

VWD

Challenging A Popular Perception & Changing A Lot Of Minds

Talk to any manufacturer about issues and one of the biggest concerns is going to be reducing costs to be more competitive...



“Everyone is trying to find a way to pay less, sell for less, be lean at all costs and, at the very least, stay profitable,” says Mike Newman, VWD’s general manager.

He describes this process as a long, slow painful slide, “a race to the bottom,” he calls it.

“What can we do to provide our dealers with something different?” he asks.

To put it another way, Newman says, “why should I (as a dealer) buy from you?”

Every manufacturer boasts about quality, service, energy-efficiency and each tries to offer the lowest price, he says.

Changing The Perception About Low Cost

Newman explains that in its quest to be unique, the company is following another path.

The message to customers is that it is time to break away from the long-held paradigm that success comes from being the low bidder and offer value that is not going to be available any place else. Newman views this approach as an opportunity for its dealers to grow and be more profitable, without the need to expand.

“Our theme is ‘Stop Spending and Start Investing.’”

He says the more value homeowners see in a window, the more inclined they will be to treat it as an investment that can increase the value of their homes or provide immediate benefits, like reducing heating costs or improving comfort.

“Windows For Life”

Among the company’s unique offerings are windows with premium glass that is 33% thicker than standard glass. Thicker glass reduces outside noise. It withstands greater impact and, what is probably most attractive, it is a better insulator. Another option is a glass package that includes PPG’s Solarban 60 low E glass, spacer and sealant. The company’s stainless steel warm edge spacer that combines the thermal properties of a foam spacer with the strength of steel is an additional option. Higher energy efficiency can be achieved with its triple-pane glass; and for special needs, there is tempered, laminated and obscured glass. There are even options with gas-filling: standard argon, krypton and an argon-krypton mix.

Advanced engineering takes the standard out of double-hung windows and provides added value through innovation... a sill that does not require drain holes, eliminating cold air from traditional drain systems. A revolutionary magnetic screen system that can be

operated with one hand is included in one line of casement windows, with an option to use a patented roll screen system where the screen travels along a path that is invisible to the eye and is secured by a latch when it closes.

Changing Minds

The company is not limiting its effort to change perception to dealers and homeowners.

"I have been using, standard (double-pane) windows for many years in the homes we build," says Terry Juma of Highland Homes in London, Ontario.

After all, compared to single-pane units, standard windows do provide benefits. But double-pane windows will no longer be used by this builder, beginning with his latest project, a subdivision of thirty-two mid-to high-end homes also in London.

"... everyone is trying to find a way to pay less, sell for less, be lean at all costs..."

"I have had many discussions with Peter Dyson, sales representative for VWD, about windows and the savings homeowners can realize from the energy efficiency of triple glazing," says Juma.

After doing his own research, he also learned that windows account for 30% of the heat loss in a building.

"Peter convinced me that this change made sense," says Juma.

What Juma is not doing is offering the higher efficiency window as an option.

Recognizing its value to his potential buyers, he is using triple glazed windows in every home.

"This is a significant step and it will become a major selling feature for my company."

Acknowledging that the initial cost is higher, he points out that the return on investment (three to four years) is very attractive. But Juma has gone beyond upgrading windows.

"I have become a registered Energy-Star Home Builder and, I want to be ahead of the curve for energy efficiency ratings."



Peter Dyson of Vinyl Window Designs and Terry Juma, President of Highland Homes, review blueprints of a model home for the company's latest project, thirty-two medium- to high-end homes in London, Ontario. All Triple Glazed Low E Glass and Foam Filled Frames manufactured by Vinyl Window Designs and supplied by Langford's Home Building Centre.

Looking to the future, he expects to move his company forward.

"I want to build to the 2012 standard."

Presently he is looking for an E85 rating on energy efficiency which, he says, exceeds the current minimum ratings by the government. He expects to have an R-value of 26 in walls and R50 in attics, compared to the minimum R-19 and R-40 respectively.

These changes also give Juma a unique position in the market.

"No one else is doing this right now and I want to have this edge over my competitors."

He says Peter Dyson helped change his thinking, and the company's understanding of the Energy Star Program was also very helpful.

"... acknowledging the initial cost is higher, the return on investment is very attractive."

Highland Homes offer an interesting combination. They are upscale and they are affordable.

"We offer value - quality with a higher level of energy efficiency - that we feel will attract buyers."

Fateh Virji, VWD's director of marketing, knows what it takes to promote value over low cost. At a time when consumers have become more sophisticated and more knowledgeable, and dealers and distributors have grown in numbers, he offers his successful approach to changing a perception.

"Be honest, be accurate, be informative and provide specific reasons for placing value above cost."

For example, he explains that when homeowners are told that glass comes in more than one thickness and there are benefits to thicker glass, they are impressed.

"Any company can make it, but no one wants to," he says. "We offer options in glass (including low E) and virtually everything else because we are a solutions-oriented company."

The company has the ability to mix and match in order to customize to a homeowner's needs and "the dealer does this in their house," adds Virji.

If people are more focused on comfort than on energy efficiency ratings, "we offer solutions to help provide that."

According to Newman, it's all part of an effort to demonstrate value throughout the entire process; and that is how Vinyl Window Designs is challenging a popular perception and changing a lot of minds.