

Speaker 1 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 2 00:00:20 How some of the higher end stuff is done and look at it and say, "How can I do that in a more economical way and in a repeatable way?" Or, "How can I, how can I just do that better?" And, uh, I think the, the drive is when you say, "Wow, I, I can do that and I can do it so much better than they can do it."

Speaker 1 00:00:35 Our Innovation series continues today as we continue last week's conversation with Mike Nau and Kenny Vander Bent. They share a little known fact about Ultimately Vinyl, some history around energy codes and Aluminum, as well as how they continue to find ways to stay creative and keep innovating for us all. All right. So we're gonna switch gears and we're gonna talk about Ultimate Vinyl, which everybody still calls it the UV line. And I'm like, "What is UV?"

Speaker 2 00:00:59 Do you wanna shed some light on-?

Speaker 3 00:01:00 The, it's funny how we come up with names around here. So I remember working with marketing, even a few years prior to that, and I was making pitches to them with Carole Reams and others. And, basically the team said, "Ultimately, we're gonna be here. Like it's not right now that we need the vinyl system." And that's what we kind of said. Because if you do it too soon and spend millions of dollars on a vinyl window system, that's ahead of the energy code. It's - the timing is there. So we kept saying, "Ultimately, we're gonna get here and ultimately we're gonna do this project." And that's what I named the project folder. When we were doing all our research and design on the systems, I just had a folder on the S Drive called "Ultimately Vinyl."

Speaker 2 00:01:36 Oh, I didn't know that.

Speaker 3 00:01:36 Which was funny, cause I didn't, we had no intention of that becoming the name of the project and the initiative. And then 10 years later still calling it the UV line. It's kind of funny. It literally started with the folder name, just on the S Drive.

Speaker 2 00:01:50 The name's never gonna go away. It doesn't matter what's in the marketing documents.

Speaker 3 00:01:52 Yeah. Be careful what we named that folder. That's literally where it came from.

Speaker 1 00:01:56 <laugh> okay. Well, that's interesting to know. I love that.

Speaker 2 00:01:59 Ultimately Vinyl, obviously we said Ultimately Vinyl because the markets were all going towards these more, what they considered more energy efficient, thermally improved products. But uh, not necessarily for Florida, we found that air conditioning is obviously the, the biggest driver and I was heavily involved in code at the time. So the growth and the continued growth of aluminum PGDI never lost sight of aluminum because we found aluminum. It's, it's a strong contender. It's a, you can provide a very, very efficient aluminum window using the right glass. You can get some really good energy efficiency, because, like I said, it, it comes from air conditioning. And so as long as you can block the sun, you're gonna be blocking most of the heat transfer. Isn't you know, the only whole thing is the sun shining on that glass. And if you have really good glass, you're gonna save a ton of energy. And if you have a really tight window, you're gonna save a ton of energy. Energy. So those two items are probably key to a really efficient Florida product.

Speaker 1 00:02:57 Right? So you were involved in the energy code and then it was time to launch UV?

Speaker 2 00:03:02 I was involved in the energy code from 2003 or 2004. And I, I went to a lot of the Florida Building Commission meetings and that, and, uh, what happened was we found from a HVAC system, all of the, uh, the heat engineers, we're doing all our calculations for zone one, the same, all the way up to Lee County, Palm Beach County, you draw a straight line across the state. All their heat calculations for air conditioning were done the same in those areas. So the question came up, "If you're doing your heat calcs for the same and the same heating degree days and the same cooling degree days, why are the U-factors different for windows in, in those other, other Northern counties?" And so the rationale was, they're not, they're not any different. So they expanded zone one from just Miami-Dade Monroe to Miami-Dade, Monroe, Broward, and Henry and Collier and Lee County all the way up. So it straight line.

Speaker 3 00:03:52 Correct me if I'm wrong, but in like layman's terms that allowed, at the time, going back to Aluminum WinGuard, when every other window company was starting to pull out resources for aluminum windows and it was kind of letting their aluminum window die on the vine. They weren't investing in it because they were under the impression that the energy code was gonna continue to not allow the aluminum system in Florida. And Mike's work and his, the team's work allowed us to figure out, well, maybe there is a way, and that's what he is alluding to. We were able to, to work with the agencies, expand the scope, and that allowed us to time the Aluminum WinGuard design appropriately with the code. So we were able to kind of do the opposite of what our competitors were doing. We actually sat down and redesigned that Aluminum WinGuard system even further so that we could get efficiencies out of the line and do more with it because we thought there was gonna be another 10 years of this window system. And other companies thought it was no chance of using that. So that was a timing in the code and the change that happened, that like we capitalized on.

Speaker 1 00:04:53 Ah, okay.

Speaker 2 00:04:53 So while everybody's thinking, Ultimately Vinyl, well, Ultimately Vinyl in certain areas, but not necessarily that Southern area, the climates haven't changed down there. And there aluminum is a very effective product.

Speaker 3 00:05:04 And there's a distinction cuz it's easy for, if you're a vinyl company, you're against aluminum. And if you're aluminum company you're against vinyl and I think...

Speaker 2 00:05:12 We don't make a distinction.

Speaker 3 00:05:13 No, I won't use ultimately too many times in this podcast. But ultimately, the decision was we gotta find a way to make the best Aluminum WinGuard system out there because there's a decade or two of that window system, and we gotta sell and redesign the Vinyl WinGuard appropriately so that it meets the market need. And today I said, when we started 20 years ago, the vinyl window system was made up 5% of our sales. And as of today we're actually, Vinyl WinGuard is outpacing Aluminum WinGuard by a little bit. So we're about a 50-50 mix. So it's interesting how both strategies have had to evolve and how PGT has used both strategies really well. And in my opinion, other companies were so focused on one strategy that they ended up, uh, losing to us because of it.

Speaker 1 00:05:57 Smart. So many smart people around here. I love it.

Speaker 3 00:06:00 It's a big team. It is a big team, that marketing team and the executives and all of us kind of come back together with our experience and from the code side, the design side, manufacturing. Everybody is on that project team, which makes it really difficult at times. Um, but really rewarding cuz you know, the process is tough, but when you get out of it, you have a product that usually meets all the requirements.

Speaker 1 00:06:23 Excellent.

Speaker 2 00:06:24 Excellent point that Ken made, I mean fundamentally to don't listen to the outside noise, but ultimately we were looking to provide the best product that we possibly could with the most efficiency in the areas that they needed it. And I think we did that very successfully through the, the strategies that were chosen.

Speaker 1 00:06:42 Yeah, well it's nice to just excel in both spaces. So what was the process and timeline for UV? I know you said like 10 years...

Speaker 1 00:06:51 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](http://pgtiuniversity.com). You can also find us on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Speaker 3 00:07:13 It took 10 years from the first time we talked about doing it. <laugh> when we did it. So that was probably the longest project I've ever been a part of. It was probably 18 to 24 months cuz that was like the 770 Sliding-Glass Door was one product at a time. And Ultimately Vinyl was the largest -

Speaker 2 00:07:26 It was huge.

Speaker 3 00:07:26 Corporate wide project that we've ever done. And it probably spanned probably 18 to 24 months because we, we designed every single window system along with the door at the same time.

Speaker 2 00:07:37 Very unique. There was a lot of research done and looking at a couple of different extruders, vinyl extruders, before we even, well, I mean obviously we had a lot of sketches and ideas and we were printing stuff feverishly on our 3D printers and coming up with ideas. But then the crux of it was, we all went into a room and we had an overhead projector. Projector was connected to AutoCAD and you know, we changed positions, certain people were driving and then everyone would just yell at what they would, "Change that, move that, move that around, move that around." It was a room full of vinyl extruders along with uh, Ken and Sam and James and me.

Speaker 3 00:08:09 It was by far the most annoying prod <laugh> meeting I've ever been part of.

Speaker 2 00:08:13 But we came out with some really strong stuff. So...

Speaker 1 00:08:16 Wait, I wanna hear more about that. So it was the most annoying process?

Speaker 3 00:08:19 Imagine getting in a car with 12 steering wheels and everybody has a map of where they want to go. And basically fighting over-

Speaker 1 00:08:28 Who's in charge.

Speaker 3 00:08:29 Some things that were amazing and significant. And some that were irrelevant, but we still had to go through.

Speaker 2 00:08:34 And I had to drive a lot.

Speaker 3 00:08:36 Nobody ever let me drive. <laugh> Ever.

Speaker 1 00:08:40 Well, those days are over right? Now you drive?

Speaker 3 00:08:42 Nah, I still don't drive. Mike does it all.

Speaker 1 00:08:44 Mike does it all?

Speaker 3 00:08:44 The team does the driving still.

Speaker 2 00:08:46 We just get second guessed on everything. Which is great. The problem is you come up with too many ideas. You gotta pick one.

Speaker 1 00:08:52 Right? Gosh, engineers are so fascinating to me. I'm just amazed by all of you.

Speaker 3 00:08:57 I've never heard somebody call us "fascinating."

Speaker 2 00:08:59 Yeah...

Speaker 3 00:08:59 Frustrating, annoying, overthinking.

Speaker 1 00:09:03 No, I, it's like I can see the gears turning. It's so interesting to me. I just have one last question and you guys can each answer this. How do you continue to find inspiration to keep innovating?

Speaker 2 00:09:14 I worked at a lot of companies, 10 companies, two years, four years and on, and I've been here 20 years. So obviously something kept me here. And one of 'em is the constant need for something new, the constant need for something. And we are exposed to a lot of different dealers here. This new iLab is, is awesome. I mean, we're exposed to the dealers that have wants and needs. And I mean, they just, they want everything. They want it all. And we're exposed to those people as well. As, you know, you have all kinds of there's well magazine, there's all kinds of, you know, architectural type magazines and you just looking at things and you look at how some of the higher end stuff is done and look at it and say, "How can I do that in a more economical way and in a repeatable way? Or how can I, how can I just do that better?" And uh, I think the, the drive is when you say, "Wow, I, I can do that. I can do it so much better than they can do it."

Speaker 1 00:10:02 Excellent. What about you, Kenny?

Speaker 3 00:10:04 I think since my career's been, like Mike's over here, I started working alongside of Rod in the beginning, so it's impossible not to work alongside Rod and realize he's thinking bigger, and he's thinking the next step for PGT. So I think I credit my first 10 years of innovation working alongside of guys like him, and girls like him, that just are always pushing it. Listening to the customers, just has a great relationship and knows the market really well. So anytime Rod comes in and says, "Hey, what's, can we do this?" We just sit down and we all figure out how to do it. And I think that's been PGT's method from the engineering side, from the marketing side, from the sales side. And almost every department, we don't say no, we literally figure out how to do stuff. And I think the last 10 years, since

Jeff's been on board and working with us and his transition, it's more of the same, a different style than Rod, for sure, but amazing.

Speaker 3 00:10:53 Cuz he basically set us up over here. Um, acknowledged that the iLab, as PGT grows, innovation is very hard for a really big company that has a lot of things to do. Uh, so I think Jeff recognizing that to keep going with the innovation that Rod started here, that you need to break out a team to be able to focus on stuff like that. I think it's impossible not to work alongside of Rod and Jeff continually. We see both of 'em. So they're always looking at what we can do next. And it's just infectious. Like who's gonna tell Rod and Jeff out of ideas. I mean we <laugh>, we just have so many.

Speaker 2 00:11:26 I have, I have to add, Kenny's a tinkerer. He, he, he just, he can never stop. He's always, there's always something on the printer and you go, "What? What's this?"

Speaker 3 00:11:32 There are so many bad ideas. I get printed after hours that I throw away. And I'm afraid for people to see them cause they're that bad.

Speaker 2 00:11:39 But we see him and then we, you grow off of him. You go, "oh my gosh, I can't please - You did - Oh I think I can do something with that." And he does that to all of us. Every one of us, we, we watch him. Oh yeah. I think he's just like just planting seeds or something. I don't know what he's cut.

Speaker 3 00:11:39 "Here's an ideas so bad that Mike will see it, and then he is gonna throw it away and fix it."

Speaker 2 00:11:58 Nice. He's always been historically since day one. Right? You had all four corners at the table projects on all four corners. And if this one wasn't working right now, he would move to the other corner and keep working.

Speaker 3 00:12:09 Yeah. I have problems. Like it's a problem of mine.

Speaker 1 00:12:11 That's what artists do though. Artists never work on just one thing at a time. They work on multiple projects in that way. When they get stuck on one, they can switch gears, still be productive, still keep working and let the other one just kind of simmer and marinade while, while you're actively working on the second one. So all right guys. Well, this has been a great conversation. Thank you for shedding some light on some of the present products. And I love that we found out why Ultimately Vinyl had the name that it does. I'm gonna make that a trivia question.

Speaker 3 00:12:41 You didn't get that from me.

Speaker 1 00:12:42 <laugh> Too late. I've already recorded it. But anyway, thank you for your time today. I really appreciate it. And uh, we'll look forward to another conversation someday.

Speaker 3 00:12:50 Thank you. All right.

Speaker 1 00:12:50 All right. Take care. Thanks. PGTI University is the Customer Education Team for an entire family of brands. We began with the original EZBreeze 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, Eco Windows and Doors, and our latest acquisition, Anlin 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

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