

Fenestration **FOCUS**

Your industry
insight

How to Capitalize on New Trends in Color

Long gone are the days when color options for window framing were limited. Today, consumers are demanding an increasing variety of bold colors to bring extra flair to their homes.

Are you prepared to meet those demands?

As 2021 gets underway, and as the housing market remains at explosive highs, it's worth investigating how to best position yourself to offer color options to your customers:

Navigating a hot market

Success under market conditions like we've seen over the past year will involve keeping up with high demand, while simultaneously navigating trends like colored vinyl sought by homebuilders and owners.

It's worth taking stock of your manufacturing process when it comes to offering color. Are you painting profiles in-house? Using laminate technology? These are both popular options that have served the market well, but both methods require additional labor on the plant floor—which can be hard to come by today. Depending on the quality of the materials, laminates and paint can also be susceptible to longevity issues in rougher climates. Consider that some of the housing markets with the strongest remodel projections in 2021 include heat-intense cities like Houston, Phoenix and several cities in southern Florida.

Co-extruded vinyl color technology can serve as a reliable solution here. For example, Quanex Building Products' patented SuperCapSR™ exterior color technology delivers enhanced scratch resistance, long-term durability and outstanding resistance against weathering and sun damage. Co-extrusion also eliminates any additional labor needs because the color is already fully integrated.

A diversity of options

While black has been the dominant alternative color option in recent years, others are joining

the mix. Bronze, grays and other colors could see upticks in demand in the coming years. Additionally, dual-color windows are becoming increasingly desirable—where the interior frame is a different hue than the exterior, complementing home design on both the inside and outside.

One challenge inherent to offering this kind of color variety is the additional SKUs doing so involves. For example, assume your company currently offers one profile in two color options. Perhaps now you'd like to offer that same profile in a third, or in a dual-color option. You can see how quickly SKUs can pile up with the addition of new colors.

From an inventory perspective, this can create a headache. No manufacturer wants to be holding onto countless varieties of color options in their warehouse and neither will your extrusion supplier. However, a collaborative vinyl supplier should be able to deliver on your changing needs, in step with the demand you're seeing, with reasonable lead times. If you're considering new color options, it's worth having this conversation with your supplier sooner rather than later.

Interested in learning more about how to add color to your offerings? Contact your Quanex representative to learn how we can help today, or visit www.quanex.com.



SuperCapSRTM
Heat-Reflective Color Technology

One Way to Cut Your Lead Times

“Unprecedented” is a term we hear a lot these days, and it’s manifesting in a new way in the residential window market: Lead times.

If you’re a homeowner in the market for new windows and you order them today, you aren’t likely to see them installed for about 10 weeks. That much lead time certainly qualifies as unprecedented.

There are a few easily identifiable factors that have led to this situation. First, the pandemic and its consequences have wreaked havoc on the global supply chain. Obtaining raw materials at reasonable prices and in a timely fashion remains a challenge for manufacturers around the world.

Meanwhile, demand in the residential space is booming. Low interest rates have spurred investment in home improvements, coupled with the increased amount of time people have spent in their houses for the past year. A “good problem” to have—but also one that has placed even more strain on windowmakers throughout the country.

Finally, the ongoing and worsening labor shortage has further compounded the problems associated with difficult supply chains and high demand. Even when we can get the materials we need, it’s extremely difficult to find the people to put them together.

It’s all resulted in a market where an 8-to-10-week lead time for a homeowner has become normal. For manufacturers, it’s worth continued investigation in how we can get back to delivering



quality products to our customers in a timelier fashion.

One potential solution is **rethinking your in-house screens production**. Making screens involves frame cutting, punching corners, frame assembly and applying screen mesh, with each of these distinct processes involving a different skilled worker. It’s hard work—and it has the potential to become a major headache if it isn’t all performed efficiently and consistently. No window and door manufacturer should be sacrificing their best people to screens production when they could be helping assemble the high-performance, high-value window systems that make you money.

But let’s face it: Your customers expect quality, functional screens when their new windows are installed. It’s a necessity, and it must be treated as such. If you’re making 600 windows per day

but can only manage to make 500 screens for those windows, that means you’re only able to ship 500 orders out the door to your customers. Screens could be creating an artificial cap on your production.

What is to be done? Get rid of the headache by eliminating the source. Consider outsourcing your screens production with a trusted supplier. Full-service window and door screens outsourcing from Quanex Building Products can help you focus on building quality windows and doors without the headaches associated with screens production. If you’re struggling with inventory, devoting too much floor space to screens production, or are looking for an effective way to get completed windows into your customers’ homes faster, we can help.

To learn more, visit www.quanex.com/Screens.



How to Effectively Meet a Variety of Performance Demands

Windows, doors and commercial glazing have long been guided by the need to meet certain thermal performance targets. Our ability to meet those targets has allowed occupants of buildings everywhere to enjoy the benefits of glass and windows without worrying about compromised interior conditions.

So, what happens when a new demand starts trending? How do we build a new performance characteristic into our products without compromising all of the other necessities?

Consider acoustic and sound performance. As holistic occupancy comfort becomes increasingly desirable, it means we must be thinking about how windows and glass can limit sound transmission from the outside to the inside. This is especially true in urban areas, where multifamily developers are now pursuing construction at sites near train tracks, elevated lines, and major freeways. Design of these spaces must account for the loud rumbling of trains, cars, and other noise—and windows have a critical role to play.

In order to maximize the benefits occupants are looking for, window and glass manufacturers have to find the right balance. If you're pursuing higher acoustic performance, one area to consider is the window frame. For large-scale multifamily development, metallic framing has typically been the traditional choice. But in recent years, high-performance vinyl options like Quanex's Mikron® AW-Rated System C3-11300™ have become increasingly attractive for their ability to meet heightened thermal targets while demonstrating high performance under demanding conditions.

Vinyl and composite options can additionally deliver on new demands for acoustic performance. Multichamber designs like that found in the C3-11300 system can help dampen noise versus a metallic frame that may reverberate more readily. Though dampening technology can be incorporated into metallic options, this may add complexity to the manufacturing process that vinyl does not require. In addition, vinyl and composites, which can be welded vs. mechanically fastened at corners, have an advantage by reducing tiny gaps or small openings where noise can seep through. Though framing material choice alone does not make



or break a window's ability to achieve excellent acoustic performance, it is one area to closely consider moving forward.

As we continue to work toward high-quality windows and glazing that meet the evolving needs of occupants everywhere, we must be thinking about how to achieve the right balance. Energy efficiency remains the most important consideration when it comes to building design—but it's not the only one. The right mix of high-quality products will be required as our understanding of buildings and their impact on people continues to evolve.

Interested in learning about how Quanex can help? Get in touch with our teams or visit www.quanex.com.



How to Make the Most of the Virtual Tradeshow Experience

The fenestration industry is built on personal networks and quality relationships, and 2020 made it challenging for us to maintain the same professional connections as years past. One of the venues most affected were tradeshows and events. These opportunities to connect were often watered down to Zoom calls and digital platforms where attendees tried their best to stay engaged and free of interruptions.

Being able to log in to some educational sessions in your slippers has some appeal, but the energetic environment and bustle of a tradeshow floor were impossible to replicate online. But with 2021 in full swing, and large gatherings still out of reach, we have the opportunity to leverage our experience from last year to build more engaging digital experiences for as long as it's necessary this year. With all this in mind, here are a few best practices to make the most of your tradeshow dollars, time and experience:

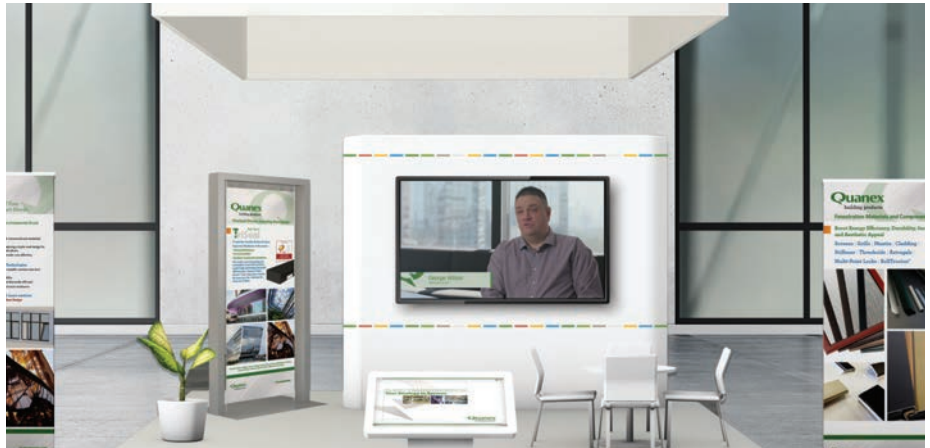
1. Control what you can control.

Some associations will be better—and have exponentially larger budgets—than others when it comes to virtual shows. The 2021 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), for example, had exceptional technology and engaging presenters bring the CES experience into each attendee's home at a very reasonable ticket price.

But not everyone has the money to pull off an event like CES. So, take control of your situation and leverage what you can to make a splash. If the event platform is lacking, create your own landing page with relevant resources, share your news on social and set up video calls for media appointments. You may not be able to control how successful the show is as a whole, but you can still make your company stand out.

2. Leverage video.

Video is your friend with virtual events. Encourage your sales team to use it for customer conversations, record SMEs talking about industry hot topics, and even dabble with the live features on social channels if you're up for



it. In-person conversation can't be replaced, but most people will watch a video rather than read a press release. Zoom and Microsoft Teams both have easy-to-use recording functions—experiment with them ahead of the show and leverage video wherever you can.

3. Get social.

Now more than ever before, joining the conversation on social is important. Keep an eye on any event hashtags, help your organization's experts push content out during the show and don't be afraid to engage in online conversations. Having your name alongside the others who are talking about relevant topics will increase your visibility beyond the event platform.

4. Share insights.

A lot of the virtual tradeshows keep presentation recordings available well beyond the show dates. Take advantage of the additional time to virtually attend sessions, capture insights and share them out via a content piece to your customers and internal stakeholders.

I think we're all looking forward to the day when we can come back together for in-person meetings, have a cocktail and toast to a successful tradeshow. But until then, take advantage of the extra time you have to dig deeper into what's happening in our industry. We'll be back at it (hopefully) soon enough.

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