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National Vinyl Achieves New Heights in Performance with Quanex



With a history stretching back to the 1980s, National Vinyl in Chicopee, Massachusetts, provides quality vinyl window and door systems to new construction and retrofit applications throughout the Northeast and beyond. Over the years, the company's differentiator has been one simple thing: great teamwork.

"We live by the premise that everyone makes a difference," said Scott Channell, general manager, National Vinyl. "There is no 'most important' person in our company. We operate with the goal of making the best products day in and day out, no matter what your role is. We're only as good as our last window, and we need to take care of our customers quickly and efficiently."

Delivering on quality isn't always easy, particularly when reaching for new performance targets. To make it happen, National Vinyl worked with Quanex Building Products and its warm-edge spacer systems to deliver on its commitment to customers.

Starting with Duraseal® warm-edge systems and later Super Spacer® systems in the early part of the 2000s, National Vinyl and Quanex worked together to boost performance when ENERGY STAR® (4.0 and 5.0) made their debut several years ago. Maintaining the thermal performance necessitated by the popular program was a top priority for National Vinyl across all its standard window and door offerings.

"People know and recognize ENERGY STAR, and meeting the

criteria across all of our product tiers is an important part of our business," Channell said. "And Quanex helped make it happen."

Discovering the Right Solution

With spacer systems being a key component to a window's long-term performance and durability, Channell said that National Vinyl wanted to make no sacrifices in terms of quality and consistency in hitting the new ENERGY STAR standards. And he was confident that the Quanex team could deliver.

"We also wanted to make certain that we weren't going to pass a higher cost on our products down to our customers," Channell said. "We worked closely and directly with the Quanex team to learn what changes we could make to these units to make that happen."

The solution came in the form of Quanex's Duralite® when moving up to ENERGY STAR 6.0, a system that is ideally suited for high-volume production of dual- and triple-paned units. In addition to performance, Duralite offers aesthetic benefits with its smooth surface appearance.



Duralite systems made for a comfortable switch from previous Quanex spacer products the company had used, and the Quanex team ensured a smooth transition.

Quanex also helped implement continual improvement and automated quality control processes to National Vinyl's new system, helping to ensure consistency in every completed window and door.

"The processes they helped implement have given us the confidence we need," Channell said. "We can sleep well at night knowing we were making the best units possible, and that they were meeting the performance criteria we needed."

Technical Excellence

Channell also noted that Quanex's Technical Services team helped National Vinyl ensure they were living up to their customers' highest expectations. With the ability to help customers enhance product lines, uncover new manufacturing efficiencies and drive excellence across the plant floor, the Technical Services team worked closely with National Vinyl throughout the transition to Duralite.

"We run a combination of automated and semi-automated equipment, including an automated spacer application table for Duralite," said Channell. "Quanex's team has helped us ensure that we're not missing a step when it comes to units throughout the fabrication process."

"Our customers come to us for quality, performance and the highest level of customer service," Channell said. "Coupled with support from the Quanex Technical Services team, there is no doubt that we're living up to our customers' highest expectations."

For more information on National Vinyl visit www.nvpwindows.com.



Are You Caught Up on These Critical Maintenance Tasks?



Spring will be here before you know it. With warmer weather comes the busy season in the fenestration industry, filled with plant floor hustle and bustle for the next many months.

That makes the early part of the year a great time to catch up on any maintenance and housekeeping tasks that might have been put on the back burner throughout the previous year's busy season. Ongoing maintenance is always important, of course, but with a little bit of downtime comes the opportunity to dig in, take your time, and ensure your equipment and operations are primed for continued success.

With that in mind, here are some spots on the plant floor that are worth giving some special attention:

The Glass-Washing Station

If you manufacture your own insulating glass (IG), the glass-washing station is one of the most critical components of your line. Dirty glass makes for poor end products, leading to aesthetic as well as performance issues like seal failures.

Ongoing maintenance to the glass-washing station should be a regular function of your plant. Ensuring that water quality and temperature are consistent is an everyday task. But with

some extra downtime, give your machine some good and thorough attention. It's recommended that glass-washing machines be power washed at least once a week and taken apart/thoroughly cleaned monthly, but those processes can slip as we work through the hustle and bustle of busy season. Now is a prime opportunity to get back on track.

Likewise, unseen issues can go undetected even when following ongoing maintenance best practices. It's not uncommon that the brushes in an automated glass-washing machine may not even be contacting the glass due to calibration issues. Take the time to give your equipment a good, thorough inspection for issues like this one. Speaking of...

Calibration

Your automated glass washing machine isn't the only thing that depends on proper calibration. Fenestration manufacturing is an exacting, precise process. And now more than ever, as we implement automated processes and technologies into our operations, it's critically important to ensure that all equipment is properly calibrated.

For instance: Accurate cutting and notching of IG spacers are important when it comes to the overall performance of your units, and your spacer applicators or benders must function as intended to make that happen. You should already be regularly checking that your saws are sharp,

and that they're cutting to the correct lengths, but now that you have a wider window of opportunity to do so, take a close look. Make adjustments as necessary.

Continuous Improvement

As mentioned, maintenance and upkeep should be something you're pursuing year-round. It's a process—and it's just as important as any other on your shop floor.

While you've got some extra downtime, take the time to evaluate your floor's best practices and procedures. Have these best practices been working well? Are they being followed? Is everyone on your floor following the maintenance schedule you've established? Does your schedule need adjusting?

Only you can answer those questions—and now's a good time for some reflection.

For more information about Quanex, visit www.Quanex.com.



Make the Most of Your Seasonal Employees



have the skills and the attitude you need. Not only will it help you this year, but as mentioned, you can rehire them next year safe in the knowledge that they're the right fit.

It's important to think about culture fit here, too. Workers who don't fit from the culture perspective can have negative consequences. Employee disengagement can be contagious, spreading from an employee who might not be the right fit to employees who have delivered stellar work for years.

Do Your Homework

It's important to remember that though your seasonal staff might only be with you for a few months out of the year, laws and regulations that apply to your full-time staff are still in effect.

A few things in particular: Know the difference between independent contractors and seasonal employees; stay on top of required benefits for your seasonal staff; and know the details about your tax-reporting responsibilities.

Good luck this busy season!

Check the latest insight from Quanex Building Products in our In Focus blog at www.Quanex.com/InFocus.

It's never too early to begin preparing for the busy summer season. Numerous industry reports expect 2018 to be a good one for the fenestration industry. Is your factory prepared to handle more orders, more work...and more workers?

It's a time of the year where many manufacturers turn to seasonal employees in order to keep up with higher demand. But it requires doing a few things right to ensure you're making the most of a temporary workforce to get over the busy season hump.

Here are a few ways you can make the most of it:

Learn from Experience

Before you begin your search for seasonal employees, think back to past years. How many extra hands on deck have you needed? Have you over-hired? Under-hired? Which parts of the plant floor have you needed extra help on? Correlate what you've experienced in years past with your current year projections as a starting point.

Build Loyalty

Just because seasonal employees might not be working with you for the long haul, they can and should be valuable members of your team—otherwise, why bring them on board in the first place?

Engagement is just as important with your seasonal staff as it is with your year-round staff. You need both teams to gel so you can get the job done right—engaging everyone is critical.

Additionally, manufacturers need people who have the right skills to do an increasingly specialized job. It's easier to find the right seasonal help if you have a strong pool of engaged workers that you can rehire year after year.

Find the Right People

Making the wrong hire can cost you significantly, and that's a rule that applies to seasonal staffers too. Do the legwork of finding the right people, ensuring they



What You Need to Know About GreenON Rebates

Big news for energy-efficient windows in Canada hit in mid-December, as the Green Ontario Fund (GreenON) announced major changes to its rebate program.

Homeowners can now receive up to \$500 per window, and up to \$5,000 total, when upgrading to high-performance windows over the next two years.

GreenON states that replacement windows must conform to ENERGY STAR® Zone 3 and must be on ENERGY STAR's Most Efficient 2017 list recognizing high-performance products. What does it mean for residential window manufacturers doing business in Ontario? A potential big spike in sales as homeowners look to benefit from the attractive rebates.

"This will drive sales of highly efficient windows while the rebate program is in effect," says Andrew Moore, sales agent, Quanex Building Products. "I'm already



having good conversations with numerous customers on how they can capitalize.

"Our customers want to know what they need to do to offer products that meet the specified performance levels," he continued. "Will it require triple glazing? New coatings? Switching to higher-performance spacer technology? The answers won't be the same for everyone,

but Quanex is dedicated to finding them for our customers."

Do your windows have what it takes to meet GreenON rebate performance specifications? Contact your Quanex representative and start the conversation today.

For more information, visit www.greenon.ca.

Quanex's Edgetech Brings Warm-Edge Excellence to Fensterbau Frontale

Edgetech Europe, a Quanex Building Products company, will showcase the technical benefits of its industry-leading Super Spacer® technology at this year's Fensterbau Frontale 2018, Europe's premier fenestration show.

Fenestration professionals all over the world are wrestling with changing technology and industry evolution. Digitization, production automation and an ever-increasing focus on energy efficiency have driven manufacturers to think differently about their operations.

With Super Spacer, those manufacturers can handle change with ease. Super Spacer is uniquely suited for use with modern high-speed spacer processing equipment, including vertical automated lines. As a premium energy-efficient and sustainable solution for high-volume dual- and triple-pane IG units, Super Spacer further grants manufacturers confidence in delivering a

high-quality product.

"Due to a shortage of skilled workers and high competitive pressures, many window producers are now faced with the decision of whether to move in the direction of full automation whilst the warm edge has at the same time established itself as an energy-efficient edge seal compound for windows," explains Joachim Stoss, managing director of the German Edgetech Europe GmbH company based in Heinsberg. "In view of the manufacturing technology involved, flexible spacer technology like Super Spacer outperforms rigid spacers in terms of their flexibility, application speed and precision."

As the company prepares for Fensterbau 2018, Edgetech approaches its 30th anniversary. On December 1, 1989, what was then called Edgetech I.G. was incorporated in New Philadelphia, Ohio, bringing a product to market that would

forever change the fenestration industry: Super Spacer, what was and remains the world's leading warm-edge spacer system.

Founded upon a dedication to quality and exceptional customer service, Edgetech's core group of original innovators—many of whom are still with Quanex today—worked together to successfully establish Super Spacer for use within the most energy-efficient and sustainable insulating glass windows in the world. Today, more than 10 billion feet of Quanex warm-edge spacer has been used in homes, buildings, solar panels and refrigeration units across the globe.

Visit Edgetech Europe at Fensterbau on March 21 - 24, Exhibition Centre Nuremberg, Hall 7A/7A-302. Find out more, at www.frontale.de/en.

To receive Fenestration Focus electronically, please visit www.Quanex.com/register.