

Speaker 0 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

Speaker 1 00:00:20 Hey, I've done a lot of researching and I think this internet thing is going to stick around a while. You think so? I'm ready to put my money down on that, that this internet thing is going to be around.

Speaker 2 00:00:30 As we continue with introductions, we spoke with Brent Boydston. Brent shared how his childhood home helped shape his perspective and how that influences what he does here at PGT Innovations. We even touch on some things from the past and looked into the future. You're going to love this conversation with Brent.

Good morning. We are here today with Brent Boydston. Hi, Brent. Hello. How are you? I'm doing well. I'm doing well. Uh, so your title is Senior Vice President of Corporate Sales and Innovation.

Speaker 1 00:01:02 That's correct. That's a big title. It's not as big as the old title, but now it's just all encompassing. The innovation word seems to be a little bit like a shortstop in baseball. It'll just catch everything that comes its way.

Speaker 2 00:01:15 Oh, that's a great analogy. So I just met you, um, recently, can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Sure.

Speaker 1 00:01:22 Probably the most interesting thing about my history is I grew up in Hawaii. There are not many folks who are able to say that who live all the way in Florida, and it really informed a lot of my worldview. I grew up in Honolulu, uh, second grade through high school, learning pidgin English, listening to multiple dialects, seeing the literal definition of a cultural melting pot. And so my eyes were instantly opened, I guess, as a child, to multiple ways of living. Fun and interesting, when you'd go into a house in Hawaii, you take your shoes off, but you don't just flop them off. You take them off and you play some typically to the right side of the opening and in some orderly fashion. And so that's a little bit of some of the cultural, uh, learnings that I had growing up as a, as a child. And that's probably informed many of the decisions or thought processes that I use today. Whenever I'm looking at a problem, looking at how to navigate through a certain situation, is this intense desire for a diversity of perspective, but also a requirement or a need to make a decision and move forward. Let's go ahead and let's move. And Hawaii is a very dynamic place. It's an extremely different environment to grow up there than it is to go visit the local Marriott.

Speaker 2 00:02:48 I would imagine so.

Speaker 1 00:02:49 Have a lifestyle built around an island, uh, with multiple visitors and frankly, the folks that were there from antiquity. Recognizing those sorts of cultural values are very important to respect as well, while maintaining a need for things like electricity and other innovations that were brought to Hawaii to make it a wonderful place. If Hawaii remained in antiquity, it wouldn't be such a great place if you actually wanted a nice hotel room overlooking the water. So innovation has to be embedded in all parts of cultural advancements. And so those are some of the things that informed how I think today.

Speaker 2 00:03:30 The only thing I can tell you about Hawaii is that my parents went there when I was five. And when I turned six, I had a little brother. So it must be a magical place. It absolutely can be.

That's awesome. So, Brent, I have a question. How did you arrive at PGT Innovations or in the fenestration industry?

Speaker 1 00:03:48 So usually when someone asks me a very fancy question and use the word like fenestration, my eyes sort of roll back and I lose myself for a moment, because I am definitely not a window and door guy. I am an entrepreneur by nature and hopefully a business person first who makes great decisions for the business, that happens to be in the finished riation industry, that happens to be responsible for the selling and profitable sales of our product. And I also happen to be responsible for the innovation that's being driven by our company. And that doesn't mean just product. I think we'll get to that in the future, but the way I got to the company was pretty traditional. I had a head hunter call me, and it was an exciting sort of journey because all along the way, the head hunter said, I'm not sure you're a fit for this at all, but they keep wanting to talk to you.

Speaker 1 00:04:35 And so I had multiple engagements along those lines and ultimately found myself excited about the vision and the journey that Jeff Jackson, our CEO had articulated about where he wanted to take the company. So in 2016, when I got here, we were a, essentially a Florida based, only relatively, I'll call it bedroom type company, powerful, very notable in the state of Florida. But the vision was to create a national footprint with the foundation being in Florida. And so that vision captured my imagination and said, I can do this. Though I'd always worked on either an international or national basis, embracing that vision to say, hey, let's allow the Florida base to be our springboard into a national footprint was very exciting and motivating for me.

Speaker 2 00:05:20 So tell us a little bit about, what does it look like to come to work as Brent Boydston? What is a typical day for you?

Speaker 1 00:05:27 So a typical date for me is no such thing as typical. Okay. Um, and that isn't because it's not a planned day or a planned week, uh, or a planned month or your year, is because I have to remain flexible. I have to remain frankly, innovative in how I solve problems on a daily basis. One of the things that makes this role particular unique is we are a relatively dominant player in Florida. And so there's a responsibility I believe that our company has, to serve the homeowners, the constituents, the population here in Florida, particularly, but even in other parts of the country because of the protection that our products provide families and secondarily some of the beautiful visions that we're able to make, come to life for families, particularly out west, where some of our Western based products.

Speaker 2 00:06:16 So you oversee the sales operations and everybody that works under those umbrellas?

Speaker 1 00:06:22 So I oversee the selling organization and the engineering organization, including the iLab as a specific direct responsibility. But one of the things that makes PGT particularly unique, and this is one of the things I love about it, is our CEO expects our executive staff to be responsible, maybe not accountable, but responsible for everything. If I see something that can be solved in another area, whether it's HR, IT, or operations, I have a particular not only responsibility, but he gives me an authority to voice that into the company. But it works both ways. If someone has a beautiful idea or a thought on a new market that we need to go address, or a new product that we need to think about putting into our product line, they have the authority, and I'll add responsibility, to communicate to my function of accountability, and say, hey, have you thought about X, Y, and Z as something that we should really

think about? And so that allows for the leadership team to both be connected throughout the organization and really feel embedded in the success of the organization. And it helps break down a terrible, terrible phenomenon in corporate America, where silos exist. Don't come across my line, is something I've seen in other corporations that really hamper the organization's ability to grow profitably.

Speaker 2 00:07:43 Right? Well, because at the end of the day, the end user, they don't care which vice president you answer to. A hundred percent. They just want what they need, and they want it at a great price, and they want it to function well, and they don't care which line item it bills to. They just want it. And they deserve that. Absolutely. Yeah. That's awesome. I did not know that about the leadership here. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:08:03 I'll give you an example if that's okay. Out of the blue, Jeff said to me, if you think we need solar panels on our roof and that's the right economic decision, and you've done some research on it, bring that to the table. Talk to the team about solar panels needing to be on our roof, whether it comes from you or comes from the person in charge of the actual building. It doesn't matter. A great idea is a great idea, in and of itself, regardless of from whom it comes. And so that was an inspirational vision that Jeff gave to me one time, as an example of how broad he expects the leadership team's responsibility to be.

Speaker 2 00:08:39 Hmm, that's empowering and exciting, and also could be very daunting. It can be.

Speaker 0 00:08:45 Be sure to tune in for upcoming episodes to help you understand the fenestration industry, what you need to know when buying windows and doors and other related topics, you can find out more about us at pgtiuniversity.com. You can also find us on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Speaker 2 00:09:02 I want to talk for just a few minutes about our name.

Speaker 1 00:09:06 Sure. Our heritage, as you know, it was PGT Industries. And, and as we made a couple acquisitions, we maintain the PGT Industries as the parent company. But the more acquisitions we made, the more lack of symmetry that provided for the marketplace because PGT Industries remained that brand name, but we are continuing to add to it. And industries sort of indicates a pure play manufacturing box that the company could be put into. PGT Innovations is very, very wide open in its definition. People ask all the time, what is innovations in your company? And the way I answered it is, PGT Innovations goal is to provide the best, most efficient way to solve the consumer, dealer, builders, and employees' needs. And that is going to change over time with lots of different either technologies or processes. A lazy definition of innovation in this context typically goes pure play to product.

Speaker 1 00:10:08 I'm constantly trying to break our mindset out of innovation being a product solution or a product answer, into a way of working answer. Very specifically, I'm going to go back in kind of old times of PGT Industries. When we instituted a system that allowed a customer to place their own orders online. Ten years ago, that was very innovative. That was a new way of working. It actually was a more efficient way for them to place orders, tell us what they wanted and for us to receive that request and process it in our facility. Today, that's a normal course of business. No one would think of placing orders any longer through fax machines, which was the way we were doing it back in the day, or even call in. And, uh, and a person, a customer care person would take manual order. Well, let's fast

forward to today, the way that we're going to begin communicating to consumers, builders, customers, I believe is based in a digital world.

Speaker 1 00:11:06 That's going to be the next generation. I, tongue in cheek, would say in front of a whole gathering of our circle of innovators are excellent through partnership trips. Hey, I've done a lot of research and I think this internet thing is going to stick around awhile. You think so? I'm ready to put my money down on that, that this internet thing is going to be around. Well, if that's the case, then that's how we should talk to our customers, our consumers, all the constituents or stakeholders in, in the space. And so I think in terms of that relative to marketing. So our need to go on television, I think over time will wane, as the customer base wanes or moves out of television viewing. Cord cutting is a major trend in our, in our country today. All the social media and digital platforms are where people are consuming content.

Speaker 1 00:11:56 That's why companies that didn't exist 10 years ago, like YouTube and Snapchat and Instagram and Tik TOK, right? Those platforms exist today. And if we are not sending our message on those platforms, we have not innovated, right? And so this industry has a history of being very slow to embrace those sorts of technologies. And that isn't about product. That's about how we talk to each other. Today, meaning today we are now using digital platforms and digital engagement in order to attract a workforce. We're, we're not putting ads in newspapers anymore to say, Hey, come be a line leader, come be an engineer for us, or come via sales or customer service rep. We're doing that all digitally today, right? Those are things that are examples of innovations that we're putting in place. Oh, by the way, we have some pretty cool products too, that nobody really has been able to see yet because we're in the process of commercializing these things. So there's a whole long list of traditionally defined innovations coming from a product perspective. But I wanted to spend the first part of this talking about how innovation needs to be about how we do business and how we connect with each other. Not just about the product.

Speaker 2 00:13:05 Right, I'm envisioning an entire series along innovations and Dean and I had so much to talk about, um, but just, you know, things along patents and the new technologies and power to windows and doors and things like that. It was like, oh, what, ooh, that sounds awesome. Can they clean themselves? That's what I want to know.

Speaker 1 00:13:23 So very true. My tours of the innovation lab this morning continues to confirm the acceleration of technology and capabilities that over the next three and five and ten years will make its way into every home in America. And it will revolutionize the way you live in your home. In the future you'll have windows that will generate its own power for either sections of the home or for the whole home. And conceptually could replace solar panels on your, on your roof over the next some sort of 10, 15 year period. As just a micro example of innovation coming in that space. So this is a fun place to be. Then you're in the heartbeat of the product side of the innovation.

Speaker 2 00:14:05 I love it. It's not just four sticks of wood and a piece of glass. That's what Patrick always says. Patrick Jameson, yeah, he's great. So here's a question we're asking all of our guests on the intro series, who is a person or what is an event that has had a major impact in your life?

Speaker 1 00:14:20 Early in my career, I had, um, a CEO of a company named Blue Rhino. He also was the CEO of Primo Water Corporation, various other companies that he had run in the past, who tapped me to be a vice-president in the organization. And I sat under his leadership and tutelage, teaching of

entrepreneurial ways for about 11 years, there are two different cycles of it. It was a five-year period and then a six year period, but his name is Billy Prim. He's available, he's written a book, a couple of books, he's available online to do some research on. He is an incredible entrepreneur that was able to combine what I would always call a Southern gentleman style, with incredible aggressive risk-taking innovation within a proper risk profile. He ran publicly held companies, raised funds, um, sold the two companies, that I mentioned, uh, for very nice, uh, premiums for the original investors. He was an incredible entrepreneur and taught me many, many lessons along the way about how to think through solving your business problems.

Speaker 1 00:15:23 And so I'm going to give you one little nugget that I've synthesized. He, he didn't say it this way, but this is what I've sort of come to a conclusion. In any business situation that you find yourself in that has a problem. I believe that there are three segments or sectors, sector is a better word that must be solved in order for the big problem to be solved at its most efficient manner. Okay, you can solve one of the three I'm about to give you with a low level of efficiency, and you're going to get a suboptimal outcome. But if all three of these are a 10 on a scale of one to 10, you're going to have the very best solution to your problem. So this is how it goes. You must have a proper strategy. You must have a proper structure to support that strategy, and you must have proper talent to populate that structure.

Speaker 1 00:16:09 And I believe they come in that exact order. I've seen multiple organizations that get these backwards, or one of those three are out of whack. So let's say we have a problem in the business. The first question I'd ask is, are we doing the right thing? Is the strategy that we have for this particular problem, the proper strategy is this something we should be doing? And if the answer is yes, then you move to structure. Are the people underneath this built in a manner that they know who to go to, how to navigate the system, which is the company, navigate, or maybe it's the external world. Can they navigate in order to stay connected to that original strategy that's been set forth, that we've all decided is the right strategy. Does the structure support that? And then the last thing to have great people that support that structure, if you have really great people and a great structure, but a terrible strategy, you're not going to sell any buggy whips.

Speaker 1 00:17:06 Likewise, if you have the greatest business, let's say Tesla's the most honorable most valuable company. Uh, at least in that, uh, automotive space. Incredible strategy, great structure. But if they had poor people, if Elon Musk wasn't there, you would ask yourself who maybe those things wouldn't find themselves all the way to the incredible success that they have been able to achieve. So you have to satisfy at the greatest condition, each one of those sectors, in order to have the best outcome for each of your problems. And so I learned that methodology from Billy Prim years ago, we would set out a strategy for the year. We would build a structure and put all the people to the side. And then after those first two things were satisfied. We all agreed that proper strategy was in place. This is the structure, regardless of people, then you populate the people underneath that. And then sometimes the people have to move or change, because the talent is needed in other areas, depending on what the strategy looked like. I love that. That's awesome. Strategy, structure, talent, must be satisfied if you want to have the most optimal solution to your problem. Right?

Speaker 2 00:18:12 And you can remember that because it's only three things. Sometimes you get into these things. It's like, here's some pointers, oh, by the way, you need a notepad. Correct. You know,

you can remember three things. This has been a great conversation. I'm grateful for our time and I'm sure we'll have you back.

Speaker 1 00:18:27 Thank you very much. This is an awesome example of innovation in the space. So keep doing it. We're very proud of what you're doing and let's keep it rolling.

Speaker 3 00:18:34 All right. Sounds great.

Speaker 0 00:18:37 PGTI University is the customer education team for an entire family of brands. We began with the original Eze-breeze porch enclosure line, then became PGT, America's leading brand of impact resistant windows and doors. We then added CGI, CGIC, WinDoor, Western Windows, New South Windows, and Eco Windows and Doors. We create products built to withstand major storms, keeping people safe, secure, and prepared. Our exceptional brands give you the protection you need without compromising design or functionality. PGTI University is here to educate you, our listener, so that you can be a more informed consumer of window and door products.