

Seeking New Directions

GlassBuild America Attendees Search for New Opportunities for Tough Year Ahead

by Megan Headley, Charles Cumpston, Ellen Rogers and Tara Taffera

A majority of the exhibitors at this year's GlassBuild America reported that upon the show's closing on October 3 the annual event had exceeded their expectations. That expectations appeared to have been universally low before the event opened on October 1 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta may have accounted for many of those reviews, but several exhibitors reported that they'd had their best show in years, an encouraging report for professionals preparing for the stark commercial construction forecasts of 2010.

"We exceeded our expectations, for sure," commented Rob Botman, general manager of Glassopolis in Toronto. "In hindsight, I think that our high traffic was not hurt by the tough economy, but rather was maybe helped by it as customers are now forced to seek out the best deals they can. They can no longer buy the same old product the same old way, but in fact have the incentive now to go find the best value supplier they can find."

In its booth the company had visitors take the 'the PYRAN Challenge,' which let visitors examine the differences between fire-rated glass products. "Glassopolis had a fine show. We were very busy through Friday morning," Botman added.

Last year in Las Vegas, attendees noted the absence of most of the primary glass manufacturers, as well as

several of the largest glass fabricators (visit www.usglassmag.com to read the *Only Online* review from December 2008). This year several others were absent from that exhibitor list as well.

That proved a boon for other companies, such as EFCO Corp.

"I think the fact that [our competitors] weren't there helped us a lot too—it was one of the best shows I've ever been to," commented Dave Hewitt, director of sales and marketing with EFCO. He added, "I don't think I had a few seconds before I turned around and saw somebody I knew or who wanted to talk business with us. You build relationships and strengthen bonds with customers you've had over the years."

Vitro America was on the floor front and center as well, displaying information on all of its products, including its PAVIA satin-finished glass. PPG Industries exhibited several new products, including its Solarblue/Pacifica products. The company also has two new products designed specifically to meet .30/.30 requirements, Sungate 400 and Solarblue 65. Both J.E. Berkowitz and Standard Bent Glass promoted their SentryGlas Expressions laminated glass on the trade show floor.

However, several local companies chose to emphasize their presence off the show floor. For example, exhibitor Grenzbach of Newnan, Ga., took advantage of the show to invite customers



to an open house at its nearby factory. The company displayed one of its newest developments, an edge seaming robot, in operation on its factory floor.

YKK AP America, which chose not to exhibit this year, offered tours of its manufacturing facility in Dublin, Ga. The day-long tour gave customers the opportunity to see the entire process from casting to extrusion, finishing and fabrication.

And Bonnell Aluminum of Newnan, Ga., had a presence at the show solely through an off-site reception for customers, where it publicized its forthcoming capability for producing larger-than-ever aluminum extrusions due to a 5,500-ton press that is soon to be operational.

"The large press is going to be the only one of its kind in North America that is focused on that market," explained Duncan Crowdis, president of Bonnell. "We're excited about the opportunities."

Crowdis also noted, "We've introduced a new acid-etch process in our anodizing facility, which we're also very excited about. Not only is it environmentally friendly but it provides customers with a much superior surface finish."



Show attendees showed interest in new products that would allow them to expand into new directions in 2010.

Preparing for 2010

After some time on the trade show floor, Bonnell director of sales and marketing Ira Endres noted that the show seemed to showcase a similar level of technology to years past, and traffic had noticeably decreased. "It was down a little bit ... by and large everybody is talking pretty much about the same message. They're looking for opportunities to carry them through this economic downturn," Endres said. "I think most everybody was very optimistic about the things that they were doing in their businesses to get through this difficult year."

The well-timed extrusion press is Bonnell's way of expanding into new opportunities as the extrusion company has been hit as hard as anyone by the tough year drawing to an end.

"Just to give you an idea of how deep it is, [aluminum] industry shipments through 2009 compared to 2006 are projected to be down about 45 percent; year over year through August industry shipments are going to be down probably about 32 percent," Endres said. "As far as Bonnell Aluminum is concerned, we're doing a little bit better than the industry—not much, we're all in the same situation—and our view is going



Several exhibitors reported that they'd had their best show in years, while attendees looked for ways to improve sales in the year ahead.

forward that the nonresidential segments still have some softness ahead well into 2010. Hopefully the support of stimulus funding and the return of private investment will help us on the recovery side of the cycle."

Forecasts similar to Endres' were echoed across the show floor.

"The economy is having a significant impact on the industry both with our customers and our customers' customers," commented Bob Quast, president of Lisec America Inc. "What we're hearing from our customers is that they're seeing orders down anywhere from 30 to 70 percent in different areas."

Quast added that many of the ma-

chinery manufacturer's customers are seeing a slowdown in commercial construction. "The hope is that many people out there are now are hoping to see a turnaround sometime middle or end of 2010. But, clearly, capital is constrained and a lot of our customers who are looking to purchase new machines to support their businesses are having difficulty getting funding for their capital projects specifically because banks are not lending and they're being very risk averse now. Hopefully everything falls out the way we believe it will, and we'll see a turnaround in this sometime toward the end of 2010," he said.

Ed Sieber has owned a Glass Doctor

Greatly reduced this year was the presence of Chinese companies on the GlassBuild show floor, a result of the economic downturn. Talking to those Chinese companies that exhibited offered insight into their thoughts, motives and actions.

For Yuntong Glass Mech-Electro Technology Co. Ltd., "The U.S. market has great potential," said Frank Lu, general manager of Yuntong USA. He said that his company, which makes tempering equipment, has sold a number of systems over the last couple of years. "It seemed like we were on the right track to grow, but then the economy turned," he said. "Now, we are doing the marketing and getting our name and credibility built up." He pointed out that the company has a technician who visits customers to allay any concern about service problems.

Lu said that while there used to be eight to 10 Chinese exhibitors like his company at the GlassBuild show, this year the number was closer to three. "Chinese companies have scaled back worldwide, not just in the U.S.," he said. "The domestic market is still strong, so the companies are changing their emphasis until the market springs back." Lu calls it an interesting situation. "Companies feel they will survive and come back but they are pulling back and regrouping right now. When the market was good, we were doing 10 to 15 machines a month but in the last year and a half, it has been slower."

Hangzhou Haofeier Decorative Co., Ltd., was a first-time exhibitor, and Geofrey Xu, sales manager in the U.S., said that it was not a total match between his company and the show as its main product is an interior door. However, he said that the family-owned company also provides glass doors, shower doors and mirror. "This is a new market segment for us," he said speaking of the large company with diverse product lines.

Xu said that he had seen some machinery at the show which they might buy and export to China to make decorative glass. "We are interested in finding distributors in the U.S. to expand our sales here," Xu added.

Xu told the story of taking his cousins from China, who are visiting for the show, to a Home Depot. "They said that the quality of the products being sold in China is higher than those at Home Depot. This gives us some insight into how we might approach the market here in the U.S. with higher quality products," he said.

Intex Glass (Xiamen) Co. Ltd., which offers a range of fabricated glass products, was represented in its booth by Continental Group, its representative in the U.S. In discussing the market, Continental's Thomas Snyder said that it is slow "but it's still good and it will come back. In 2008 the market started down and our customers are off up to 50 percent," he said. "I think it will come back but not to where it was."

While the number of Chinese exhibitors was down, they offered a diverse range of equipment and products. Yantai Bluesky Glass Co., Ltd., a Chinese glass fabricator, was promoting decorative glass in its booth.

Jumping to the other side of the trade show, and the world, attendees found that the Italian presence at GlassBuild smaller than in years past with Vitrum scheduled for a few weeks later. Cinzia Schiatti, who handles foreign sales for Schiatti Angelo, the Italian machinery and accessories manufacturer, explained that some companies decided not to exhibit in the Atlanta show because it was so close to the biannual event in Milan. "But the companies which have been successful in the past are in the same situation we are," she explained, "and they are here. The U.S. has always been a good market for us and regardless of the recession we still have to see our customers and maybe meet new ones."

Asked if the market in the U.S. is good, she replied, "At the moment, there is no good market. We still sell some machines in the U.S., not as much as in the past, but we are still selling."

One point which a number of the Italian exhibitors at GlassBuild made was that they would be introducing new machinery and equipment at Vitrum therefore they were not showing anything new in Atlanta.

The Italian exhibitors had also scaled back the sizes of their booths and the amount of machinery that they had on the show floor.

All the companies represented by Besana-Lovati shared a booth space, which had tables and literature about the offerings from the various companies. In the space were Besana and Lovati as well as Macotec.

"We have the showroom with machinery in Winston-Salem, and it's not so far that interested people can visit," explained Nadia Cassini, who heads up the export department for Besana. "We will be showing new offerings at Vitrum," she added.

Asked how the U.S. market is, she said that that was a difficult question. "The market is very slow. We have few requests from potential clients. We hope 2010 will see a lift in the market. Luckily," she added, "Europe is in better shape so we can turn to them. But 30 percent of our business is in the U.S. and that is an important segment."

Sergio Cosano, sales manager for insulating glass machinery manufacturer For.El, also reported a decline in business in the U.S. "Before, there was too much business—speculation and overextended credit. The market had been artificial for the past few years and now it is taking a more responsible position," he said. "When the market gets better, it will be better for us. There is not a need now for so many energy efficient windows in the U.S."

One new exhibitor from Italy at GlassBuild was Marker Italia, which makes sand-jet marking machine systems for glass. "We want to get more into the U.S. market," explained Maike Bergal, who handles communications services for the company. "We want to meet Americans here, not just at the European shows," she said in explaining why the company had decided to exhibit at the show for the first time. She added that the company can sell direct, or is open to having an agent or a joint venture, "if someone is interested," she said. The majority of the company's business is currently in Europe.

—Charles Cumpston

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franchise in Charlotte, N.C., since 1987 and worked through several downturns. However, he commented, “This has been a really hard cycle. We’ve had to do a little downsizing ourselves; we struggled a little bit at the first of the year.”

To combat that, Sieber said, “We had to get lean. Our vice president of Glass Doctor, Dan Mock, said this year we’ve got to be better businessmen and that’s what we’ve really had to do: we’ve had to really focus on the numbers to get all of our people working as efficiently as they can—and everyone has. Our team has stepped up and is working a lot harder doing more than they’ve normally had to do.”

The CEO of Glass Doctor’s parent company, the Dwyer Group, spoke before Congress in September with regard to freeing up short-term capital for small businesses, Sieber noted.

“That’s been a big push for us, to get that capital freed up,” he said.

Sieber also commented that this year’s event in Atlanta had a number of vendors on-hand with enticing solutions for business operations.

“I’ve been really impressed with the machinery this year and all the representation,” Sieber added.

Product Fabrication Expansion

Indeed machinery seemed to provide a popular avenue for entering new markets. “It’s interesting how many customers I did talk to who came to see us who ... said they wanted to go look at equipment,” Hewitt noted. “You know it’s going to turn and if you’ve had a lot of cash flow and been successful—if you’ve got the money now’s the time to get the best deal, and I think that probably applies to windows and equipment.”

Bob Carter with Salem Distributing remarked that the company’s traditional fabrication equipment on display got less interest from attendees than its new HOAF laminating system. “We’ve had hundreds of people come by wanting to look inside,” said Carter. “It’s been by far the attention-grabber in our booth.”



Glaslam demonstrated the process of making IGUs with its new SmartEdge warm-edge spacer.

Carter suspected the reason for that is that many glass fabricators are looking for “new directions” for their business to keep busy in 2010.

“It’s a new direction glass fabricators could go,” Carter said of the laminating kiln. He added, “It’s custom—and import-resistant.”

After visitors toured the inside of the oven—which is made from recycled shipping containers in a unique example of being green—they could examine examples of decorative laminated glass.

Giovanni Barbareschi, North American business development manager for Tekna, saw traffic in the company’s booth interested in automatic CNC fabrication equipment. As Barbareschi optimistically pointed out, the company has continued to increase in the North American marketplace despite the down economy because it is just expanding into this marketplace.

Over the last 10 or 15 years Tekna has supplied more and more automatic CNC equipment. “The advantage of the CNC equipment is that you program the machine to do whatever you have to do

and you don’t have to reset the machine very often with tooling and dies and so on,” Barbareschi explained. “Also, with the increase of the fenestration software in the industry you can implement the complete automation from the office to the shop floor. I have to say that Europe, in terms of technology, is a little bit more advanced compared to North America, but America is really picking up; there are a lot of shops that are transitioning from manual machinery to automatic machinery. That’s actually the trend.”

The company displayed examples of its CNC machining center during the Atlanta show, including one already-purchased example of an automated cutting machine. Barbareschi that part of what’s allowing the company to grow with this trend is its service policy.

“Our products our good, but we know that a key factor in North America is service and I think we have been very good in that,” Barbareschi added.

Carey Brayer, vice president of sales for Intermac America, noted that the company saw a 38-percent increase in

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Bohle America drew crowds interested in learning more about its variety of glass cutting tools.

booth traffic compared to last year's event. "Our booth was extremely busy on Wednesday and Thursday and steady on Friday," he added.

Intermac received a variety of new projects from visitors that currently have few fabrication machines, as well as visits from companies with active projects.

FeneTech reported a record number of visitors in its booth compared to previous years. Ron Crawl, FeneTech president, commented, "We approached this year's GlassBuild show with apprehension as we were not sure what to expect based on the ongoing economic downturn. While attendance at this year's show was lighter than previous years the quality of attendees was exceptional. Traffic in our booth could only be described as encouraging."

FeneTech is among those companies looking to enter new markets.

"About two years ago at FeneTech we determined that to avoid participating in the industry downturn that we wanted to diversify the products that we offer and the geographical locations that we serve. We decided to partner with a company from Austria called SoftSolution and we've brought to the North American market the FeneVision line scanner," Crawl said. In addition, "FeneTech is now an international company; we have active project sin Indonesia, Thailand, France and Egypt as well as throughout North America."

Finding New Markets

According to Fred Gebauer, business development manager for Insulgard Security Products, the security glazing market is among those remaining strong. "We see good opportunities," he said. As an example he pointed to the Appeals Court in Atlanta where his company is installing both bomb- and bullet-resistant glazing. "FEMA is becoming an important aspect of our products," he added.

Art Marino of SAF-Glas described the market as "spotty." He explained, "Until the money is on the street from the stimulus package, I think it's going to be spotty. Upgrading government facilities is part of the package."

According to Marino, in the work that is currently being done they're using the lowest upgrades possible to save money. "Hopefully, when the stimulus money comes in, they upgrade," he said. "In the U.S., we had banner years last year and the year before; but this year it's dried up," he added. "Prisons and other security facilities are waiting for the stimulus money. It's like the cash-for-clunkers program."

Marino said that his company is looking internationally and has built a plant in Taiwan to service the Far East and Europe, based on the value of those currencies verses the U.S. dollar.

Gebauer echoed the sentiment about not seeing the stimulus money. "The

Company News

In addition to transitions to new markets, several GlassBuild exhibitors had news to share about inter-company transitions.

Ken Hegyes of Capital Tape Co. and Glazers Choice Inc. in Cleveland mentioned that the company has redesigned its website, www.glazerschoice.com, to include the addition of the Groves Glass and Stone Material Storage and Handling Equipment and Glazers Choice mirror mounting tapes. The mounting tapes are packaged in small quantity cartons, which Hegyes said allow buyers the best economic pricing. Freight is paid for orders of two cartons or more.

Cheryl Browning commented that interest remained strong at the show, and that the questions from attendees were much more specific than in years past. "It used to be 'what have you got?' ... Now it is 'do you have x?'" she said.

Representatives with GIESSE were pleased to share that the company now has a new branch in Blountville, Tenn. The first facility of GIESSE Group North American Inc. is expected to be able to service nearly 75 percent of the U.S. and Canadian population with freight service in two days or less.

There are a couple new products to be coming out of the hardware manufacturer's new facility as well, including the GOS™-S T-Rex® device. According to the company, the hardware helps create a sliding door capable of providing exceptional thermal performance; the thermal transmittance, air and water resistance and acoustic performance, tested according to EN standards, are similar to those of the top best swing door and window systems available today.

Arne Klöfkorn, president of Bohle America, noted that the Charlotte, N.C.-based company would be moving into its new office space at the end of October, with additional warehouse space ready by November. The two spaces will be located together, while providing additional space.

The company highlighted its vast offering of cutting and other glass processing tools at the show.

"We are still drawing a crowd for something as simple as glass cutting," Klöfkorn commented with a smile. Indeed, the booth still remained busy at the end of the event's largely sluggish third day.

projects we're working on have been in the works for some time," he said.

According to Hewitt, "A lot of these [glazing contractors] that have been doing office buildings during the boom run are out of office buildings to bid, so they're looking for schools and educational [projects]." He added, "Schools have been strong for us; it still doesn't make up the reduction of office and retail and condo."

This year EFCO Corp. kept the spotlight on its 8700 and 8800 unitized curtainwall series, introduced at the AIA Convention (see June 2009 *USGlass*, page 64).

"We had a lot of interest in that because ... that was the last piece we didn't have and we used it to fill out our product line; for us it's kind of a natural completion of the line. ... And yes, we've had a lot of interest for it because a lot of our window customers want to get into that business," commented Hewitt.

Coral Industries, which was once known solely as a shower door company, highlighted a new direction, focusing on its residential and architectural product segments. The company displayed a variety of glass products, including an array of patterned glass.

Jennifer Heidrick with World Glass noted that the company is moving toward more pre-fabricated products. "We're supplying something [glaziers] can just buy and install and we're seeing lots of interest in this," Heidrick commented.

That company, however, also got a great deal of interest from attendees in its glass flooring and stairs, which they also offer backpainted. The company also showcased its new acid-etched patterns for glass and mirror for closet doors, as well as sliding doors.

Northern Building Products Inc. announced at the show its new affiliation with Greek engineered wall systems solutions provider ALUMIL. The Teterboro, N.J.-based fenestration manufacturer is now the exclusive fabricator of ALUMIL products for the United States (see November 2009 *USGlass*, page 16).

The Energy Push

"Energy is the hottest topic in the news everyday," commented Mark Silverberg of Technoform. It kept traffic coming to Technoform's booth to check out offerings such as its Bautec structural insulating strut.

Silverberg is predicting that the next generation of windows will be built around thermal strut and warm-edge spacers. He sees movement into use of warm-edge spacers in the commercial arena accelerating, even as Technoform has spent the last year expanding its capabilities with hollows.

"[There's] an unprecedented level of design activity in the commercial window frame," Silverberg commented.

Expect to see more hybrids, he predicted, as commercial window manufacturers move from all-aluminum products to a mix of aluminum with composites.

Continuing that trend of energy concern, Glasslam demonstrated in its booth how to make an insulating glass unit with its new Air-Tight™ Smart-Edge spacer.

"It's just been a fantastic show," commented Matt Hale. He said that interest ran high in the new SmartEdge warm-edge spacer product thanks to the live demonstrations.

The continued focus on energy concerns prompted Lisec to display its TriSeal applicator at this year's event. "As many are aware with all the ENERGY STAR, code requirements and things that are coming into place, customers really need to switch over to a warm-edge spacer system or running triple glazed units for stainless steel bent spacers in combination with other low-E coatings in order to be able to comply with the ENERGY STAR requirements," Quast said.

Joe Erb, commercial product manager of Edgetech, the manufacturer of the TriSeal

SuperSpacer, explained that the spacer product "is a flexible warm-edge with the metal removed but you still get all the structural integrity, the condensation resistance and thermal improvements that are necessary to meet the codes. When you can do that with a reduction in labor on the line it makes for a very good system to put into place." Erb added, "We're definitely seeing a continued growth for this market because of the energy codes."

Mike McHugh with FeneTech explained that energy demands had prompted the company's latest offering as well. "With some of the changes in our industry regarding ENERGY STAR, NFRC's increased the labeling requirements for windows dramatically. Many people have access to lasers, any people have information databases; what's really lacking is the capability to integrate this information on the factory floor," he said. "What we have devised is a system where the operator can simply touch the screen, feed the glass; in real time our computer system will label the glass intelligently, whether it's a label for tempering, a label for IG certification, labeling ENERGY STAR what the U-value is or for a particular customer that's totally up to what the customer wants to put in the database." ■

More Products, Please!

Check out our Showcase department in the December 2009 *USGlass*, and in future issues, for an expanded look at the exciting new products introduced at GlassBuild 2009.

the authors



Megan Headley is the editor and **Charles Cumpston, Ellen Rogers** and **Tara Taffera** are contributing editors of *USGlass*.