The future of the EIFS industry is bright—if we don’t shoot off our own foot.

What do the future of EIFS and shooting off one’s foot have to do with each other?

Exterior insulation has been available in North America since the early 1970s. Since that time it has gained wide acceptance within the architectural and building community. To understand this we have to go back to the reasoning behind its conception.

The Past

EIFS first gained popularity at the beginning of the energy crisis in the 1970s, when oil prices went through the roof. Today EIF Systems are still one of the most cost efficient ways to insulate buildings.

Later, as energy concerns decreased, we found that interest began to grow due to design options; flexibility in dealing with shapes and dimensions, along with colors and textures, increased the attractiveness of EIFS. Still, a third area became important: affordability. Utilizing curtain wall construction in EIFS provided energy efficiency, unlimited design options and cost effectiveness when compared to other competitive cladding products.

The Present

The most popular system currently sold by Sto consists of BTS-B as an adhesive and ground coat, and a finish. This system has been a mainstay for several years and continues to be popular. In large part, its success has been directly related to the success of BTS-B, a very popular ground coat and adhesive.

Running a close second in popularity is the original system, which utilizes dispersion adhesive, RFP and a finish. This system continues to hold a favorite place with contractors due to its easy workability and ready-to-use formula.

These systems are considered PB Systems according to standards set by EIMA. PB stands for polymer-based ground coats. The PM systems are yet another EIFS application. PM stands for polymer-modified ground coats.

The PM Systems, which gained popularity in the mid 1980s, are experiencing a current decline in popularity. PM Systems gained usefulness in the school market but still continue to lose ground as a result of cost and application difficulty.

The panelization trend has been on a roller coaster cycle since its introduction in the 1970s. It is controlled by the contractor base and its success lies exclusively with the ability of contractors to maintain a profit after considerable capital investment. The popularity of this type of application peaked out in the early 1980s and has continued to drift downward since that time. While the concept is still valid and the merits of panelization still provide a viable construction method, the trick is to make it profitable.

During the last 10 years the EIFS industry has focused primarily on large project sales. In recent years, due to the economy, large projects have become less commonplace. Smaller jobs and renovation work are becoming more typical.

Our average order is much smaller than in previous years, while our overall sales volume has grown, in large part, due to the creative efforts of our sales force, distributors and applicators. This has resulted in new and creative uses for EIFS products.

We at Sto think this “new niche” trend will certainly continue for many years to come. This trend is reminiscent of the trend that developed in the European market many years ago, which still remains dominated by small jobs and renovation projects.

The Future

Today, we see EIFS used on virtually all types of architecture and in every imaginable marketplace; renovation and new construction, in all types of residential and commercial structures. With this widespread acceptance at all levels, the industry would be expected to flourish-provided we don’t shoot ourselves in the foot!

The self-inflicted shot to the foot...
in this market. We are already seeing a heightened awareness and interest in the technology.”

The award winning residence's interior includes five bedrooms, four living areas and 4 1/2 baths. Walls of windows create indoor and outdoor living environments. A two-story foyer focuses on a spiral staircase and leads to a spacious, open multi-level design. Each room is designed with shape, form and function. The home has curved walls, high ceilings and custom appointments throughout.

As a SMART home, the residence featured numerous new products, new technologies and new innovative construction and design techniques. Highlights include a state-of-the-art automated home management system. Space-age control of appliances, utilities and special features from security to entertainment provide increased comfort and convenience and lower energy costs.

Could result from lack of quality applications, using systems for inappropriate applications and using products that do not meet industry standards.

Whether you're a distributor or a contractor, sell on the merits of your service and your products and not on the cost of the system. As an industry, we must continue to improve quality, ensure proper design and accept nothing but proper applications.

Within the industry, we should all push in the same direction. We have much to gain. There is nothing else in the market today that can compete with EIFS, but if we allow substandard work, inferior installation techniques and inappropriate applications, the satisfaction level of the owner, architect or developer will deteriorate.

EIFS would then become a fading fad, not a growth industry. We have the opportunity to continue a long and mutually beneficial business relationship, but we must gain control through enforcement of proper installation methods.

These systems are extremely flexible in use, application and performance, but there are limitations. We know what those limitations are. Let's live with them. EIFS systems are great, but they are not magic! Sell the system for what it is and for what it can do—not what you wish it could do. The future of EIFS is in our hands. Let's improve our quality at all levels, and business opportunities will come our way for years to come.

About the Author

C. "Buck" Buchanan is vice president of marketing for Sto, Atlanta, and a past president and current secretary of the EIFS Industry Members Association.