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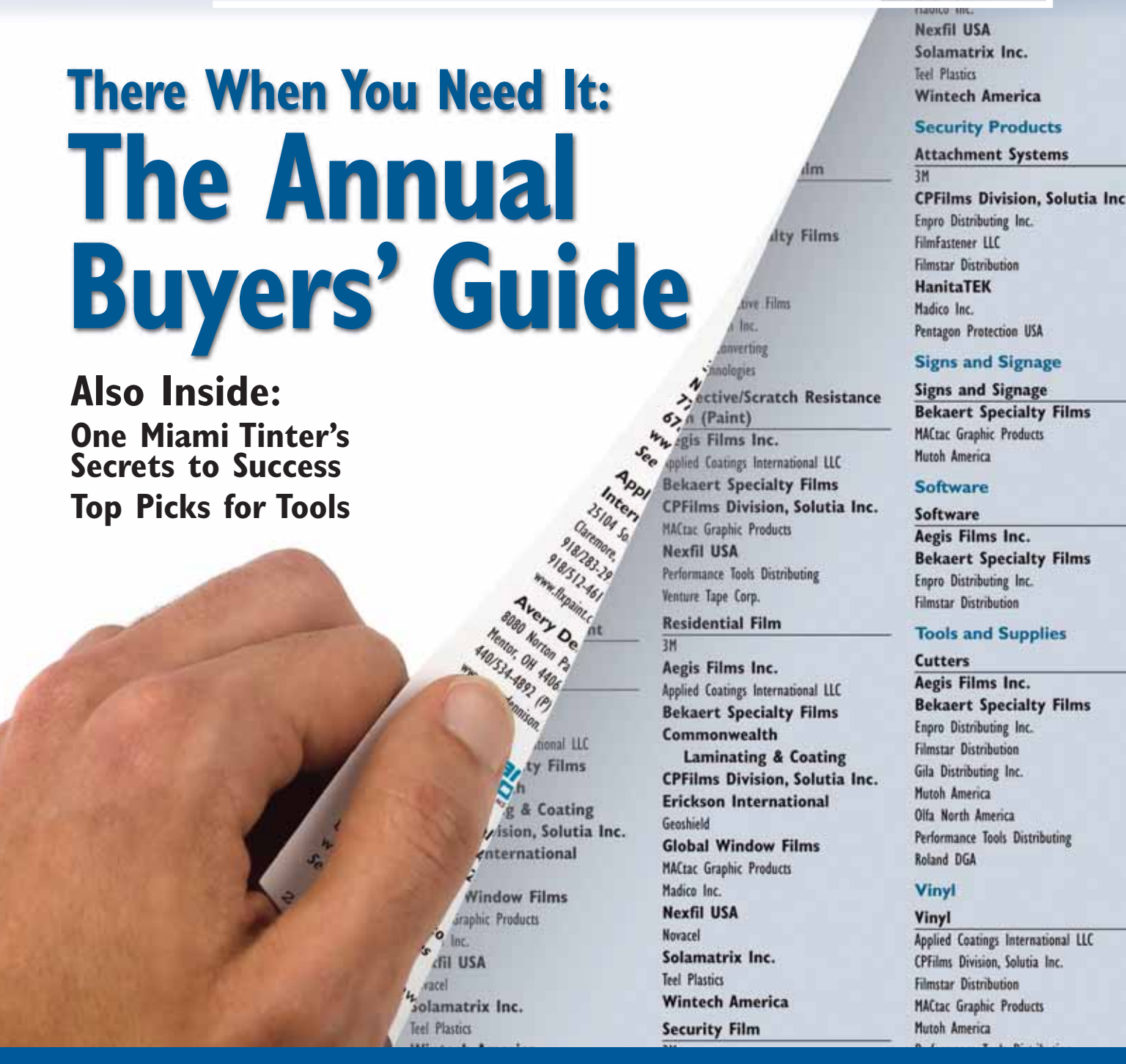
Inside: Previewing the 2011 International Window Film Conference and Tint-Off

WINDOW FILM™

Architectural - Auto - Decorative - Paint Protection - Security
Volume 14 - Issue 5 - September-October 2010

There When You Need It:
The Annual Buyers' Guide

Also Inside:
One Miami Tinter's Secrets to Success
Top Picks for Tools



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Key Communications Inc.
385 Garrisonville Rd, #116
Stafford, VA 22554
540/720-5584; 540/720-5687 (fax)
www.windowfilmmag.com

Publisher	Debra Levy deb@glass.com
Editor	Ellen Rogers erogers@glass.com
Managing Editor	Erin Harris eharris@glass.com
Contributing Editors	Megan Headley mheadley@glass.com
	Penny Stacey pstacey@glass.com
Assistant Editor	Katie Hodge khodge@glass.com
Art Directors	Chris Bunn cbunn@glass.com
	Dawn Campbell dcampbell@glass.com
Exhibits Manager	Tina Czar tczar@glass.com
Marketing Director	Holly Biller, vice president hbiller@glass.com
Marketing Assistant	Ally Curran acurran@glass.com
Video Producer	Marshall Stephens mstephens@glass.com
Web Developer	Bryan Hovey bhovey@glass.com
Customer Relations Manager	Janeen Mulligan jmulligan@glass.com

Advertising Offices

Midwest	**Lisa Naugle** lnaugle@glass.com Phone 312/850-0899 Fax 312/277-2912
Northeast & Eastern Canada	**Brian Welsh** bwelsh@glass.com Phone 540/720-5584 x195 215/679-8826 Fax 215/679-0408
Southeast	**Scott Rickles** srickles@glass.com Phone 770/664-4567 Fax 770/740-1399
West Coast & Western Canada	**Ed Mitchell** emitchell@glass.com Phone 805/262-2932 Fax 805/262-2933
Europe	**Patrick Connolly** patco@glass.com 699 Kings Road Westcliff on Sea Essex SS0 8PH ENGLAND Phone (44) 1-702-477341 Fax (44) 1-702-477559
China & Asia	**Sean Xiao** sxiao@glass.com Rm.403, Block 17, Wuyimingzhu, No.6 Jinshan Road, Fuzhou, Fujian, 350001, China. Phone (86) 591-838-63000
All Others	**Contact Publisher Directly**

Debra Levy
540/720-5584, ext. 111;
fax: 540/720-5687
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ASK THE EXPERT

DONNA WELLS

Are You De-Valuing Window Film in 2010?

It has been an interesting 2010, hasn't it? Many questions and issues have arisen over this selling season. Some of you have hired me to help you close large deals, while others have hired me for individual projects. At both ends of the spectrum what I am seeing across the country is a shocking trend. Many window film companies are de-valuing their products. It seems to be a growing trend to price products and services ultra low to get the deal. I don't usually use this word, but window film is selling cheap, cheap, cheap!

I try to instill into my clients the value of what we offer to the consumer. We offer a cost-effective way to reduce energy costs, increase comfort and add beauty to the space. Yet, many companies feel that the only way they can win a job is through price. I am not here to tell you how much to charge per square foot or per job. But I am going to point out what it costs to win a contract.

Know Your Costs

First, think about what it costs you to receive an invitation to bid a project. Yellow page advertising can be expensive. How about other forms of advertising? Do you advertise on the Internet? Do you use door hangers, flyers, Value Pak, RSVP or your own mailing list? How much are you spending to design your own advertising? What about home shows, trade shows, car shows, etc? You must consider all of these costs when your phone rings or your front door swings open. You invested dollars to generate that lead.

What does it cost you to put the numbers together? Think about travel time to and from the site as well as time spent at the actual site with the client. What is your time worth? Consider how long it takes to calculate the cost of the job. Large commercial jobs can take hours or days to prepare. Are you doing cost comparisons with various manufacturers? How much time have you spent researching products for equipment costs (if needed) and additional incidentals specific to the job? Most companies do not take the following costs into consideration: blades, paper towels, drop cloths, squeegees, ladders, parking fees, insurance, workman's compensation insurance, liability insurance, bonding, pre and post liens, salaries, commissions, rent on shop space, car payments and auto insurance.

Finally let's consider the installation. Are you installing during normal business hours? Does the job require installation after hours and/or long weekends? What will your installers cost you? Is the job a government job that requires a prevailing wage? Is the glass unusual? Does it require lifts or the removal of pre-existing film?

"Some companies have decided that breaking even is the wave of the future. If you are not making a profit, then you need to ask yourself, why not?"

Beyond Breaking Even

As a business owner, you have to decide how much profit you need to make in order to expand your business. Some companies have decided that breaking even is the wave of the future. If you are not making a profit, then you need to ask yourself, why not? I'm going to bet, if you are not making a profit you are not going to be in business for very long.

Having been in this industry for more than 20 years, it's alarming to see pricing in our industry reverting back to 1980s levels. While pricing in other industries may have dropped 10-20 percent, window film prices seem to have fallen by a large percentage. By reducing your pricing significantly, you are pricing yourself out of the market. More importantly, you are de-valuing our entire industry.

As you go forward the rest of the year, think about how you want others to view the window film industry. Do you want people to think we are a cheap alternative or a cost-effective way to achieve energy efficiency, meet LEED requirements and add beauty? My bet is on the latter. 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

MANNY HONDROULIS

Using Microsoft Excel as a Sales Tool

In my last column I discussed the impact of Microsoft PowerPoint. Now we turn to Microsoft Excel, another application included in Microsoft Office software.

Excel is a spreadsheet application made up of cells that are displayed in rows and columns. At first glance, an Excel spreadsheet can be quite intimidating, with 256 columns and 65,536 rows for a grand total of 16,777,216 cells. Each cell can contain data, such as a user-inputted number or string of text, or formula that produces a number or string of text. What does that mean for us?

If you're calculating an installation's square footage using pencil, paper and a calculator, then you're going to love what Excel can do for you. Gone are the days when you have to multiply a window's height by its width, divide by 144, and then multiply by the quantity of windows and scribble the results on note paper. A simple spreadsheet, however, can do this work in a fraction of the time.

Know the Details

Before we get into the specifics, let me explain one part of Excel terminology. We've already established that a spreadsheet is made of rows and columns of cells. The cell located at the intersection of Column A and Row 1 is referred to as Cell A1.

In this simple exercise we're going to input a window's dimensions (height and width in inches) and the quantity of windows. For each window type, we're going to use a new row in the spreadsheet.

Type the word Quantity in Cell A1. Then type the words Width, Height, Square Foot and Total Project in Cells B1, C1, D1, and E1 respectively. Columns A, B, and C will require inputted data from you while Columns D and E will automatically populate with the window's (Column D) or project's (Column E) square footage (*see table 1*).

We're going to ask Excel to calculate the square footage of each window set. So in Cell D2, type the following formula: =A2*B2*C2/144, and in Cell D3 type =A3*B3*C3/144. In typing this formula, we're asking Excel to multiply the window's height by width, divide by 144 to convert from square inches to square feet, and multiply by the number of windows in this set. Next we need to create a formula that will tell us the total square footage of the project. So in Cell E2 enter the following formula: =SUM(D:D). This formula will create a running total of the square footage of each window set for each row. Save your spreadsheet on your desktop as "Takeoff Template."

Table 1

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Quantity	Width	Height	Square Feet	Total Project
2					
3					
4					

Table 2

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Quantity	Width	Height	Square Feet	Total Project
2	10	40	60	166.67	1164.17
3	35	57	72	997.50	
4				0.00	

Some Excel columns will require inputted data while others will automatically populate with the necessary information.

Putting It All Together

In Cell A2, enter 10 as the quantity of windows and 40 and 60 as the window's width and height, respectively. In Cell A3, enter 35 as the quantity of windows and 57 and 72 as the window's width and height, respectively. Cell D2 will automatically calculate the total square footage of ten windows that have a width of 40 inches and a height of 60 inches, while Cell D3 will automatically calculate the total square footage of 35 windows that have a width of 57 inches and a height of 72 inches. The total square footage is 1164.17 as shown in Cell E2 (*see table 2*).

For every different window type, enter all of the vital information (quantity, width and height) in Columns A, B, and C, beginning with Row 2 and working your way down. You will need to copy the formula used in Column D for each new row. Select Cell D2, press the down arrow key while holding down the shift key until you get to the row where you want to stop. Then press CTRL D to paste the formula in D2 to the selected area.

This is a very basic spreadsheet and Excel can do much more, such as calculate the perimeter of your windows, which may be relevant if you're applying an attachment system. If you have trouble creating your own template, download the one available here: www.windowfilmmag.com/documents/takeoff_template.xls. Using Excel, you'll spend less time calculating square footage and more time marketing. **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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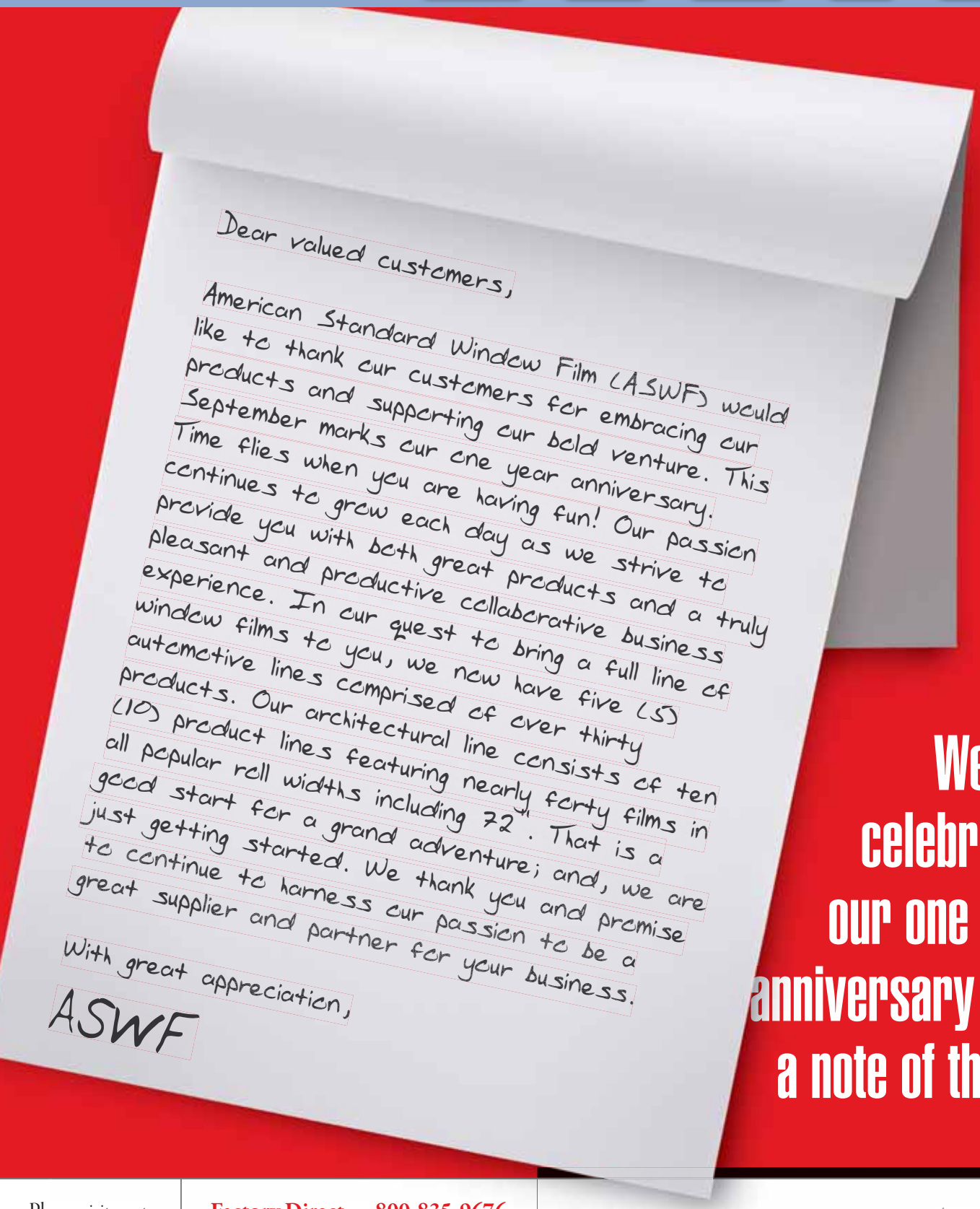

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NEWSWORTHY

THE LATEST INDUSTRY NEWS

COMPANY NEWS

Solutia Receives Grant to Invest in Energy-Efficient Building Technologies

Solutia recently received grant money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The DOE is investing more than $76 million dollars in companies that are working to make U.S. buildings and homes more energy-efficient.

Solutia received $356,000 of this for its Performance Films segment, which intends to use the grant for the continued research, development and commercialization of high-performance, energy-efficient retrofit window film technology for residential and commercial buildings.

In addition to Solutia, other film companies were awarded grant money including 3M, Pleotint LLC, and Southwall Technologies.

"The Department of Energy has recognized the value of window films as a retrofit solution to improving energy efficiency," said Ray Kollar, president and general manager of Solutia's Performance Films segment. "Today's consumers have also learned that, just like changing their lighting, window films are an affordable, easy-to-make choice that can add significant energy savings and real value. As a global leader in film technology, we'll use this grant to keep pushing the technology forward."

"A building's energy efficiency starts at its windows," explains Dave Kaliser, director of product marketing – architectural for Solutia's Performance Films segment. "This will allow technologies similar to those in high-performance low-E glass coatings to be adopted into retrofit window films, while keeping costs in line with the market. The technologies we're working on include improved coating flexibility and low infrared-transmission coatings," Kaliser continues. "These easy-to-install window films can increase energy efficiency year round, with much faster paybacks than traditional window replacement and substantially better energy savings per dollar spent."

INDUSTRY NEWS

Window Film Holds While Storms Brew

As much of the country experiences record temperatures and sweltering heat the southern coasts have been preparing for one of the most dangerous seasons of the year: hurricane season. Residents of the Gulf Coast in particular have been preparing their property to withstand hurricane conditions, and for some, this includes window film installations.

Chris Smeltz, marketing manager of ProTech Coating Services in Pinellas Park, Fla., says he has noticed a sudden rush in window film sales. "As soon as a storm pops up everyone calls immediately," says Smeltz. "Unfortunately everyone waits until there is a storm coming."

All along the Gulf Coast window film companies are seeing a similar pattern. Abid Quraishi, general manager for Solar X Window Film Systems in Houston, adds, "We do see a lot of action being so close to the Gulf of Mexico. Whenever there is something developing in the Gulf, people's awareness heightens and the media creates a frenzy."

In the past, coastal cities have been hit hard by hurricanes and have learned what to do to protect their property and themselves. Quraishi remembers, "After Hurricane Ike, there was a lot of glass replacement throughout Greater Houston and Galveston. One of our customers who had glass replaced and had safety film previously applied to it, said that the film worked great in keeping the broken glass together," says Quraishi. "We did not get one phone call from an unsatisfied customer."

Likewise, ProTech Coating Services was involved in the post-storm work left behind by Hurricane Charley. "We cover 16 counties so when Charley came through we had a lot of clean up," says Smeltz.

Following Hurricane Ike, Solar X Window Film Systems started to see increasing interest in window film. "After the effects of Hurricane Ike, customers' concern about hurricane protection has increased," says Quraishi. "With our marketing efforts, people are becoming more aware that window film is a viable option to give increased protection to their windows."

Hurricane season runs until November 30 and is expected to be particularly active this year. The National Hurricane Center tracks this year's early hurricane activity as unusual compared to previous years.

Smeltz agrees that this hurricane season is likely to be a tough one. "I've been in the area for quite some time and the way the weather has been acting it seems like it will be a much more active season. This area hasn't had a direct hit in a while, but we do get the winds."

Quraishi remains optimistic about this season for his company. "The economy is down. Everyone is feeling the effects of it, but no one wants to take a loss so they don't mind spending money to protect what they have. You never know with mother nature…time will tell."

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PEOPLE NEWS

Window Film Industry Mourns the Loss of Paul Panarisi

Paul Panarisi

Paul Panarisi, marketing manager for Madico based in Woburn, Mass., passed away Tuesday, July 7, in Boynton Beach, Fla., at 46 years old. Panarisi spent 18 years in the window film business with Madico. He joined the company in 1992 in the warehouse at Madico Southeast, moved to California in sales and branch management, returned to Florida as window film product manager, and recently became marketing manager.

Panarisi is survived by his wife, Anelle, and his daughter, Cara. His family is accepting donations to the American Cancer Society in his honor.

"Please join me in taking a moment to celebrate Paul's dynamic life and courage; his passion for music and literature; thirst for knowledge; and keen sense of humor," says Tom Niziolek, marketing and sales director for Madico.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Major Film Project Completed in Qatar

One of the largest glass containment projects was completed recently in Qatar. Building Defence Systems WLL in conjunction with Pentagon Protection PLC used 1800 square meters of FT800 blast mitigation film for glazing to protect the exterior glazing at an oil and gas facility. The film was used to protect the facility and the people who work from an explosion or an attack.

Energy Products Distribution Holds Training Events; Hires New Automotive Market Salesperson

EPD recently hosted workshops for its automotive and commercial dealers.

Energy Products Distribution (EPD), a film distributor located in Baltimore, held two workshops earlier this year for its automotive and commercial dealers. The company's second annual automotive workshop was held May 10-11 for existing and prospective customers. EPD held a brief awards ceremony to recognize its largest paint protection film (PPF) and automotive window film customers, which was followed by a presentation on branding.

Afterward, EPD held an open forum to discuss the revenue opportunity of bundling various products and services such as automotive window film, PPF, headlight restoration, and DI-NOC™ Carbon Fiber Vinyl.

On May 24, EPD conducted its second annual commercial workshop, presented by 3M technical service manager, Billy Pettit. The purpose of the training was to promote industry accepted selling tools to increase a dealer's selling credibility.

"We've always encouraged our dealers to present to a commercial prospect as an educator rather than as a salesperson," said Manny Hondroulis, marketing manager of EPD. "Using readily available and analytical sales tools to demonstrate the effectiveness of window film does just that."

"One of our main company initiatives is to provide continuing education for our dealers, whether from a technical or marketing perspective," said Jim Hondroulis, EPD president. "The two workshops we hosted in May strengthened their knowledge base and were a nice addition to our regularly scheduled EPD University, which we hold online. It was also great to see our customers and enjoy the camaraderie that comes through face-to-face meetings."

In addition to holding workshops, EPD has also hired Sebrina Wajer as its new automotive specialist. Wajer joins the company with 12 years of experience in the automotive aftermarket. She began her career working for Enterprise Rent-A-Car and later worked for Koons Ford of Baltimore in the aftermarket department where she sold 3M™ paint protection film. Wajer's focus will be to expand the company's share of the automotive aftermarket, which includes working with installers to promote the company's product line. WF

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NOTEWORTHY

NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Solamatrix Introduces New Film and Online Marketing Tool

Two new developments are now available from St. Petersburg, Fla.-based Solamatrix: a new film and a new online program.

The charcoal automotive window film series is the latest addition to the Sun-Gard Automotive Window Film line and features 1.5 mil premium-grade film in both non-reflective and high-performance options. HP Charcoal is available in five shades (4, 15, 22, 32, and 38 percent visible light transmission (VLT)). NR Charcoal is also available in five shades (5, 20, 35, 55, and 70 percent VLT).

In addition to the new automotive window film series Solamatrix has announced its Sun-Gard WebNet online dealer program, which is designed to allow dealers to process business through their own WebNet website. Dealers will have their own website with a unique URL that they can utilize to promote their business in their local market. The website manages referrals, requests for quotes, recent traffic to the site, follow up with leads and submitted questions through a customized tracking system. As part of the program, all participants receive free hosting and a free web address (URL).

www.solamatrix.com

Can You Hear Me Now?

3M's FX Premium automotive window film features a scratch-resistant coating and is manufactured without the use of metals, which can help eliminate interference with cell phones or GPS devices.

The film also protects people from 99 percent of harmful UV rays and is available in 5, 15, 25, 30, 35, and 55 percent VLT.

www.3m.com/us

GEOSHIELD's Film Addition

SuperAlloy architectural film is the most recent development from GEOSHIELD based in Baton Rouge, La. The company says the film uses advanced metallurgy to obtain high thermal properties, corrosion resistance and a clean look. The three-ply, 1.5-mil film is available in both 15 and 25 percent visible light transmission.

SuperAlloy is available in a dry adhesive that the company says allows for easy installation and adhesion to the glass. The film is made of sputtered nichrome, an additional layer of aluminum to increase solar energy rejection and a color-stable dyed film that reduces reflectivity.

www.geoshieldusa.com

Cutting Up

Roland has introduced what it says is its largest and most powerful vinyl cutter yet. The GX-640 is suited for restyling applications and is fully integrated with the company's VersaWorks RIP software. It features advanced DC servo motor technology and ten pinch-roll slots to accommodate up to six added pinch-roll assemblies.

It also comes with the latest version of the companies design software, CutStudio.

www.rolanddga.com WF

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There When You Need It

The Window Film Magazine Annual Buyers' Guide

Requests such as, "I'm looking for a company that provides this type of film. Do you know of any? I checked the web, but there are so many out there to choose from," are not unusual. Sometimes a handy reference guide will provide all the answers, sources and more that those in need may require.

The Window Film magazine Annual Buyers' Guide is your one-stop source for all of your tinting needs and more—our Annual Buyer's Guide makes it easy to find the providers you're looking for. Just look for the category of product or service you desire and there you will find a list of providers. At the beginning of the guide, you will find the contact information for each. Keep this nearby as a reference throughout the year.

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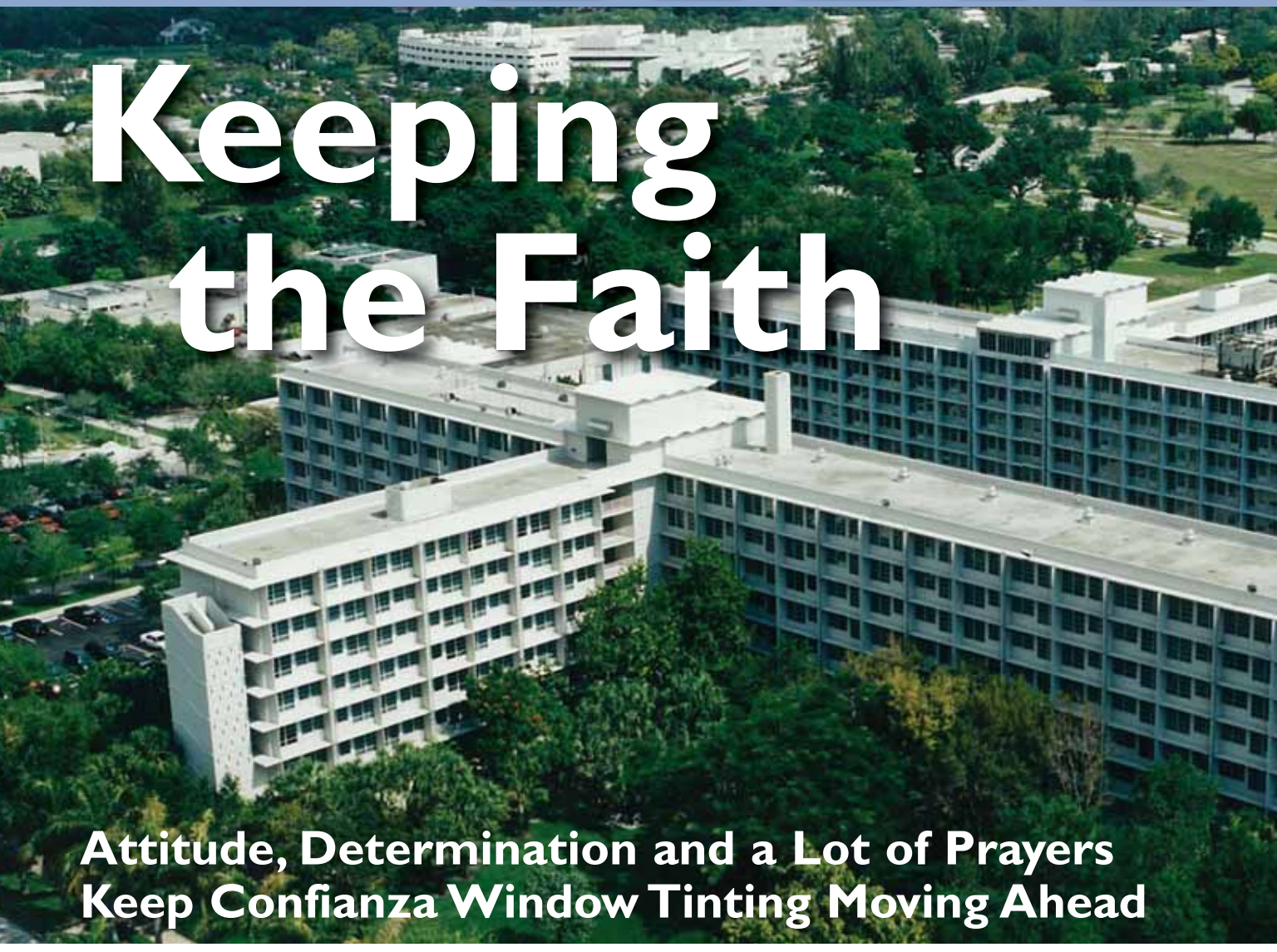
Keeping the Faith



Attitude, Determination and a Lot of Prayers Keep Confianza Window Tinting Moving Ahead

by Ellen Rogers

Some people make their career decisions by flipping a coin; for others, a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors may be the deciding factor. There are those who make lists weighing the pros and cons, and others who turn to everyone they know asking, "What would you do?" Rafael Fernandez, owner of Confianza Window Tinting in Miami, used a method that he does not recommend: "Bible roulette," he says.

Fernandez harkens back to a time in his life when he had just started attending church, yet found himself out of a job soon after.

"I was upset and felt lied to, but I learned that disappointments are the birthplace of incredible achievements," says Fernandez who had been working for an automotive company that focused on car alarms and stereos, and dabbled in window tinting. "My dad, who is a very quiet man, took me out one day and said, 'You know son, there are a lot of windows in Miami …' So I thought about it and prayed about it and then I did something that I don't recommend—I played Bible roulette. I opened the Bible and pointed to the first verse I saw," he says. "And it worked that day because I bumped into one of the most beautiful verses, Jeremiah 17:7, which says 'But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.' Confidence … and, it was a Spanish Bible, so I said, 'Ah! Confianza Window Tinting" and that's where the company name came from."

That was April 1990 and since then Confianza Window Tinting has grown into one of the largest commercial tinting companies in the Miami area. Fernandez's Christian faith has been a huge part of his success. In fact, in addition to the window film business he also has a radio ministry that is broadcast to every Spanish-speaking region around the world. For Fernandez the combination of faith and giving back whenever possible has made all the difference.

Upward Bound

"I started out of the garage of my house with $500 and a lot of faith and enthusiasm," says Fernandez. "And I promised myself we would not do cars, partly because I could not tint. I had a lot to learn and flat glass is a lot easier to learn than automotive. I would sell in the mornings

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"You know what they call their employees at the Ritz Carlton? Ladies and gentlemen. Can you imagine if we all started calling our employees—our installers—'ladies and gentlemen?' Give an installer just a little bit of recognition and watch him fly."

—Rafael Fernandez

Above: Confianza applied film to 65,000 square feet of this University of Miami building in 1996 and again in 2002. Left: Outside of the film industry, Rafael and his wife, Maria, also collect classic cars, including a 1960 Cadillac Fleetwood limo.

and install in the afternoons. Sometimes my dad would help me."

As the jobs began to add up so did the need for a full-time installer.

"That's when Ulises Abreu came to my doorstep. He is now our head installer; he's been with me for 17 years," says Fernandez. He adds the company also has two other installers, George and Alex Morales, a father and son who have been with the company for almost 11 years. "In our industry [it's unusual] for an installer to be with you for 17 years, 11 years … and they also have the keys to the business and the code to the alarm—the installers," says Fernandez. "We are blessed that we have that level of trust in our team."

Abreu has been in the film industry sine 1986 when he got started tinting cars. He says he was rebuked when he first called Confianza to see if they needed an installer. He tried again a year later and that time they did.

"This is not like any other company I've worked for," Abreu says. "We're more like family and we've grown together over the years."

Abreu also has seen the industry change and became concerned at

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Keeping the Faith

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one point that it was dying out because of all the new glass products that were being introduced.

"But somehow, we keep growing," he says. "Even with the slow economy … we have our ups and downs just like any business, but we're still growing."

In addition to three installers, Fernadez's wife, Maria, works in the office and their daughter Alina is the administrative assistant (in total they have five children, two son-in-laws and two grandchildren). Enrique de la Pezuela joined the company in April and handles the company's architectural sales, working closely with architects and developers.

de la Pezuela says it was a result of both the market and a blessing that lead him to Confianza. Like Fernandez, he is also involved with a ministry through his church and the two met when Fernandez was a guest speaker at one of de la Pezuela's meetings.

"It turned out that he needed someone to do architectural sales and I needed a job," says de la Pezuela who had owned an architectural firm for a number of years, and had also worked as a project manager for two of Miami's condo developers, WIC and the Related Group of Florida.

"I work closely with the architects and developers every day," de la Pezuela says. "It's important to do so because as green, LEED certification, tax credits and energy efficiency become important it's imperative they use window film; it's really a no-brainer."

Business Tactics

Twenty years since the debut of his company, Fernandez has moved up from working in his garage and now occupies 2,000 square feet of office space (which he is proud to say is completely paid off) in a suburban Miami office park. Confianza Window Tinting works primarily with 3M and in the past has worked with others, such as Solamatrix. Over the years the company has taken on some high-profile film projects in the Miami area. Projects include the Fontainebleau, for which he is the exclusive film supplier, and the Miami Courthouse. The company has also been involved with a number of international projects, including apartment and condo buildings in Santo Domingo.

> **"I learned that disappointments are the birthplace of incredible achievements."**
> **—Rafael Fernandez**

"I've known Rafael for more than two years and I think he's a true professional in what he does for both his business and the industry," says Charlie Calisto, national sales manager for 3M.

Mike Giles, 3M territory manager, adds, "Rafael and the entire team at Confianza Window Tinting have been a valued customer of 3M for many years, and some of the most prestigious installations of [our] window film have been accomplished through the efforts of Confianza Window Tinting throughout the region. Our partnership in the industry in the past has been strong, however a renewed and stronger partnership has developed that has already demonstrated that we will enjoy much success together in the years to come."

Achievements aside, Confianza Window Tinting is still a small business, tackling a range of projects. "We do residential jobs everyday. But when you're involved with commercial projects you're really a farmer; a farmer doesn't just throw out a seed and wait. He knows you have to move the soil, plant the seed and water it. The same is true of commercial projects," Fernandez explains. "If you have the discipline to do what you need to do, maybe the job won't start for another nine months, but the work you did six months before will fall into play three months from now. So it becomes a cycle."

He continues, "in a year we do two or three commercial projects. Huge projects are not as common, but we've been blessed with those, too."

With a hand in both residential and commercial work, Fernandez admits there are a number of differences between the two

"Look at everything we've seen of late, like foreclosures. When you are losing your home you're not thinking about window tinting. And on top of that we had a long, cold winter, which is rare in Miami," he says. "But, as soon as the sun starts baking people the phone starts ringing."

He continues, "Commercial is less cyclical because there are budgets that have been appropriated. Plus, now the trend for a lot of buildings is to go green. Owners are really looking at how to make their buildings more efficient. On the residential side, too, we are fortunate because we live in [an area] where there are a lot of condo buildings with a lot of nice views. In condos the windows are all sliding glass door type windows. In one apartment you can have 1,000 square feet of glass."

Top-Tier Service

When it came to developing a business model, Fernandez looked to what some consider the pinna-

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cle of any business in any industry: the Ritz Carlton.

"We are big supporters of the way they do business at the Ritz Carlton. So I say, be a Ritz Carlton window film dealer," says Fernandez. "You know what they call their employees at the Ritz Carlton? Ladies and gentlemen. Can you imagine if we all started calling our employees—our installers—'ladies and gentlemen?' Give an installer just a little bit of recognition and watch him fly. Our industry doesn't do that enough."

He adds, "I adopted the motto of the Ritz Carlton for my own company. I don't want our customers to just be happy; I want them to be proud … walking the extra mile goes so far."

One challenge for the film industry, he believes, is finding ways to increase the perceived level off professionalism. And in Miami, this can be particularly tough.

"I know there are manufacturers who do not even want to sell in south Florida," says Fernandez. "Sadly enough, Miami, one of the many names it's been given is the 'Gateways to the Americas'." He says the nickname comes from all of the importing and exporting that takes place, much of which is with countries where high-quality material is less important than it is in the United States.

"I really believe that if we can bring up the level of professionalism in our industry people will notice," he says.

This might be easier said than done. Fernandez says the only way to accomplish this is simply one dealer at a time.

"It's been said that it takes a village to raise a child; it takes an industry to raise a dealer," he says. "I hope and pray that there are dealers who read this and realize that they can do more and they can be better. I have hope that we can bring up the standards of all our industry; it has to be an industry effort."

Confianza applied safety film for storm protection for this courthouse in Metro Dade County.

Reap What You Sow

Fernandez says he is extremely grateful for the successes he's seen and experienced. As a result, he is committed to giving back whenever and wherever he can. He has donated film and installation services to various projects around the Miami area. He also created The Children of Lumenesse, a charity organization whose mission is to build and manage an orphanage for children around the world. He says the goal is to eventually build and maintain

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Keeping the Faith

continued from page 27

the orphanage for its first three years. In the meantime, every six months the charity donates 10 percent of the funds to children's charities until it reaches that goal.

Five percent of every roll of Lumenesse purchased by dealers goes directly into the fund.

"After being so blessed, on our 20th anniversary we decided to officially start our children's fund as a way to give back and leave a legacy," says Fernandez. "Five percent of every sale we make, large or small, goes toward this fund. After the job is finished we send a thank you letter to our customer with a copy of the check to the fund with their name on the memo and a reassurance that we not only want them to be happy to be our customer but proud to be one as well."

He adds that a down economy is the perfect time to give back.

"When things are slow, donate and give. Look for a church, a synagogue, a school, Habitat for Humanity … someplace where you can [donate]," he says.

Team Efforts

Over the years Fernandez and his team have worked diligently to establish Confianza Window Tinting as a quality, professional organization. These efforts have included working closely with organizations such as Florida Power & Light, which has a Business Building Envelope Program that provides incentives for various energy-efficient measures, including window film installation.

"Rafael has demonstrated a strong ability to create and close large commercial projects through a vast network of contacts here in Florida," says Giles, who expects their partnership to continue moving forward.

"One of the things that we admire about Rafael and his team at Confianza is how they have developed long-term relationships with key decision makers in South Florida in the commercial arena," says Bill Stewart, North American sales and operations manager for Solamatrix. "Rafael understands the importance of building a solid reputation and has spent many years working to achieve this through active participation in his local community. In this day and age, and in our industry, it is truly impressive when companies are still actively involved in the same business, in the same area, decade after decade."

Hurricane films are also a big part of Confianza's business. Fernandez says that purveyors of the economy have actually purged the industry of a lot of disreputable hurricane companies "because the fly-by-nights have flown."

He says the issue of safety and impact film is one of immense importance.

"When I was on the Ethics Committee of the International Window Film Association one of the issues we had was overzealous dealers selling safety films as 'bullet-proof,' yet they wouldn't stand behind the product," he says. "When you are going to sell safety film, sell it for what it is. These products are an important part of a dealer's business but they are also

Confianza has applied film to a range of buildings over the years, including Union Planters Bank.

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Blue safety film was used to match the Bank Atlantic colors.

an important part of our industry because safety films really work; they are not a gimmick."

He continues, "As an industry, we need to work on getting safety films recognized by insurance companies. We are working toward that. We should protect ourselves on the defensive by making sure that dealers are not putting out ads that say things like 'no need to shutter your home …' safety film does not need to be hyped; the test results speak for themselves."

Customer Satisfaction

"You never argue with a customer; what do you gain by doing so? You take care of the situation as quickly as you can. It doesn't matter what the problem is," he says. "We take pride in what we do. It's awesome to be able to go to a home and let people know that we do not subcontract the work; the only time we subcontract is if it's a very large project and there's a time frame to meet. We work only with installers we know and have worked with in the past."

On the Horizon

Always the optimist, Fernandez has also coined a few words that he uses as mantras for his business. One of these words is "persa-vision."

"It's perseverance with a vision," he says, explaining that once you know what you want your success to be, it's easy to go after those achievements. Much of that ties to the demand for energy performance.

"There are films that go hand-in-hand with those needs," says Fernandez. "Five years from now will be huge, especially as the economy gets better and more and more people are concerned about energy savings. Our industry is perfect for what's coming and I am very excited." **WF**

Ellen Rogers is the editor of Window Film magazine.

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I Can't *Live* Without It!

Window Film Installers Reveal Trusted Tools

by Katie Hodge

Everyone has had one of "those days." The kind of day where nothing seems to go right and every task takes twice as long. Thankfully, most of us have a few items or trusted sources on which we can always rely to help get the job done. The world of window film is no different. While jobs vary and environmental factors are uncontrollable, most installers have a few helpful tools that make the process quicker and easier.

Sidekicks

The typical technician carries his tools with him all day and juggling them can be a challenge. Joel Marler, president of Architectural Window Film in Salt Lake City, is grateful for his vest and his caddy.

"I like a tool vest instead of a tool belt because your shoulders support the vest instead of your hips. Also, I use a film caddy, a canvas film tote. It enables quick and easy handling of materials, supplies and tools."

When it comes to installers' favorite sidekick tools some say the "chizler," the "bulldozer," "tail fins," and the "E-Z reach" are among the top tools.

Nick Lowery, a master installer of automotive window film for Quality Glass Tinting Inc. in St. Louis praises his bulldozer.

"It can get into places that most other tools can't get into with a lot of pressure. It has a nice wide bill on it that is angled so you can shove it behind brake lights. It has a nice long handle so that if it's hard to reach you don't have to work very hard to get to it," says Lowery. "It's allowed us to quit removing back decks out of cars or having to remove a lot of stuff out of the car and just use that tool to get the film back behind places. It's definitely made [the job] a lot easier."

Gordon Watson, owner of Gordon Watson Window Tinting that installs commercial and residential film in Santa Cruz, Calif., agrees with Lowery about bulldozers.

"The bulldozer is one of those tools that I consider mandatory," says Watson.

Lowery is also a big fan of chizlers, but tweaked with his own personal touch.

"It's a nice, hard composite so you can get into tight spaces and get the pressure that you need. What we have done with the chizler is cut them in half and make this little spock ear out of it. We essentially cut it in half so we have a nice, long, sharp point and we can get behind gaskets and stuff like that as well as really tiny windows," says Lowery.

The EZ reach is also an installer favorite across the board. Mark Killmer, manager/owner of Jazz It Up in Centennial, Colo., has benefited from making the EZ reach a part of his automotive tinting tool kit.

"We use the EZ reach, which comes in gold and silver. The gold one is a medium strength tool and it reaches in a lot of corners. You can almost use it like a chizler," says Killmer. "For some cars where the front corners are very hard to reach or to get into the EZ reach works very well for that."

Watson agrees, "A platinum EZ reach tool can also be used as a five-way tool to give you the gap on residential or commercial applications."

Gordon Watson trusts a variety of tools, including his homemade pressure system (pictured in rear).

Old Favorites

In addition to specific tools, there are components of window film installation that installers say are mandatory.

"These are things you have to use to keep warranties valid such as distilled water, X-100, stainless steel razor blades, and white nylon scrub pads," explains Watson, who also uses Plexus on every single installation. "That is an incredible plastic polish and

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sealant and it is also anti-static. Every singe piece of film that we install gets coated with Plexus and micro fiber towels."

Under Pressure

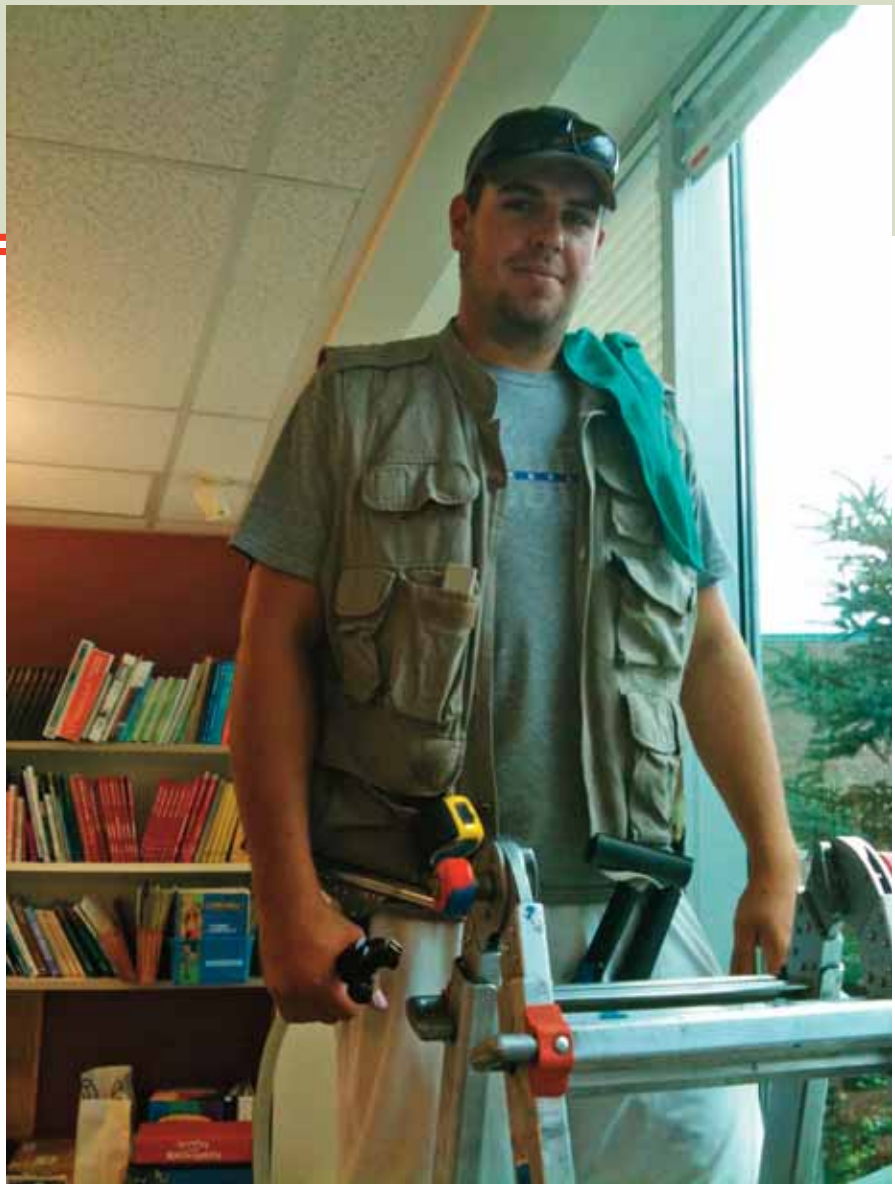
One thing that many installers agree on is that without a pressure system the job just can't be done properly. Watson has created his own system, which he considers one of his most valuable tools.

"It's a three-gallon tank just like everybody else has and I have mounted a motorized pump on it," says Watson. "In addition, in our tank I use chainsaw filters and those can be coupled to the pick-up tube inside the tank with a small piece of gasoline line and the chainsaw filter, which you can pick up at any small motorized tool company or online," says Watson.

Watson says his system, which runs 80-100 PSI, was hand-made for a fraction of what a similar system would cost. "The pump was $89 and I probably spent another 10 bucks on Ts and fittings and stuff like that. I probably was out the door for $130 and it is the best tool I have ever used. The pressure tank with the hoses and the nozzles blasts everything off the glass and the edges. It saves time because you don't have to pump it at all. If you are on a ladder you don't have to get down. It saves me more time than anything," Watson adds.

Other companies have also bought pressure systems or have tweaked their systems.

"We have a pressure system which enables an installer to have 80 pounds of constant water pressure using carbon dioxide paint ball containers and the standard Cornelius tanks," says Marler.



Joel Marler's installers use a tool vest rather than a tool belt to place less stress on their hips.

Tool Innovation

While the world of tools is constantly evolving, installers are also thinking about what they could do to make a tool work better or tools they wish would be manufactured.

"Over the course of the past five years I have seen a lot of tools being developed that are really good for the installer," says Lowery. "These are mainly a lot of long tools that will help you get behind and down into back decks and behind brake lights."

Killmer made a few modifications to the tail fins in his shop to create a better tool for his team.

"We drill two holes at the top edge and you can stick your finger in one of those tools and drag it across the window a lot better," says Killmer. "Those things are so hard to hold onto when they are wet so I drilled two holes into it and that helps."

When installers look back just ten years ago to the tools available to them, they say it's obvious that the industry has changed quite a bit. Ten years from now what kind of tools will installers be raving about and what will they say about the tools that are so loved now?

Katie Hodge is an assistant editor for Window Film magazine.

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Tint-Off and Conference to Return in 2011

International Window Film Expo, Conference and Tint-Off™
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Automotive Tinters Begin Prep for September 2011 Event

by: Katie Hodge

When the upcoming International Window Film Conference and Tint-off slides into the "River City," Memphis, Tenn., September 15-16, 2011, attendees and contestants can expect to experience more than just barbeque, Elvis, and a taste of the blues. The event, sponsored by Window Film magazine, brings the hands-on aspect of the industry right to you when the best of the best vie once again for bragging rights and the title of "World's Best Tinter." With 2011 right around the corner, mark your calendars now for the International Window Film Expo, Conference and Tint-Off, taking place as part of 2011 Auto Glass Week, which runs September 15-16, 2011. The Tint-Off is scheduled to take place Thursday, September 15, from 4 to 7 p.m.

Let the Games Begin

The Tint-Off will bring automotive window film tinters from across the country ready to compete for the winning title. This year the tint-off will solely focus on automotive tinting while architectural installers can expect to re-join the competition in upcoming years. Automotive tinters will compete against other tinters in a competition that will test their skills and their knowledge. Events such as this one acknowledge quality work and recognize those who excel at their craft.

For those unfamiliar with the event, judges score tinters in five different sections:

- Cleanliness of film;
- Cleanliness of vehicle;
- Light gaps and edge cuts;
- Quality of application; and
- Warranty card.

Judges will make deductions for different criteria that are not met to determine each contestant's final score. There will be one preliminary round followed by the final round of competition and the announcement of the winner. The competition will be open for spectators who want to watch the action live and check out the talent.

Prizes will be awarded for the three finalists in the competition. First place will be awarded $7,500. Second place will walk away with $1,000 and third place will be awarded with $500.

Film Studies

Following competition day, seminars will be held Friday, September 16 from 10:30 a.m. through 3 p.m. With a wide array of educational and hands-on involvement, the week will have opportunities for everyone to take something away from the event.

In addition, since the International Window Film Conference and Tint-Off is happening in conjunction with 2011 Auto Glass Week, attendees will have access to a great selection of additional seminars and programs that will be sponsored by other groups taking part in the week's events.

Home of the Blues

While one skilled tinter definitely won't be singing the blues, there are plenty of sites to see for those feeling bluesy. Memphis, known for its exceptional barbeque, blues music and rock 'n roll history, has plenty of things to do when the competition ends. Attendees can take a stroll down Beale Street, which honors many of Memphis' most famous and influential musicians, to take in the sights and sounds of this famous stretch of restaurants, bars and stores. With close proximity to both shopping and the Mississippi River, visitors will have the option to enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities. Graceland, the home of the legendary Elvis Presley, is just a short drive and almost anywhere you go in Memphis you can find traditional Memphis barbeque.

Other local attractions include the nearby National Civil Rights Museum, AutoZone Park and the FedEx Forum.

Shut-Eye in Memphis

The 2011 International Window Film Tint-Off will be taking place in the heart of Memphis at the Memphis Marriott Downtown and the Memphis Cook Convention Center. The hotel, which boasts the title of "largest hotel in Memphis," has spectacular views of the skyline and the convenience of being just a few steps from the competition and seminars.

The 19-floor hotel and convention center are attached by a short skywalk and feature a fitness center, indoor pool, coffee shop and a UPS store for shipping needs. The hotel is located on the Memphis trolley line, which provides attendees with easy transportation to restaurants, shopping and other attractions.

Attendees can stay at the hotel for the low room rate of $99. Reserve your room by contacting the Memphis Marriott Downtown at 901/527-7300.

Stay Tuned

For those interested in being a part of the 2011 International Window Film Tint-Off contact Holly Biller at hbiller@glass.com or at 540/720-5584 x123.

Stayed tuned to Window Film magazine and windowfilmmag.com for more updates as the Tint-Off approaches. WF

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Jonathan Longhurst, Autoshades

Jonathan Longhurst, company director of Autoshades in London, possesses the unique quality of not only being loved by his customers, but by his employees, too. Louise Morris, marketing executive at Autoshades contacted Window Film magazine to nominate her boss as a "Film Star."

Morris says, "He leads by example and keeps the team focused and hard working. He gives 100 percent and expects no less from others, but is always ready to show his gratitude for your efforts."

Longhurst got started in the tinting business more than two decades ago.

"I started by tinting my brother's car in my Dad's garage," says Longhurst. "From then on I began to get approached by people who saw his car. My brother and I started a partnership and after two and a half years I started Autoshades, in 1992."

For Longhurst, a day's work always comes back to satisfying customers and working as a team.

"The knowledge that I've gained over the years and improvements in the film industry have spurred me into wanting to grow the business and continue in this industry. The satisfaction of seeing that my customers appreciate my hard work and gaining repeat business by word of mouth makes it all worthwhile. I've built up a great team that works alongside me and they all care about the business as much as I do," says Longhurst.

Longhurst has always focused on automotive tinting, but is interested in expanding.

Longhurst opened Autoshades 18 years ago and still continues to serve as the director and beloved leader of his team.

"I would like to move more into the residential and commercial side of the business," he says. "I would eventually like to set up a UK network of true professional window tinting dealers to be able to offer a nationwide service," says Longhurst.

Morris notes that Longhurst's dedication to working hard for his customers is the key to his success.

"His attention to detail never fails to impress his individual customers and dealerships alike. He maintains a personal service of high quality and customer satisfaction," says Morris.

Throughout his career Longhurst has worked on all kinds of projects, including tinting cars on film sets where time is of the essence. However, the one project that he dreams of being a part of is something much different than a film set.

"Having worked closely with schools, I would like to work on a project developing schools for the future where I feel window film could significantly improve the working conditions for future generations of students and teachers alike," he says. "With ever increasing demands for the latest technology in the classroom such as interactive whiteboards, it is also important that the classroom is suitable for these developments, so that the schools can really benefit."

In his free time Longhurst enjoys traveling, visiting theme parks, exploring the countryside with his dogs, running, and most importantly spending time with his two young sons. **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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