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TOP GLASS REPORT • CONTRACT GLAZIERS • BEC REVIEW

INSIGHT AT BEC

by RICH PORAYKO

The pain is finally over. The U.S. glazing industry that has been suffering from recession and the post-traumatic stress disorder that followed, has finally recovered. In fact, “recovered” is a poor choice of word. A familiar word that we haven’t used for a while was being thrown around with a lot more confidence at the recent Building Enclosure Contractors (BEC) Conference in Las Vegas. Growth. Not recovery or optimism, but growth. And lots of it. At least until 2018 or 2019 (barring any major geopolitical event). So buckle your safety belt because the next four or five years are going to be wild.

Produced by the Glass Association of North America, this year’s BEC speakers were exceptionally high calibre as usual. James O’Callaghan of Ecker O’Callaghan described the journey of designing, manufacturing and building Apple’s famous flagship glass cube stores and staircases around the world in his



Photo by Rich Porayko

Everyone eying opportunities in Las Vegas.

presentation “the Future of Glazing Technology.” “Transparency becomes very important when you want to make sure that people have a very clear vision of navigation when they are looking from one side of the retail store to the other,” O’Callaghan said. In a presentation that needed to be seen, in order to be truly appreciated, O’Callaghan chronicled the trials, tribulations and enormous successes of designing, manufacturing and building with massive, never-been-done-before oversized laminated glass. The incredible project included using autoclaves from

the aerospace industry, developing a method to splice laminated glass together in a similar fashion to plywood and handling, shipping and installing huge lites of glass. The Future of Glazing Technology could easily be summed up in one word: wow.

Industry blogger and glass rockstar Max Perilstein was everywhere. Not only did Perilstein moderate a thought-provoking fabricator Q&A panel, he got to throw two pitches to one-handed former pitcher for the Yankees and the Angels, Jim Abbott, during Abbott’s ovation-receiving keynote.

ABOVE: James O’Callaghan of Exker O’Callaghan described the journey of designing, manufacturing and building Apple’s famous flagship glass cube stores.

Azon Saves Energy

Perilstein also nailed it with his full-house presentation on social media.

But the powerhouse Glazing Industry Update presentation by Apogee Enterprises CEO, Joe Puishys, was the one that had everyone buzzing about for the rest of the conference. Candid and intense. Nothing short of what you'd expect from someone that runs a \$935 million a year publicly traded company. Apogee touches every part of the U.S. glazing industry and reaches well into Canada. As the largest glass fabricator in North and South America, Viracon is the single largest out of the seven companies currently in Apogee's portfolio. Glazing contractor Harmon is Apogee's second-largest company. Apogee also owns Canadian architectural framing systems leader Alumicor and its American counterpart Tubalite as well as aluminum window systems and curtainwall manufacturer Wausau, paint and anodizing finisher Linetech and picture framing and engineered optics specialty glass manufacturer Tru Vue.

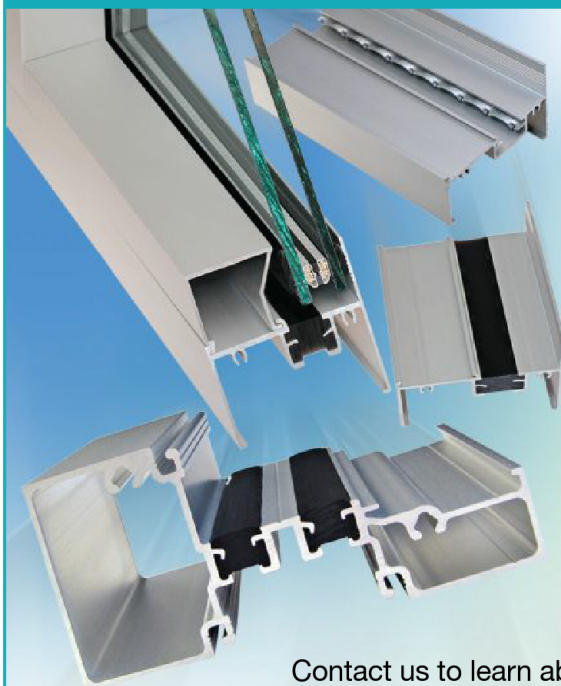
Puishys, only three years deep in the industry and admits he is new to the business, but he used the presentation to "describe his observations as an 'outsider.'"

"I believe our industry is a good industry," Puishys said. "It's had its bad times. It's a complicated business with low margins. I thought 'how complicated can the industry be with no moving parts?' No circuit boards. No programmable logic controllers. I was shocked with the low margins. As an industry, we don't get paid for the complexity of the work that we do."

Sound familiar? It gets better. "This industry moves at glacial speed. Who wants to be the best buggy whip manufacturer in the United States? We need to be careful because this industry is slow to adapt. This is also an incestuous business. Look around the room. You're with your competitors. You're with your suppliers. Sometimes they are the same person."

This industry landscape is changing. "Certainly you used to be able to

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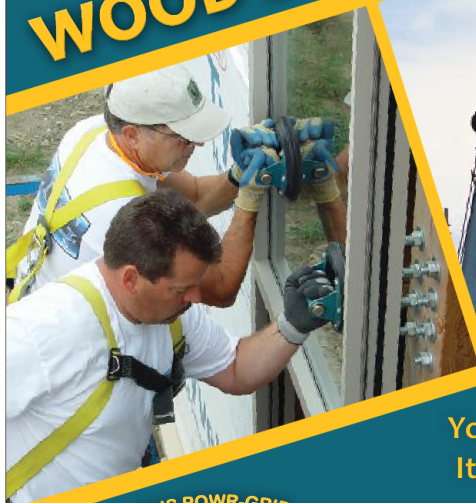
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