

It's all about vision.

Once the rare remodeling luxury, decks today are a must-have extension of a home's living and entertaining area. They are the focal point of more elaborate and functional outdoor living spaces where families gather to live and play. Beyond the basic wood decks that defined the category for years, homeowners have set the bar higher. They expect and demand cool design, rich style and a low-maintenance, long-lasting life from their decks.

First introduced more than 10 years ago, alternative decking has evolved to meet and exceed those high standards, closing the gap on popular redwood, cedar, and pressure-treated wood products. Demand for alternative decking (primarily wood plastic composite and expanded polymer) is expected to grow by 2010 is predicted to comprise 45 percent of the overall decking market, up from just 16 percent in 2002.

So, why the striking shift? The category has come a long way from the original decking planks first introduced in the mid to late 1990s. Ongoing advancements in manufacturing and innovation have led to dramatic improvements in product appearance and quality.

### **The Category Catalyst**

In 1947, Robert Crane Sr. founded Crane Plastics in Columbus, Ohio, to develop new applications in the nascent plastics industry – a full two decades before Dustin Hoffman received that fateful one-word career advice in *The Graduate*: “Plastics.” A business visionary, Crane applied his passion for people and creative solutions to build a successful enterprise. But even he would have been hard-pressed to predict and bet on a market opportunity for a wood/plastic composite blend. But in 1995, that's exactly what his company did. That year, Crane Plastics invested in a full-scale wood/plastic blending system. A year later they realized the potential for an alternative material that could revolutionize the way we think about decks after seeing the stranglehold wood products had on the decking market. The company combined their wood/plastic blending technology with additional investments in extruders, tooling, plant and equipment, and TimberTech decking was born.

In the early days of the newly-formed Crane offshoot, the Crane family established a foundation for TimberTech built on quality (both in product and people), innovation, and building good old-fashioned business relationships with contractors and dealers. And TimberTech president Stu Kemper carried that vision forward, putting the people in place to bring it to reality, including Tom Gramlich (now TimberTech's president), VP of innovation Paul Bizzarri, Sr. VP of sales and marketing Kevin Brennan, and Sr. VP of operations Art Dierks.

### **Innovation Fascination**

In 1997, TimberTech shipped its first tongue-and-groove natural decking planks and a remarkable string of product innovations has followed, from introduction of the 2x6 plank in 1998, to TimberTech's first foray into composite railing in 2000, to the introduction of planks sized to compete with traditional 5/4 wood planks and the addition of three color profiles in 2001. TimberTech has enjoyed double-digit growth every year since and is now the fastest-growing composite decking company in the marketplace. Constant innovation has been the cornerstone of that growth.

TimberTech leaders knew early on success was going to hinge on how well new products and technologies that would keep TimberTech ahead of the curve could be developed. TimberTech has a passion for innovation and has made a commitment to understand what the customers need and why they need it.

Contractor-recommended and revolutionary deck drainage system DrySpace™ was the recipient of *Building Products Magazine's* 2006 Most Valuable Product Award. Ideal for second-story decks, DrySpace collects the water that falls between the gaps in the planks and channels it away, leaving a dry and functional space below. In early 2007, TimberTech introduced CONCEALoc®, a hidden, easy-to-install decking fastener.

And TimberTech's innovative RadianceRail system was the first composite railing system to be available to the market in black.

Beyond decking and railing, TimberTech also developed FenceScape®, a brand of composite fencing, delivering the low-maintenance benefits of vinyl with the same design versatility as wood. *FencePost Magazine* named FenceScape its #1 new product at the FENCETECH trade show in 2007.

The newest addition to TimberTech's decking product portfolio is XLM®, an extreme low-maintenance alternative decking solution. Responding to homeowner demand for ultra-low maintenance decking options and contractors' need for easier-to-install decking materials, TimberTech developed XLM to satisfy both. Forty percent lighter than TimberTech's wood plastic composite planks, XLM is an-extremely durable-expanded polymer decking material that features a proprietary blend of mineral enhancements to provide unparalleled scratch and stain resistance.

In 2008, TimberTech introduced DeckLites®, a low-voltage lighting system designed to be used with RadianceRail and Ornamental Rail systems. TimberTech is the first alternative decking/railing manufacturer to introduce a truly integrated lighting system designed by deck experts.

TimberTech is one of the few manufacturers to cover the alternative decking category with nine product profiles available in numerous colors. The addition of XLM rounds out the most complete product line in the industry, making TimberTech a one-stop source for a vast array of outdoor living product options: railing, fencing, lighting, fastening and drainage systems, accessories and trim.

### **Quality Through Lean Manufacturing**

While innovation has been key to TimberTech's emergence as a leading player in the decking category, all the great ideas in the world wouldn't mean much if the company didn't have the manufacturing expertise to make high quality products and the sales channel to get them to market.

In April 2004, TimberTech broke ground in Wilmington, Ohio, for construction of a 140,000 square foot manufacturing and warehousing facility, adding more than 200 jobs.

Tom Gramlich spearheaded TimberTech's plant-wide Lean Manufacturing initiative and implementation of the 5S process (Sort, Sweep, Straighten, Standardize and Sustain) to establish standards of operational excellence while continuing to grow sales. From the outset of the project, the team at TimberTech exhibited a "can-do" attitude that was immediately recognized by the employees on the shop floor, where safety, quality and communication are the most important ingredients. Best of all, the cleaner plant is always in "tour-ready" condition for potential customers.

Lean Manufacturing has resulted in lower operational expenses, and a higher percentage of future sales contribute directly toward the bottom line through the elimination of waste in the company's internal processes.

## **Tuning In The Channel**

The early vision for TimberTech was high manufacturing standards and category-leading innovation and the third critical piece of the puzzle was a sales channel that could get products in the hands of the right decision-makers and influencers. TimberTech has built a deep bench of loyal distributors, dealers, builders and contractors that can reach consumers from coast-to-coast and even in international markets. And it's a loyalty borne out of TimberTech's commitment to helping its partners succeed, from quality products to dealer programs that deliver marketing muscle and reward outstanding performance.

TimberTech products have been featured on nationally-watched shows such as ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and NBC's *The Today Show* and in TV shows, radio shows, magazines and web sites across the country and around the world.

## **The Next Frontier**

In June 2007, TimberTech's parent company, Crane Group, announced the creation of Crane Building Products, the umbrella over TimberTech and the other related companies in the Crane Group family, including Exterior Portfolio by Crane, EverMark and others. In July 2007, Stu Kemper transitioned from his role at TimberTech and leads that group. Tom Gramlich, now president at TimberTech, continues to lead with a clear vision of leveraging the collected resources of the Crane Building Products family and staying true to TimberTech's original building blocks of innovation and quality.

More than 80 percent of TimberTech sales in 2008 will be on products that were introduced in the last three years. The alternative decking, railing and fencing category is dynamic and consumer tastes are evolving and becoming more sophisticated. TimberTech has never shied away from high expectations, whether it's from customers, partners or employees. In fact, this company thrives on it, and the foundation that's been laid has helped TimberTech chart a successful course for the future.

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