

Each month Windows Active talks to an industry director. Here we talk to Keith Sadler, Managing Director of Vista

Director of the month

2014 has been a very good year so far for Vista. At the time of writing (August), we've sold 44,800 PVC-U panels, which is 4% up on 2013, and 24,400 composite doors, which is an improvement on 2013. It's interesting that we've managed to grow our panel sales by 4% considering the latest Palmer Market Report indicated the PVC-U panel door market is declining. The report stated that composite doors now have 38% share of the 1.3 million domestic door market, overtaking PVC-U panel doors which now account for 35%.

From our perspective, the PVC-U panel market is buoyant, but whether that's because we're bucking the trend or the report was inaccurate I'm not sure. We supply over 450 PVC-U fabricators and we're hell bent on providing them with the best possible products and services – customers pay our wages after all – so perhaps this ethos has enabled us to grow while others have struggled.

The composite door market meanwhile is booming and growing year on year. Consumer awareness for composite doors has increased – people now realise they can have a door that looks like timber but with none of the maintenance issues – and domestic window companies are pushing composites more than ever.

While the market may be buoyant, one interesting market trend we have noticed is the number of window fabricators moving out of composite door manufacturing and choosing to buy-in instead.

Composite doors require a significant amount of ongoing investment if you want to make a serious go of it - including CNC machinery, experienced personnel, factory space and stock. You can't use the same components on composite doors as you do on PVC-U doors (you need a different outerframe and locks for instance) and you will need to offer a wide variety of widths, styles and colours in order to compete with specialist suppliers who have a plethora of options.

Then there is legislation. All doors need to be CE marked of course, plus you will need PAS23/24 and Secured by



Design if you want to be taken seriously – all of which require time and money to achieve. Composite door manufacturing can be a false economy and that's why many fabricators are choosing to concentrate on what they're good at – making windows – and leaving composite doors to specialists like Vista.

Operating from a 50,000 ft² factory, Vista is a high volume supplier. We carry large amounts of stock (we have at least 1,500 door blanks in seven colours, six styles and three widths at any given time) and have invested substantially in machinery to ensure we're manufacturing as efficiently as possible. This includes a state-of-the-art paint spray facility that allows us to paint most RAL colours.

In the same way Vista isn't geared up to manufacture windows, it's simply not practical for a multi-product fabricator to match our resources in composite doors, so it's no surprise we're starting to hear from companies looking to outsource.

Specialising in composite doors is not just beneficial from a logistical perspective – it also gives Vista time to evaluate our product range and create market leading solutions. A prime example of our innovation is XtremeDoor, our newly launched high performance composite door.

As well as achieving PAS23/24 and Secured by Design like most other composite door manufacturers, we have gone to the 'extreme' with every part of the door - from security to thermal efficiency and weather tightness - to create a product that truly stands head and shoulders above the competition.

XtremeDoor is manufactured using the best components on the market today brought together in a unique combination. Some of the stand-out features on XtremeDoor include:

- Five-point lock that includes two hooks and three deadbolts. The majority of similarly priced composite doors on the market have just a two- or three-point lock.

- Triple-sealed outerframe offering superior weather protection. The majority of similarly priced composite doors only have a double

FACTS AND FIGURES

First Job: Coffin maker.

When did you join or set up current company: 1995 as the office tea boy.

Most useful/favourite gadget: My iPad. It's easy to use and covers most forms of communication.

Favourite/most useful website: www.laterooms.com – great for last minute deals on quality hotels.

Business person you admire: Anyone who gives it a go, instead of complaining about what might have been.

Recommended hotel for business: Any hotel that has a comfortable bed and is clean.

Favourite UK restaurant: San Carlo for atmosphere (Liverpool or Manchester).

Best business decision: To buy Vista from the group that owned it as they went bust 6 months later.

Other interests: Family, golf and keeping fit.

KEITH SADLER'S WORKING DAY



Most of the week is spent at the Vista HQ where I normally arrive at around 7.30am after a quick session in the gym. Every day is different but I make sure I spend time with the operations director, production manager, logistics and office manager, as well as the finance director. Conference calls are then made with the sales director and sales team before settling down at my desk. One thing I have always done is open the post - it seems trivial but you will be amazed at what you see.

sealed outerframe at most.

- PVC-U edgeband, enhancing the thermal performance.
- 3 x 3 way adjustable hinge making it easier to fit. Most composite doors use a butt hinge that cannot be adjusted or a 2 way adjustable hinge.
- It is manufactured using the internationally renowned Nan Ya slab which has a foam filled core, enhancing thermal performance.
- Stainless steel hardware with a 25-year guarantee. Most composite doors have zinc hardware, which is prone to pitting, and comes with just a 12-month warranty.
- Urn knocker that has been salt-spray tested to ASTM B117 for 2,000 hours - making it perfect for coastal locations.

Once we had developed XtremeDoor we wanted to prove just how thermally efficient, weather resistant and secure it really is, so we put the product through a series of rigorous tests.

The thermal test, conducted by the University of Salford in a typical 1919 terraced house that had been reconstructed in a fully environmentally controllable chamber, concluded that XtremeDoor is 19% more thermally efficient than the solid timber core composite door and 17% more thermally efficient than the traditional timber door. The assessment test for weather tightness was carried out at Winkhaus Laboratories on XtremeDoor Glazing system and was terminated after XtremeDoor withstood 2000 Pascals, which is three times stronger than a hurricane.

Finally the door's security was put to the test by the riot squad at Greater Manchester police. The officer was armed with a 16kg battering ram, otherwise known as an 'Enforcer', which will break most doors in 1-2 seconds. After battering the door for five minutes the officer gave up completely exhausted and unable to break in.

While there isn't as much room for innovation with PVC-U panels as with composite doors, we have launched new products into the market in recent months including a thicker PVC-U panel for use in triple-glazed doors. Eurocell recently launched Modus, a new window profile designed to hold triple-glazed IGUs, and we're the first company to develop a panel for use with this system. With the triple-glazing market looking set to grow in time, this will no doubt prove to be a valuable product for Vista.

We've also expanded our colour range so it now consists of red, blue, green, black, Chartwell green, Irish oak, grey, white woodgrain and cream. Consumer tastes are becoming more adventurous and we believe the popularity of niche colours such as Chartwell green will only increase over time.

So what does Vista have planned for the future? We will be making further improvements to our products. For instance, we will be launching a new range of hardware and glass very soon, and we will continue to review our operations to ensure we're offering customers the best possible service.

Tel: 0151 608 1423 or visit www.vistapanel.co.uk

WORKING LOCATION



I work from Vista, which is based on the Wirral and only 10 minutes away from home (the Mersey Rivera). My office leads onto the sales department and the door is always open so I can hear what is going on. It also allows the staff to come in and have a chat, which is the culture we have set. The finance director and operations director are next door so we are close enough to react to any situation...