

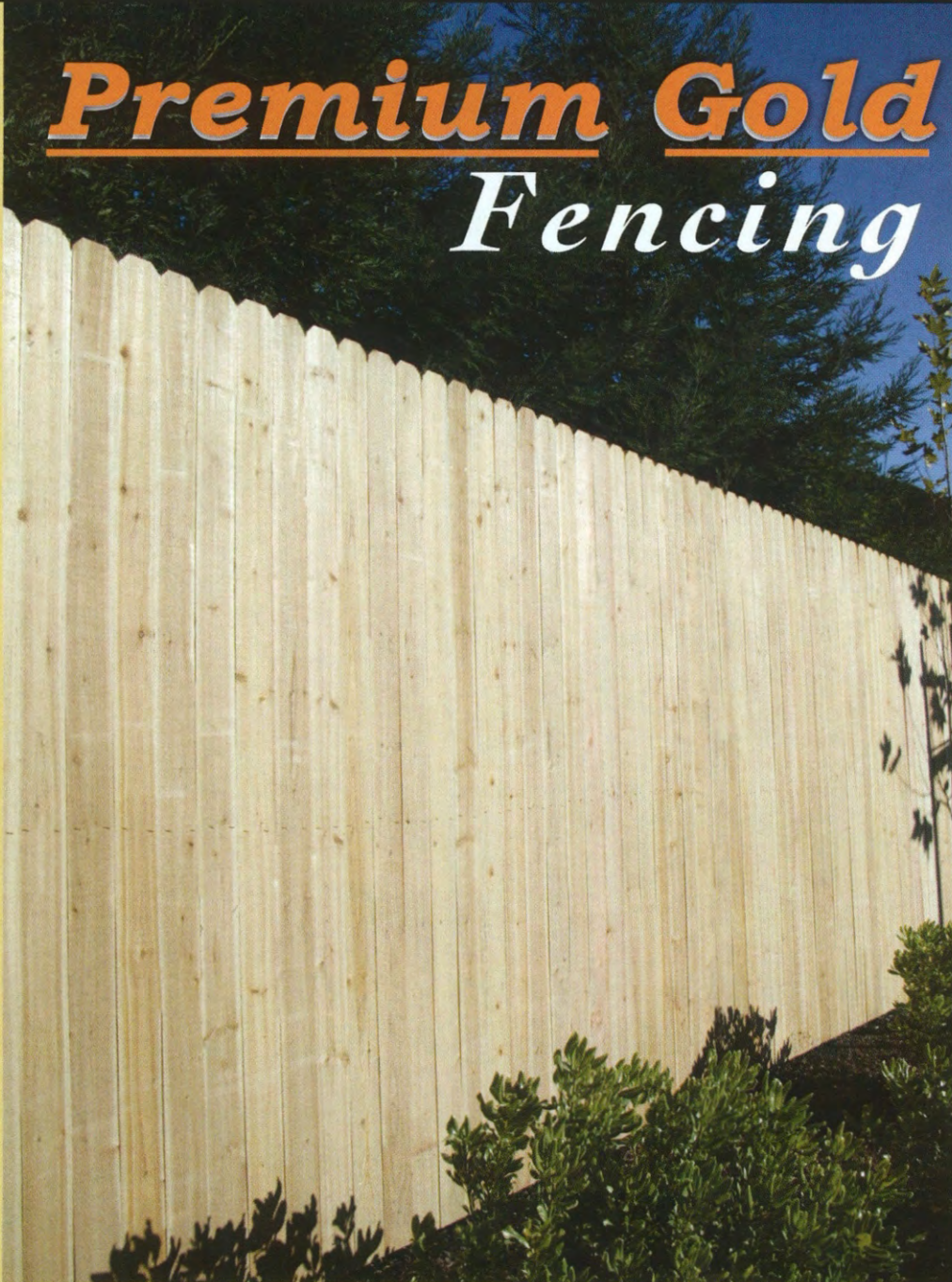
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Vendor “tours” can boost your decking sales

By Cheryl Copeland
TimberTech



REGIONAL PRESENTATIONS allow attendees to share industry knowledge and business in their respective areas.

THE best way to sell composite decking is to know composite decking.

Long-standing composite decking manufacturers are constantly innovating to improve their products and keep up with the demands of homeowners. In addition, a number of new companies have entered the marketplace due to the rising popularity of the alternative decking category—which has seen double-digit growth over the past few years.

With so many products available

from multiple manufacturers, how can a dealer or distributor keep current on the newest innovations and decide which manufacturers to work with?

One excellent tool to evaluate a manufacturer and its products is to visit their facility. A comprehensive facility tour gives visitors a well-rounded experience that guides them through all facets of the company: from the creation, packaging and shipping of the product, to marketing materials that assist in the sales process and customer support pro-

grams that help grow business.

But not everyone can invest the amount of time needed for a facility tour. That's why TimberTech decided to take their tour on the road by conducting presentations and virtual plant tours at regional locations. Participants receive similar information as a regular facility tour without having to physically be there.

Last year, TimberTech hosted nearly 2,000 distributors, dealers, and their affiliated contractors at these regional presentations. Participants walked away with a better understanding of the company, its personnel, and its products. They also gained knowledge that allows them to more confidently and effectively serve their customers and increase sales.

Another plus of regional presentations is that dealers and distributors can invite their contractor-customers to attend.

Ben Carbaugh, R.G. Miller, Hanover, Pa., attended a recent event held in Baltimore, Md. “We brought two vans of our contractors, from an hour and a half away,” he said. “They all felt it was worthwhile. The hands-on displays were excellent and having the ability to talk with guys who can explain the products in detail was very impressive.”

During the one-hour product demonstration, TimberTech's entire product line—including decking, railing, fencing and lighting—is set up in stations to allow hands-on interaction. This is also the time when dealers, distributors, and contractors can share



WHEN DECKING manufacturers bring their presentations to the dealer, retailers can invite their contractor customers to participate.

ideas about the industry and business in their respective areas.

“I saw some new items and got several display ideas from the hands-on display area,” said Rich Stout, Friel Lumber, Queenstown, Md., who has been in the business for more than 25 years and attended many product seminars.

After the product demonstrations, attendees listen as the president of the company and other top sales and marketing executives discuss the state of the business, industry trends, and sales support materials and marketing programs available to help channel partners grow their business.

“This was first I can remember where the president of the company participated in the actual presentation and was knowledgeable, informative, and seemed genuinely in touch with every part of the business, including our needs as retailers,” said Friel.

The virtual factory tour takes the form of a 10-minute video that guides participants through the manufacturing plant and all of the steps involved in manufacturing composite decking—from the intake of raw materials to the mixing areas and the extruder lines, to the finished goods warehouse.

The goal of the entire presentation is to give distributors, dealers, and contractors the knowledge they need to grow their business and to help answer the question: “Why should I support this manufacturer’s products?”

— Cheryl Copeland is a senior marketing manager at TimberTech, Wilmington, Oh. She can be reached at (800) 307-7780 or ccopeland@timbertech.com.