mm thick and can be used to create large-format window graphics as well as many other products.

This new printer/cutter also features larger lamps than those used in previous Roland models. These lamps can automatically reposition, allowing for high image quality and high-speed performance, according to the company.

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Wrap it Up!

Professionals Share Advice on Vehicle Wraps

by Katie Hodge

Part One of a Two-Part Series

The economy has hit small businesses hard and entrepreneurs are looking for additional ways to boost their business. Adding a new service to what a business already offers can help increase revenue and bring in new customers. Tint shop owners must be careful and research add-ons before making any decision to pick up product lines. Car wrapping is one add-on option that has been increasing in popularity among those in the window film industry.

Dave Dorsey, the owner of Aurora Graphics in Wichita, Kan., has worked with wraps since 1980 and has learned a lot about how to be successful. His company produces and publishes graphics for car wraps and Dorsey has seen how the industry has reacted in the last 30 years to the needs and desires of the public.

"[Vehicle wrapping's] got a lot of growth potential ahead of it. People have always liked to personalize their vehicles—it doesn't matter if it's window tint or custom wheels and tires. People have always done it and they will again," says Dorsey.

Weighing Options

The first step to considering the addition of a new service is to decide if it will provide favorable margins for a company. The answer varies depending on how much a company can invest in wrapping. Two of the biggest factors in determining a company's success will be accessibility to art/design and possession of equipment.

While the installation of the wrap is very important to the finished look, the artwork of the design is key to giving the vehicle a new look or marketing that business to other drivers. Dorsey, whose company is responsible for thousands of designs, stresses the importance of artwork in the car wrapping process.

"When people are out there buying partials or full wraps, it doesn't matter if it's commercial or personal, what they are really buying is the look because it looks cool," stresses Dorsey. "In other words, what they are buying is the artwork. The vinyl is a means to transfer that artwork to their vehicle. Obviously leading with the very best art that you can is going to be a big benefit. Other people will see the car or truck and someone is going to ask him where he got it done. If you are doing it right it will just snowball from there."

Artwork becomes the face of a vehicle wrap company and the design can also help market companies who are looking for new ways to advertise their services.

Troy Downey, president of APE Wraps in Coronado, Calif., adds, "In the beginning I recommend that

"...I tell our students all the time that we're not splitting an atom here. It's not like we are doing something really in-depth. At the end of the day it is a sticker on a car."

—Matt Richart, co-owner, Digital EFX

Digital EFX, in Louisville, Ky., designed, printed and installed this wrap with artwork files provided by Aurora Graphics.

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This Ford E350 van was wrapped by Digital EFX using a design from Todd McFarlane Productions that was printed on a Roland Soljet Pro III printer.

The partial wrap was designed and installed by Xtreme Grafx in Albany, Ore., and traveled to the SEMA show for display. It was printed on Oracal reflective film.

y o u work with companies that already have prefabbed art so that you are not re-inventing the wheel and spending all that time when you might not get the client."

To purchase professionally designed artwork a company would be looking at an investment in the area of $250 for a partial wrap and around $450 for a full wrap, according to Matt Richart, co-owner of Digital EFX in Louisville, Ky. The pricing varies depending on location and company.

Over time, as it becomes more affordable, many companies choose to bring as much of their business in-house as they can. However, there is value in keeping your design and installation separate. For some that means purchasing designs from professionals and for others that means having someone on staff who only designs.

"The best thing I could recommend is to keep an installer and a designer separate. You can have one guy for installs who is very knowledgeable on installs and have one very good design guy," says Greg Berlatsky, owner of Cutting Edge Graphics in Marion, Ill.

Once a plan is established to provide excellent designs, companies need to begin focusing on how they are going to manufacture their product. This is where printers/cutters become vitally important to making a profit.

"If someone really wanted to be successful in vehicle wrapping they would definitely need to keep everything under one roof and really invest into the equipment and the printers and the facility," Richart states. "With that said sometimes you can't afford all that equipment at first. Sometimes you don't know enough about the industry to invest in that equipment. We've had times when we have trained people at our facility and we will offer our design and print services at a wholesale rate. There are other companies that will do this as well. A company can say, 'I like vehicle wrapping and I just got trained, but let me go out and try and sell some of this for a year. I'll let someone help me design and let someone help me print so I can generate enough clientele and business and I can hone in on my skills to the point where I can afford a printer, software and computers to do this.'"

Downey agrees.

"There is no reason why you can't get someone to convert for you initially so you can get your feet wet," says Downey.

For a new vehicle wrap operation the cost of manufacturing wraps depends on location and amount of business, just as the cost of artwork will vary. According to Richart, the average wrap involves 250-300 square feet of material. A company purchasing printed material would find prices around $8-12 per square foot and the installation cost would fall between $2.50-5 per square foot. Investing in equipment, which would include a printer, laminator,

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Wrap it Up!

continued from page 21

With artwork provided by Aurora Graphics, Tony Prior of the Roland Academy in the United Kingdom installed film on this smart car.

computers, and software, could cost a company anywhere between $55-75,000. However, when printing wraps in house the cost of material drops to $2-2.25 per square foot, significantly less than the $8-12 to purchase printed material.

Waiting too long to purchase equipment could be dangerous for companies. In order to turn a large enough profit they will eventually have to invest in software, computers, and a printer and Richart recommends setting a deadline.

"At the end of the day, they are going to need to set some goals about purchasing a printer by a certain time," encourages Richart.

"You've got to be able to manufacture your own product to make any money," Dorsey agrees. "If you screw something up you can reprint just that little piece without having to replace the whole side or buy a whole other kit from someone else."

Finding Your Niche

Finding and promoting the ways that a company stands out can bring in new business and make the company memorable. Having multiple services and skill sets is one way for a company to find its niche.

Richart acknowledges that the skills a tinter has are very similar to the characteristics needed in a good vehicle wrapper.

"If I had to hire someone, and I had a guy who had been in the sign industry, not the wrap business, but the sign industry for three or four years and I had a person out of design school and I had a window tinter who had been tinting for seven or eight years, I would hire that window tinter nine times out of ten," says Richart. "We have found that window tinters have the patience for it. Secondly, they understand the detail of vehicle wrapping because window tinting is not just slapping window film on. The third thing would be that they are all about quality. They are spending just as much time getting these windows detailed, cleaned and scraped before they even apply a piece of film. Most people don't have that knack or that niche and window tinters do because they deal with it on a day-to-day basis."

Downey agrees that there is cross-over potential.

"[Tinters] already have an understanding of materials and the ins and outs of the installation aspect," says Downey. "Some of the experience that they have with window films will carry over to the wrapping of a vehicle. The only difference is that we are working with a lot of concave and compound surfaces that they don't necessarily see everyday or have ever had to lay material on, like a fender or a bumper. Those are the [challenging aspects to vehicle wrapping] that give you that uneasy feeling and that cold sweat in the middle of the night."

Having the advantage of prior experience with film, window tinters will need to grow their skills in order to take on the vehicle wrapping industry. Not only is it possible and feasible to bring vehicle wraps in as an added value, there are also lots of tools to help new wrappers develop into seasoned and skilled professionals.

Information Mecca

Tinters who are ready to learn to wrap have many learning opportunities available to them. Training is available in different formats, including trade show educational opportunities.

"Let's assume a guy doesn't know anything about this business. He's a window tint guy and he wants to do it. My suggestion would be to go to a trade show," says Dorsey. "Here is what a guy will be exposed to at a show. Every printer manufacturer is going to be there. All of the ink companies, including the aftermarket ink companies, will be there. All of the vinyl companies will be there. There will be demonstrations going on all over the place."

At these shows tinters would have the opportunity to have conversations and ask questions, all in one building. The chance to talk with experts and long-time members of the wrap industry can prove valuable for a newcomer.

More in-depth trainings are also available to those who are new to vehicle wrapping. For example, various companies across the country offer training, led by their best vehicle wrappers, over a period of days. One such training program is the brain-child of Richart and, company co-owner, Dallas Fowler. At Digital EFX they say they have successfully trained hundreds of wrappers on technique and skill.

"We would train anybody in the United States no matter what," says Richart. "If we had a window

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tinter in Sacramento, Calif., who wanted to pay to learn how to get into the wrap business we would be more than happy to train that person."

Berlatsky says he walked away from his training with tons of information.

"I don't know that I would have tried [wrapping] without training," says Berlatsky. "In three days I learned what it would take me a year to learn otherwise. I got out a lot of the mistakes that I would have made."

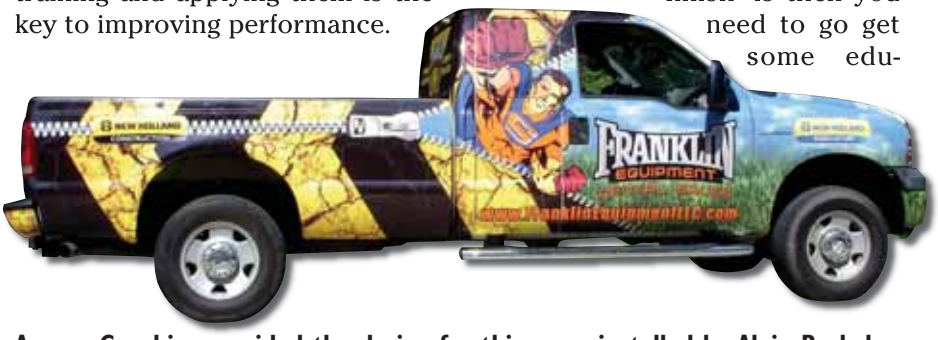
While Berlatsky participated in a comprehensive, three-day training there are other options available. The length of training is really up to the students and how much time they feel they need and can afford.

"People ask all the time how long it will take for them to get trained. Whether you are building a car, building a house or applying window film it's not how long it takes, but how many you do," Richart says. "There is a decent scale of a learning curve, but I tell our students all the time that we're not splitting an atom here. It's not like we are doing something really in-depth. At the end of the day it is a sticker on a car."

In addition, many manufacturers also provide training using their products or equipment. Arthur Meeker, managing member of Xtreme Grafx in Albany, Ore., has attended trainings from manufacturers and says he took a lot of information home.

"I would recommend going to a training. Everybody has them now. If your local warehouse or wherever you buy your vinyl offers a one-day class you should definitely take it. That will teach you the basic fundamentals of how to [wrap] and then you will be able to go back to your shop to practice the best way to do it."

Wrappers at these workshops can pick up tricks and different techniques to working with vehicle wraps. Taking the skills learned in training and applying them is the key to improving performance.



Aurora Graphics provided the design for this wrap installed by Alvin Barkeloo of Wizard Decal in Sunbury, Ohio.

Practice Perfects

Armed with an introduction to wrapping and perhaps an advanced class or two, the real challenge for new wrappers begins in the shop. Taking the knowledge gained at trainings and applying it is a key component to a new wrapper's skills development.

"Education is going to be everything. It will initially give you enough confidence to go practice," says Downey. "Whether that's practicing on the old refrigerator in the garage or wrapping the trash can or the file cabinet at the shop, all of those things help because you don't have someone watching over you and you can make mistake after mistake until you start to feel some level of, 'oh, I don't want to repeat that problem again.'"

Wrapping, like tinting, is a trade that requires constant learning and correction even after years of installing. Berlatsky comments, "I don't think the learning curve ever really goes away. I think every time you touch the materials you learn something."

In addition to constant practice, wrappers have to have a keen understanding of what a finished project will look like.

"The key is to have in your DNA some level and some exposure to the seeking of perfection," says Downey. "If you don't know what 'finish' is then you need to go get some education somewhere at what 'finish' looks like. There are so many people that don't know what 'finish' is. They have never been to completion."

All Wrapped Up

With a combination of education, tools and careful planning the vehicle wrap industry can prove profitable for a window tinter. There is unquestionable value in learning the trade.

Many companies have found wrapping their company vehicles to be an effective tool in marketing and selling a business.

"Hands down, there is no other means of advertising that will outdo a vehicle wrap. You pay for it one time and it will work for you 24/7," adds Meeker.

By incorporating vehicle wraps into their businesses, window tinters also open up the opportunity to expand their customer base for window tinting as well. The cross-over opportunity is vast and the pay-off could be huge, if done right. WF

Katie Hodge is an assistant editor for Window Film magazine.

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SEMA Stays Strong

Exhibitors and Attendees Continue to Flock to the Automotive Specialty Products Event

by Katie Hodge

Despite a struggling economy, exhibitors and attendees won't give up the chance to see it all at the Specialty Equipment Market Association's (SEMA) annual trade show. Companies from all over the world will gather in Las Vegas to display the best they have to offer. SEMA, which takes place November 2-5 in Las Vegas, has divided the more 1,500 exhibitors into 12 sections to make the show more visitor-friendly.

SEMA also ensures that there are plenty of educational opportunities available to those in attendance. On the schedule this year are seminars on topics ranging from "New Car Buyers' Aftermarket Intentions" to "Borrowing Money In Today's Credit Jungle" to "Stand Out From the Crowd: Defining Your Company's Value Proposition." And for those in attendance who learn better hands-on, SEMA also has an enormous volume of demonstrations taking place on the show floor.

Entertainment and special guests will grace the stages and entertain attendees during the show. James Gregory, once described as "America's Funniest Man," will keep the crowd laughing at the SEMA Industry Awards Banquet. Other special guests include legendary off-road racer Rod Hall, Stacey David from SPEED's show "Gearz," MTV host Funkmaster Flex, the "Queen of Cars" Genevieve Chappell and many more.

Even with all the events going on, the highlight of the show continues to be the exhibitors. Over the next two pages check out what some of the window film companies plan to showcase during the week.

Film Debut

Booth #12225- Sun-Gard

Solamatrix, based in St. Petersburg, Fla., will feature new additions to its Sun-Gard window film including the new charcoal automotive window film series. This 1.5 premium-grade film is available in high-performance or non-reflective films.

Sun-Gard will also show its new paint protection product, DefenZall paint protection film, which has a seven-year manufacturer's warranty. Both products will be available for hands-on demonstrations.

www.solamatrix.com

Enjoy the View

Booth #12317- WINTECH

Buena Park, Calif.- based WINTECH will showcase a few of its film products including NANO technology-based, environmentally friendly, energy-saving films. These films are designed to protect the consumer from the sun's harmful UV rays and feature spectrally selective coatings.

In addition, WINTECH will also feature its Lovely View Design art films. The company says this line, also referred to as LOVIEW, allows consumers to combine individuality with function.

www.wintechfilm.com

continued on page 26

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SEMA Stays Strong

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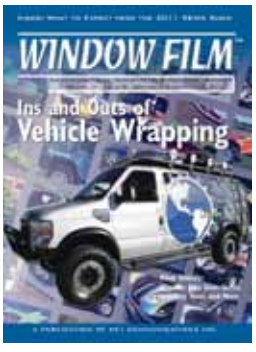
Beyond the Pages

Booth #12115- Window Film Magazine



Window Film magazine will be on-site with all of the latest news and industry updates directly from the show floor. Stop by and introduce yourself to the staff, pick up a copy of the magazine and keep an eye out for the FILM'd crew as they roam the show floor to shoot video for an upcoming episode.

www.windowfilmmag.com

Happy Anniversary

Booth #12325- American Standard Window Film

American Standard Window Film (ASWF), a division of Erickson International and based in Las Vegas, will celebrate its one-year anniversary at the SEMA show this year. ASWF will be showcasing its five lines of automotive films. The lines also feature point of purchase marketing materials and retail displays.

www.aswf.com

Taking Care

Booth #11811- Solutia

Solutia will roll into Las Vegas with plenty to show. The St. Louis-based company will display its various film lines including LLumar, Hüper Optik, FormulaOne High Performance Auto Tint and V-Kool. In addition to the film lines, paint protection film and high-performance film installation demonstrations, Solutia will also feature its new line of car care kits for consumers. The Window Film Care Kit and a Paint Protection Care Kit will both be available and can provide businesses an add-on option for customers, according to the company.

www.llumar.com

Super Solar

Booth #11925- SunTek/Commonwealth Laminating & Coating

This year at SEMA SunTek/Commonwealth Laminating & Coating will offer a close-up look at its newest automotive window film. The company will showcase its CarbonXPTM film, which is available in seven different VLTs (5, 18, 35, 45, 55, 70 and 80 percent) and has a lifetime warranty, which includes peeling, cracking, adhesive failure, and fading. The company says the film has the same characteristics as its Carbon line, but has 10-15 percent better solar performance.

www.suntekfilms.com

Interactive Activity

Booth #11959- Nexfil USA

Nexfil USA will provide booth visitors with a first-hand look at its line of films. The company will have demo cars on site for attendees to see actual installation of its films. Nexfil USA will also make its Nano IR films interactive by allowing attendees to perform heat-rejection testing, which will allow them to see the results first hand.

www.nexfilusa.com WF

Visit www.semashow.com for more information including hotel reservations, show registration and for a complete list of exhibitors.

Katie Hodge is an assistant editor for Window Film magazine.

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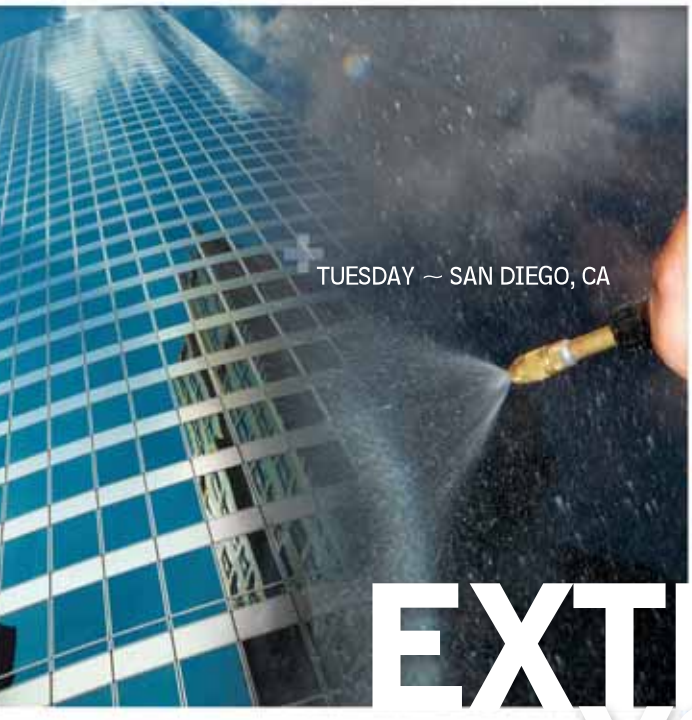

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One Little Word

The Greening of the Window Film Industry; Garnering Environmental Responsibility

by Ellen Rogers

In just a few short years a simple, little word evolved into one of the most significant adjectives of our time—and took on a completely new meaning. Green—the color of the Emerald City, spring grass and Kermit the Frog—is no longer just a color in a box of Crayola Crayons. It's now used to describe energy-efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly practices of everything from people and products to businesses and homes.

And just as quickly, the window film industry has found itself right in the midst of the green building movement. While the comfort features that window film can provide have been well-known for some time, lately those in the industry have been stepping outside those lines to push a number of other lesser known features and benefits that make window film green.

Performance First

For many, the first green benefit of window film that comes to mind is its energy efficiency.

"Window film can usually provide 5 to 15 percent energy savings for a building and typical payback is three years or fewer," says Steve DeBusk, global energy solutions manager with Solutia's Performance Films segment.

> **"As an industry, we all need to be participants in this and actively involved and not just waiting for change to happen."**
> **—Jim Black, HanitaTek**

"The moment it is installed window film saves energy," agrees Kathryn Giblin, vice president global marketing for Bekaert Specialty Films LLC. "From a green building standpoint window film provides a significant reduction in energy demand, which provides substantial energy savings in the long term."

Jim Black, general manager of HanitaTek window films in Brookfield, Wis., agrees that a huge green benefit of window film is its ability to reduce energy consumption in buildings.

"I remember years ago all the energy concerns [in places such as California] so even ten, 15 years ago there was a need to reduce energy usage and window film was recognized as a way to do so, but it was mainly in pockets, such as California, Florida and Texas," says Black. "But over the past five to seven years we've seen window film become recognized more globally as a product that adds to the green movement."

While window film may have been used for its energy-saving qualities for some time, it's only

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The eBay headquarters in San Jose, Calif., feature HanitaTek's Silver 20 window film.

been in recent years that its recognition has grown.

"In the last four or five years we've seen an increase in awareness that window film can be a green product," says DeBusk. "Window film has always offered energy-saving features, but the overall awareness around climate change … has brought on an uptick in requests for information."

Giblin points out that many in the industry have also been working hard to ensure window film's recognition as a legitimate, energy-saving product.

"Almost 200 films are now certified by the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC) for energy performance. So window film now meets the same criteria for verifying its energy efficiency as doors, windows and skylights," says Giblin. "Also, the ongoing work by the International Window Film Association (IWFA) Manufacturer's Committee to get window film included in the tax credits … to have window film called out by name in the potential Home Star program … this is gaining awareness."

Black adds, "The IWFA is more active than ever before lobbying in D.C. to make sure window film is included in energy-saving legislations. Likewise, manufacturers are more committed than ever before."

He continues, "For the most part, window film manufacturers have also changed the language they use in their marketing materials. They are talking more about green, carbon footprint, energy savings and it's all becoming more geared toward the green movement. Manufacturers are reaching out toward the decision makers and end-users."

Speaking of the NFRC, DeBusk agrees that the certification/rating program for window film has helped generate awareness.

"The [rated] products are listed on the NFRC website, so architects, specifiers and others are seeing film products, in addition to glass, doors, windows, etc. when they are on that site. It gives them awareness and comfort with how the products will perform and it gives the film industry a whole new level of credibility," he says.

Beyond Energy Savings

But there is more to window film than just reduced heating and cooling costs. Window film offers a number of benefits for environmental savings and improvements.

"Our company as a whole has done a lot to save energy and be environmentally friendly," says DeBusk. He explained that, as of 2008, Solutia's Performance Films segment had reduced its energy usage by 40 percent per square foot of output when compared to energy use per square foot of output ten years before.

Bekaert has also measured the carbon footprint of its Solar Gard film and found it to be negative (*See related article in the July-August 2010 issue of Window Film, page 36*).

"In very simple terms, when you install window film on existing glazing the environmental cost of manufacturing an entirely new window is completely avoided," says Giblin. "If you take a window and decide to replace it, not only do you take into account the disposal of the existing window and frame, but many new windows are made of vinyl, many have at least two panes of glass with at least one, if not two or more, that are treated with coatings and these steps to manufacturer a window are a huge energy and environmental cost that are avoided if you use window film."

Jami Wong, product market manager, Architectural Film for Solar Gard, explains that in doing the life-cycle analysis of their products they looked at what the carbon footprint would be of 1 square meter of Solar Gard window film.

"We found the carbon footprint of 1 square meter of Solar Gard is less than 1 kilogram," says Wong. "The carbon footprint of a wood frame window, the type with the lowest carbon cost, is around 250 kilograms

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Window film can be used in both residential and commercial structures for energy performance. This home features Solar Gard window film.

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One Little Word

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per square meter. So there is a substantial difference between the energy that goes into making glazing as opposed to window film."

Manufacturers agree, that by choosing to install window film rather than replace windows consumers are making an environmentally friendly decision.

"By installing window film customers are keeping their windows, rather than replacing them, which keeps glass and frames out of the landfills," says DeBusk.

Black agrees.

"With window film you don't have to manufacturer new glass, window frames, etc. and that's definitely part of [manufacturers'] messages moving forward. As [consumers and building owners] go deeper into what they can do for their homes/buildings the messages from manufacturers will continue in that direction," says Black.

"When you talk about replacing windows versus installing film, the payback comparison is compelling as it's typically 15-20 years or more for one window replacement compared to normally less than three years with window film," says DeBusk.

Giblin points out several other green features.

"Think about employees inside a building. You can put a film on their windows and allow lots of natural light and at the same time keep them safe from ultraviolet (UV) rays, protect them from glare and heat and enable them to be more productive," she says.

She also points to the benefits film can afford to total building performance.

"As soon as you apply window film you can dramatically reduce the amount of heat coming in and therefore you reduce the load on the HVAC. With a reduced load you may not need as big an HVAC unit so other building elements may also be able to be reduced, such as the piping or ducting for the HVAC," she explains. "When you look at window film as a component of an entire building it actually has more benefits beyond just energy savings through heat rejection. On total building performance it can enable a retrofit situation to reduce some of the size and impact of other areas of the building, reducing the overall carbon footprint of the building," she says.

LEEDing the Way

Window film, like many other building materials, can also help a project earn credits toward the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Environmental Design (LEED) program. DeBusk says 41 points are needed to receive a LEED rating and window film can help earn up to nine. He says while the biggest improvement window film can provide is improved comfort, "LEED is not just about energy savings. There are ways to allow in daylight so building occupants can connect with their environments," he says. "There is also a category for Innovations in Operations and Upgrades. Here it qualifies based on the film blocking 99 percent of UV rays. This provides protection for furniture and fabrics and people. Safety films also qualify here as they are helping to protect the occupants. With LEED it's about anything that will improve the work environment and well being of the occupants."

Industry Effort

Value is also there for dealers and distributors who are knowledgeable about these products. Looking at the residential side, Giblin notes one study conducted by the Hartman Group Inc. in April 2009 showed that 85 percent of consumers are making purchase decisions based on social/environmental factors.

"It's important that as an industry we are all knowledgeable, and that we lead the way, educate and not create confusion; we must be consistent with this message as it's building credibility for window film."

— Kathryn Giblin, Bekaert Specialty Films

"So just having the environmental message is going to resonate with [dealers/distributors]," she says.

As far as commercial, she says many corporations are making environmental sustainability a cornerstone of their messaging.

"And they want vendors to support that request," she adds.

Black agrees.

"We're seeing that the public is becoming more concerned and aware about doing the right thing … doing what they can to make the planet better," he says. "It's not just about the payback and saving money; it's also about making the earth a better place. As an industry, we all need to be participants in this and actively involved and not just waiting for change to happen." And to help dealers and distributors move into the green realm, Black says many manufacturers provide them with continual education.

Giblin adds, "It comes back to the fact that dealers need to be aware that as an industry we must continue to push this message and we do so responsibly and accurate-

continued on page 32

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One Little Word

continued from page 30

ly. It's important that as an industry we are all knowledgeable, and that we lead the way, educate and not create confusion; we must be consistent with this message as it's building credibility for window film."

Pushing Forward

Many manufacturers agree that continuing to educate everyone from the dealers and distributors to homeowners and builders is a huge hurdle to overcome.

"Our biggest issue as an industry is education and awareness. There are not enough people who know about window film and there are a lot of misconceptions," says Giblin. "There are utility companies who have rebate programs for the use of window film as an energy-savings product but they still refer to it in the literature as a 'reflective film' and these misconceptions are tough."

She also says that, as more and more buildings undergo green retrofits, there is an increasing concern about the use of artificial lighting.

"They don't want to use lighting as much so there is a need for clearer window film. The industry can meet that criterion, but many don't realize it," she says. "The industry has to keep educating everyone that window film technology should be top of mind for energy saving and for green building."

"The biggest issue is that most people still don't know that film really exists," says DeBusk. "They see a tall glass building and think that it's just glass, but often it has film on it." He says while there has been some increased awareness, which has helped, "we still have a ways to go, so there are definitely opportunities for growth."

Black also points out that as an industry, window film is still relatively small compared to others.

"Competitive technology (i.e. glass) companies are typically so much larger than window film companies and their industries are larger so those products are often what are really at the forefront of people's minds," he says. "Our industry [must continue] to spread awareness and educate the consumer-at-large about the benefits of film."

LLumar® solar control window film from Solutia was used on Temple College in Temple, Texas, to help reduce energy expenses.

Giblin stresses that it will take the efforts of the entire industry.

Dealers Too

"Dealers, too, need to be involved in these conversations. Some are, but many are still not sure about how to deliver the energy message and they need to realize how important this is. If they become more aware in pushing this along with the manufacturers and the IWFA, we will reach more people," she says. "The IWFA Manufacturer's Committee is putting more money than ever into education, lobbying, government affairs, but we need all the thousands of dealers and installers [to become involved].

For all aspects of the building industry, from commercial to residential, green building is here to stay. For suppliers this means that simply offering a green product as an "Oh, by the way, we're also green and here's how," add-on, isn't an option. Offering energy-saving, environmentally friendly, earth-saving features is fast becoming an expected must.

And these recognition efforts extend far beyond just the industry.

"For window film to be listed in proposed legislation in both the house and the senate is a major achievement, even if it doesn't go through," says Giblin. "We must treat it with care and continue to spread this message as an industry, accurately and correctly." WF

Ellen Rogers is the editor of Window Film magazine.

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FILM STARS™

Details Matter to This Florida Tinter

Agustin De Sousa's attention to detail has led to repeat customers and requests for his work.

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De Sousa's shop, Master Window Tinting in Doral, Fla., is known for its professional work and attention to detail. Other local businesses have taken notice. Richard Estrada of High Tech Electronics in nearby Hialeah, Fla., nominated De Sousa saying, "This gentleman is one of the most professional window tinters in all of the U.S. His attention to detail is of the highest standards. I have had the pleasure of working with him for many years and time after time customers request his services."

De Sousa got his start in the window film business 21 years ago in Caracas, Venezuela, while working at a friend of his uncle's car accessories and window tint shop while he was going to college.

De Sousa stayed in the industry because of his passion for cars. "I like to optimize the vehicles and make them look better than if they were from the factory," De Sousa says.

Some of De Sousa's most difficult and unique jobs have involved older cars. "Some of the most challenging projects have been classic cars from the 1950s and 1970s. One I remember was a 1967 VW Beetle and the rear glass on a '73 Dodge Dart sedan. Also a challenge was a 100-foot yacht in Coco Plum, Fla. It was tinted and decorated with a picture of the sea."

De Sousa has many goals for his business and is eager to watch it grow. One of the directions in which he would like to see growth is working on more high-end vehicles.

"I'd like to provide service to exclusive high-end vehicles," says De Sousa. "At the same time I'd like to provide high-quality films with high heat rejection, protection of paints and decorating and customizing the exterior of cars. I'm always ready to provide services to our community. They deserve the best."

In addition, De Sousa is passionate about protecting and informing his customers about health risks and the benefits of window film.

"I'd like to create programs to educate people about skin cancer and how to prevent it," he adds.

De Sousa's company stands out because of its commitment to the details of a well-done job and its superior customer service. His advice for other companies is to make sure that they finish each job completely with attention to detail.

"We are so concerned about giving customers what they really need. It is all about how we finish the job. We try to give them the maximum protection and educate them on skin cancer. If you focus on doing a well-done job you will have happy customers who refer you to others," says De Sousa.

When De Sousa is not hard at work tinting cars he is a family man at home.

"In my free time I love spending time with my wife and daughter, going to church and going to car races and car shows. I also like to take part in events in the community." WF

Do you know someone who is a star among window film tinters? Then we want to hear from you with your nominations for "Film Stars." E-mail Ellen Rogers at erogers@glass.com your nominations.

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