

Episode 43: Product Manager Insights on New JM Offerings

Daniel Robbins: Here we are again for another podcast dedicated to the roofing industry by Johns Manville, Above It All. Today I have two special guests, two of our product managers, one brand new, we've got Kaare in town. Kaare, how are you sir?

Kaare Kurtzke: Doing great today. Excited to be here. Can't wait to talk with you.

Daniel Robbins: Then of course we have Brandon Mark. We've done a couple episodes with Brandon. Brandon is our PVC product manager. Thank you for being on the podcast again, Brandon.

Brandon Mark: I appreciate you having me back today.

Daniel Robbins: So today we have some really exciting stuff to talk about. We have new products, or I would say probably new accessories that we want to kind of talk about, enlighten our viewers on, and kind of talk about applications and things like that. Who wants to go first? PVC?

Brandon Mark: Yeah, I'll kick it off.

Daniel Robbins: Awesome. All right. So Brandon, let's talk about some of the new stuff you've been working on. What is the value for contractors? What are some elements that you're really excited about?

Brandon Mark: Well, I think we've got two highlights that really stand out at the moment. We recently, at the beginning of the year, launched a JM PVC SD Plus Fleeceback offering. So with the, PVC SD Plus Fleeceback, this is really filling a gap that we had in our PVC portfolio. It does utilize the same SD Plus formulation that our customers have come to trust over the last several years while adding the durability of a fleeceback to that thermoplastic. We have also, really heard our customers about the higher price point of our current key Fleeceback offerings. So this new SD Plus Fleeceback formulation, it meets that lower price point. So I think that there's a lot of benefits to this that our customers are really going to grab onto. I would also like to just point out that JM PVC our Fleeceback offerings coming at 12-foot sheet some of the competition in the market, does not offer a 12-foot solution. This helps to save on labor during the installation process, less welding during your lap line installation. So it's another key benefit overall, price reduction and cost savings for our customers.

And then on top of that, I'd say the other highlight is our new offering for PVC Water-Based Adhesive out to a 30-year guarantee, term length. Previously we only had a 20-year term length and we've done some testing, gathered some additional data and are now able to offer an additional 10 years on top of that for our customer base. Once again, really bringing a product offering we were lacking on forward for our customer base.

Daniel Robbins: Interesting. But it sounds like it's going to be a great offering. And then as far as that water base, is it just for PVC or is this something that works with the single ply line?

Brandon Mark: This is strictly for the PVC portfolio at this time, we are actively working on a 30-year extension for our TPO Water-Based Adhesive. Hopefully more news to come on that in the coming months. Now I know that I mentioned that there were two main highlights for the PVC portfolio, but it's definitely worth mentioning as well, we have a new product, a JM Very Severe Hail Plate or VSH Plate that is going to be very popular, we believe, in the very severe hail zone along the center part of the country. The very severe hail zone really stems from a Factory Mutual or FM hail ratings map that I'm sure most of our customer base is very familiar with. This new plate does bring a mechanically fastened solution for very severe hail rated systems. JM has exclusivity on this product and we think that this is really going to grow in popularity for our customer base along the center part of the country.

This plate will be utilized in a TPO system. It is an 80 mil Smooth-Back TPO membrane, mechanically fastened over a DensDeck Prime StormX Board, insulation is optional under that system. All of these systems that we currently have are going to be FM approved systems. We do have active listings on RoofNav, that our customers can go and check out across a spectrum of uplift performance requirements. It is worth noting though that you need to really pay attention to some of the details. There are requirements for different steel gauges depending on the uplift potentials that you're looking at. But we are very excited at JM to bring this new product to our customers once again in that very severe hail zone across the center part of the country.

Daniel Robbins: Very cool. Very cool [those] sound like excellent products. Let's get to know Kaare a little bit. Kaare, this is your first podcast and before we step into some of the products that you're working on, give us your background, kind of what brought you to JM, what is your expertise in and what are you passionate about?

Kaare Kurtzke: Yeah, of course. So the big thing for me is I started my career as an engineer and that's kind of who I was for the first 10 years. I designed everything from things on the space shuttle, all the way to commercial lighting, like the lights you see above your desk when you're at work. So I've kind of seen this huge gamut of things and after 10 years of doing that, I really wanted to move over to the sales and product side, a little more strategy and business stuff. I went back to get my MBA actually at here, downtown in Denver, the University of Colorado, Denver.

Daniel Robbins: Nice.

Kaare Kurtzke: From there I kind of jumped over to running a sales team in commercial lighting and then moving into product management where I can really kind of use that analytics side.

Daniel Robbins: I went to CU, or yeah, I went to CU Denver. It was the commuter experience for me. Was that similar to you or [I] didn't know what their MBA program was like.

Kaare Kurtzke: So they have two campuses, one downtown here and one way farther south, closer to Parker.

Daniel Robbins: Oh, nice.

Kaare Kurtzke: So I was working full-time, being an engineering manager, pretending it's only a 40-hour week job and then taking classes afterwards. So I would immediately leave work, come to do a three-hour class, four days a week, whether it was downtown or all the way down in Parker. So I was very excited when I finally graduated and could get some free time back.

Daniel Robbins: Very cool. As far as that, your engineering degree, what kind of engineering did you specialize in?

Kaare Kurtzke: So I actually specialized in Aerospace Engineering. So that was, it's actually at the top of the list, AE, and I thought it would be challenging and fun.

Daniel Robbins: Was it challenging?

Kaare Kurtzke: It took a lot of effort. So I think some roommates in college made the joke, I spent more time on campus than I did actually where I paid rent.

Daniel Robbins: Alright. So I definitely want to talk about your products, but you did bring up that you designed something on a spaceship. Are you unclassified to talk about some of that stuff? Because I know there's probably high levels of clearance that you have to probably go through for that.

Kaare Kurtzke: So for the space shuttle, it's pretty easy on that one. You have those heat dispersion tiles, the big black tiles underneath the space shuttle. Every time they would replace one, they always had to, a few times after each kind of take off and landing, it would take 30 weeks to do. So it took a very long time, lots of money to do it over and over iterations and we did, I did a lot of 3D scanning and 3D printing. So, I created the process to essentially 3D scan that cavity where the new tile would go down to a few thousandths of an inch. So you got this incredible accuracy, so you didn't need to take 35 weeks, you know, hundreds, thousands of dollars every time you had to do this. Just made it a lot faster. So that was kinda the process they moved forward with before the shuttle program was shut down.

Daniel Robbins: So you were able to 3D print with those high quality materials back then?

Kaare Kurtzke: Yep. So that was kinda my first job out of college was 3D scanning and 3D printing. So everything from components on a space shuttle to things that were used for surgical devices. So a pretty wide variety.

Daniel Robbins: Well you guys got to know a little bit about Kaare now, but let's talk about TPO.

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Kaare Kurtzke: Yeah, so very similar to Brandon mentioning that there are new products coming out all the time. We have a couple of new ones for TPO. One of the big ones we're excited about is an update to our TPO Self-Adhered or SA offering. Previously it went down to installation at 40 degrees Fahrenheit and rising. We've come out with this new improvement to lower the temperature for installation down to 20 degrees Fahrenheit and rising. So you get a larger range that you can install this product, which is just going to really help, especially those colder months as people are outside trying to complete projects.

Daniel Robbins: Now is that just like we really changed up the formulation on the adhesive kind of thing? Or is it the whole product is different?

Kaare Kurtzke: So that one is on the adhesive, so it's still our great 60 mil membrane that we have all over the place that we've installed across the country. But we made an update to that adhesive. So really trying to make sure you can still use the self-adhered product because you get some great benefits. If you're in an occupied building while trying to install a product, you get no odors, you don't have all of the other materials on site. So it's a little bit cleaner, just you're not going to have as many potential things for the end user, people in the building noticing an installation going on.

Daniel Robbins: [I] had the privilege of being able to go up on a couple job sites that was using our original SA. And I think just anything self-adhered tends to go so much faster. I feel like guys were just kicking rolls out, pulling release liners and then rolling things out. Is that similar kind of to this, it's the same process, just better formulation, better product kind of a thing?

Kaare Kurtzke: Exactly, just like that. I mean, when you have the self-adhered product, you have no flash off times, so you get those labor efficiencies right away when you're using the SA product. So like, just like you said, kicking rolls out and being able to pull the liner off from there. So it's a lot more efficient to install, which is kind of a benefit to everybody.

Daniel Robbins: Do you feel like SA is its own market or do you feel like this is something a lot of contractors will want to try if they haven't tried before? What are your thoughts on that?

Kaare Kurtzke: I think it's kind of a hybrid, right between the two of us. It's definitely its own market. The people that see the benefits of SA want to stay with that kind of product from there. But at the same time we know that mechanically fastened [is] the incumbent for a lot of the installation. So we're going to see, as it becomes easier to install on a wider variety of applications, there'll probably be some growth there, but it's kind of a hybrid between the two.

Daniel Robbins: Very cool. Very cool. So we [have] our TPO SA. Anything else?

Kaare Kurtzke: Yeah, the one other one that we have launched it. So although the SA is coming out here shortly, the one that we've launched is our white, One-Part Pourable Sealer Liquid Flashing. And really the update there is we've had a gray One-Part Pourable Sealer Liquid Flashing for a long time. As we know with a lot of our single ply membranes, they tend to be white for a lot of the installations. So we came out with the white version of that one-part so that you still get that great benefit of, you know there's no measuring or mixing of product. It's, well, one-part solution, just as the name implies. So we've moved over to that to kind of meet the industry needs.

Daniel Robbins: So with that One-Part Pourable Sealer, the application is always going to go in a pitch pocket, correct? Then you can fill up, or is it all kinds of application to it?

Kaare Kurtzke: So it tends to be all kinds of applications to it. So really when you're installing it's that layer of sealer, your scrim, another layer of sealer on top of that. So where you have things like pipe clusters or are kind of that unique geometry that's a little harder to flash. This is really going to shine and make it easier. And then on top of that, the great part is after it's cured, you can come over and paint on top of that or put another layer of sealer to really drive home. Maybe if you had a cosmetic requirement or a building owner wanted it to look a certain way, you'd really be able to do that on top of the liquid flashing here.

Daniel Robbins: I feel like in the past, when we've messed with liquid flashing products, it hasn't come in the same viscosity as what I've seen with the one-part, which I think is a huge benefit because if it's holding to the detail better, I feel like you get to shape it more efficiently maybe. Have you noticed that with this?

Kaare Kurtzke: It's certainly a little bit easier to work with. On our website, we have a couple of great videos showing exactly how easy it is so you can kind of get an idea of pouring it right out of the packaging. You know, either it's the first layer or the layer on top of the scrim, almost like painting it on so you make sure you get it exactly where you need to apply it as opposed to trying to work it into kind of awkward geometry. So it's certainly an ease of use solution.

Daniel Robbins: And as Kaare said, everyone, if you're interested in learning about the product, we do have a training video on it, we have details on it, we've got all kinds of great content on our website. So if you want to know how to do it from start to finish, we got videos for you if you want to understand how it would go into an installation from more of a [specification] standpoint, we have all of that as well. But that about covers everything unless you have more. Do you have more products?

Kaare Kurtzke: I just had one update to say, in the coming months we're going to make an update to this liquid flashing and essentially come out with a kit. We're going to add scrim into the box, so kind of one step closer to a turnkey solution. So instead of just the One-Part Pourable Sealer, we'll have a box with the sealer and scrim inside of it. So just a little more of a, as I said, a turnkey solution for you when you're up on an installation.

Daniel Robbins: That's nice. Have a lot of contractors talked about kind of it being a pain to have to go source different things from other places kind of a thing?

Kaare Kurtzke: We know it's one of those instances where you have all of the individual components on a job when you're doing an installation, but it makes it a little bit easier on ordering, knowing you have exactly what you need. It's there in the packaging when it's delivered. So it's, again, we're just trying to find more of those little efficiencies that we can drive home for our customers.

Daniel Robbins: No, that's huge. I know a lot of people will find a lot of value in that, so. Alright gentlemen, thank you so much for being on the podcast. We appreciate you.

Kaare Kurtzke: Alright. Thanks for having us.

Daniel Robbins: Alright. Stay safe out there. We'll catch you next time.