

Raised

The Bar Has Been

International Window Film Expo, Conference and Tint-Off™ 2008



Attendees eagerly took notes as this year's speakers dished out invaluable advice to help better their businesses.

talks," he explained. "You get all of this great information and when you leave, you're all pumped up and then what happens? You never do anything."

McFadyen suggested dealers put his business techniques and advice to work immediately.

The following morning, in a welcoming session and event overview, WINDOW FILM'S editor Drew Vass covered recent industry events and developments. Vass pointed out how events tend to link and build upon one another. He also suggested dealers stay tapped into the latest developments in order to identify opportunities.

"Whether or not the green movement is a fad that will be here today and gone tomorrow is irrelevant," Vass said. "The fact is, it has consumer interest at an all-time high for energy saving solutions. And we all need to take advantage of that increased interest while it's here."

Vass kept the opportunity ball rolling by turning the session over to two speakers who discussed the automotive segment.

Automotive Opportunities

Brett Webster, product manager for Venture Tape Corp. in Rockland, Mass., covered advancements in paint protection technologies and provided key considerations for any window film dealer looking to capitalize on this segment.

Webster said window film dealers who wish to provide paint protection as a side product would need to do their homework and be

The window film industry is constantly evolving. Manufacturers invest heavily in research and development while distributors and dealers strive to keep up. But one part of the industry has evolved at an exponential rate recently: its customers.

The green movement and a slow economy have led homeowners to begin exploring energy (and thereby money) saving options. But an onslaught of "green" product claims has led those same consumers to develop a scrupulous eye. And if you think the average homeowner is a tough sale, wait until you get a load of the commercial segment. Property managers, designers and corporations demand a level of professionalism and service that's in a league of its own.

As of May 3, 2008, several hundred professionals are more qualified to meet these challenging opportunities. This year's International Window Film Expo, Conference and Tint-Off™ (IWFE)

set out to provide a top-notch environment for learning, competing and keeping up with the latest and that's just what it did.

Early Birds Got the Worm

The event got an early start with a pre-event session. Speaker Dave McFadyen held early birds on the edge of their seats as he shared insights to help dealers improve their businesses.

McFadyen, who owned American Window Tinting for 12 years, covered operational, sales and marketing, and financial best practices from a window film point of view.

"Everybody sitting in this room most likely owns their own business," McFadyen said. "There's very little that I'm going to teach you today that you couldn't go find if you were looking for it." But McFadyen was lined up to provide attendees with hard-hitting advice and by the time his session concluded, every attendee was begging for more.

"I've been to these kinds of



Christophe Fremont, president of Bekaert Specialty Films, presented his keynote address to a standing room only crowd.

able to provide a complete installation in two hours or less in order to be competitive. In a later session, Dana Curtis covered technologies that can help dealers meet this goal by utilizing plotter systems and pattern software. Curtis covered the ins and outs of selecting and implementing a plotter system then provided a live demonstration followed by a question-and-answer session.

Webster also pointed out some less obvious opportunities in paint protection, including the motorcycle market.

“Motorcycle dealers cringe when they see someone coming into the showroom, sitting on a bike and leaning forward,” Webster explained. “If that person has a big, metal, belt buckle on, they could leave scratches on the gas tank. So there’s an opportunity to develop a niche with motorcycle dealers for this very reason.”

Tying into Webster’s presentation, Barry Edwards, president of Aegis Films in Norcross, Ga., provided an overview of the automotive market. Edwards provided key statistics, including expected new car production levels and

explained that his company anticipates the automotive film industry to remain strong. Edwards isn’t the only manufacturing president to feel this way, as his message was later referenced and echoed by keynote speaker Christophe Fremont, president of Bekaert Specialty Films in San Diego.

Fremont delivered a spirited message to a standing-room-only crowd of more than 120 attendees as he explained his outlook for the industry. He encouraged attendees to take hold of opportunities presented by the commercial segment by raising the bar on professionalism. He also advised taking full advantage of industry associations—citing numerous points shared by Darrell Smith, executive director of the International Window Film Association (IWFA),

in his prior session including an industry and IWFA update. (*Read more on Fremont’s speech on page 28 of this issue.*)

Smith covered key opportunities in IWFA, including the association’s system for feeding leads to its members.

“If we receive an inquiry for your area and you’re not an IWFA member, that lead is going to go to someone else,” he explained. “You’re missing out on those opportunities.” Smith also cited many of IWFA’s efforts, which are supported by member dues, including accreditation courses and testing, which the association chose to offer alongside this year’s event.

Inspiring Short Courses

Several attendees said their businesses were markedly slower than past years, but steady.

From One Dealer to Another

In a special session called “What Worked for Me,” several dealers took the time out to share some of their successful experiences and techniques.

Mel Villalon, owner of Paradise Tinting in Long Beach, Calif., highlighted his recent success in offering a solution for homeowners with skylights. Villalon said he recognized the opportunity, then used good old-fashioned ingenuity to come up with an attachment system for sun shades to fill in for instances in which window film could not be used.

Nick Williams of Premier Window Tinting in Las Vegas covered a marketing technique that worked for his company recently. Williams showed how using simple marketing materials and techniques helped to boost his company’s business, including the use of special offers.

Last, but not least, Jason Obradovich, owner of Glass Coating Specialist Inc. in Tampa, Fla., shared the juicy details of how he went about landing the “big one” with his Sarasota Towers project (See “Tower Power” on page 28 of our *January-February 2008 issue*).



Showcase

In between educational sessions and watching the Tint-Off™, attendees had the opportunity to rub elbows with some new and favorite manufacturers.

Aegis Films



Aegis Films had a crew on hand to promote everything from the company's premium films and ClearBra paint protection, to plotters and software. The Norcross, Ga.-based manufacturer's Acuity Architectural Films are made from all metal laminates and ultraviolet (UV) protection is built into all layers as well as in between laminates to provide a high level of UV protection.

► www.1800gettint.com

Bekaert Specialty Films

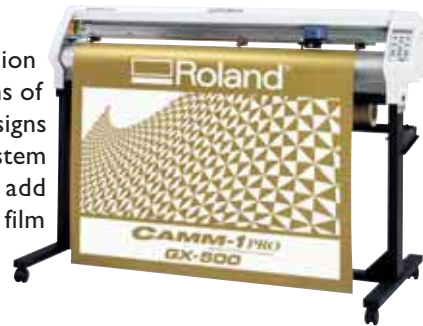
Bekaert had a full staff at IWFE to demonstrate the company's plotter system, Specularis software and full film lineup. Live demonstra-



Roland ASD

Roland Advanced Solutions Division (ASD) provided live demonstrations of its plotter systems and Film Designs Pro software. This advanced system allows film professionals to add designs, logos and text to window film patterns.

► www.rolandasd.com



tions showed how the company's Panorama dealers utilize Specularis to produce reports and sales packages including accurate impact predictions based on project parameters. In addition to inputting building characteristics, the software also uses historical weather data and sun positioning.

► www.bekaertfilms.com

Johnson Window Films



Johnson Window Film's booth promoted all of the company's offerings, including Insulair—an IR-rejecting, ceramic film that the company says is long-lasting and wireless-signal-friendly. The Carson, Calif.-based company also had a number of free handouts for visitors including its handy tool pouches.

► www.johnsonwindowfilms.com

Madico Inc.

Madico drew a crowd with its complete line-up of films, including everything from decorative and impact resistant to premium automotive products.



The company's Onyx® and Charcoal® lines provide nearly 100-percent ultraviolet protection and block more than 66 percent of the sun's heat, according to Madico.

► www.madico.com

UltraFilm USA



UltraFilm parked a Ferrari F40 in its booth this year. The company's complete portfolio of value-priced, premium and specialty window film lines also drew a crowd while a mini-lab setup demonstrated its special plasma process.

► www.ultrafilm-usa.com

Ed Golda, president of Michigan Glass Coatings Inc., addressed the issue of softer times by explaining how dealers can manage to prosper in a down market. Golda stressed the need for professionally trained salespeople and warned against one-man operations.

"This is probably the area in which most people in our industry fail," Golda explained. "They want to keep it a one-man operation, or they don't want to invest the time required to train someone to sell for them." Golda says this one-man mentality will not see dealers through tough times. "I would ask you, in these kinds of times, when maybe your competitors are having issues—maybe there's a salesperson who isn't happy with his current company, or maybe there's someone from another industry that's more depressed than ours is—take a look around. Find someone to fill the professional sales role."

One aspect of effective sales is the art of communicating. Dan Molloy and his partner Mel Auston of Molloy LLC enlightened attendees with sales techniques centered on effective sales language.

"Just because you can install the heck out of window film, that doesn't mean that you know how to answer the phone and set the appointment," Molloy said. "It's a

dance," he said, speaking of sales conversations.

Molloy and Auston explained how certain techniques build the essential building blocks for sales, including trust, respect, freedom of expression and shared commitment. Both speakers engaged attendees with questions and exercises.

Learning Lingo

One area of opportunity that speaks a language of its own is the green movement. Window film dealers know the important "green" characteristics of their products—energy savings, solar control, daylighting and such—but knowing how to understand and use the lingo that consumers are familiar with is a puzzle of its own. Kathryn Giblin, vice president of global marketing and technical services for Bekaert Specialty Films, gladly tackled this subject, bringing dealers up to speed quickly.

"We recently put together a glossary of industry terms related to the green movement," she explained, "I think we ended up with more than five pages."

Giblin said what's important to window film dealers is knowing which terms apply and how to use those terms to speak the proper lingo to potential customers who have a new vocabulary.

Another segment that offers dealers a challenging vocabulary lesson is the signal defense market. Though relatively narrow, this segment represents a gold mine for window film dealers, according to Mike Raymond of ASTIC Signals Defenses LLC. Raymond said this once government-centered sector is expanding quickly to include financial corporations and virtually any company that deals with information-based assets.

"Forty percent of businesses report losses of proprietary data," Raymond explained. "There's an opportunity for you to be the first one out there offering a solution."

Windows represent a building envelope's weakest link when it comes to wireless signal leakage (see related article on page 14 of the November-December 2007 issue of *WINDOW FILM*). But cracking this opportunity requires at least a basic understanding of the technologies involved, so Raymond dazzled attendees with his fascinating explanations. In one portion of his presentation, he showed dealers how some individuals are able to construct a laser microphone out a simple laser pointer device and basic electronic components. When aimed through a window, the laser strikes a thin, solid surface and transmits an audio signal back to nearby intruders. Raymond then explained how signal defense film prevents these sorts of intrusions.

Teaming Up

Being co-located with the Independent Glass Association's Spring Auto Glass Show and Americas Glass Showcase gave IWFE attendees the advantage of rubbing elbows with a sister industry. Not only were glass companies on hand to exhibit products and share information, but industry experts were available to bring window film dealers up to date. The conference portion of this year's event wrapped up with a glass industry update, provided by Donn Harter of the Americas Glass Association.

Never has there been a more critical time for window film professionals to grow and learn. And this year's event left several hundred ready to meet the modern challenges this industry faces. **WF**

Cameo Moment?

In case you missed it, we published a brief video overview for this year's Tint-Off™. The video was delivered in our Focus on Film e-newsletter, then later posted on our website. If you missed it, visit our website and click on "Video Archive." While you're there, ensure you don't miss future "cameos" by clicking on and signing up for our "FREE e-newsletter."