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Herman Miller Sustainable answer to PVC

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REHAU's polypropylene edgebanding provides sustainable answer to PVC - another achievement for Herman Miller's "Perfect Vision" initiative

Recognizing an elevated environmental consciousness in the U.S. market, REHAU Inc. has recently brought its longstanding experience with PVC-alternative materials to North America. In addition to making these capabilities generally available in this region, the company has specifically applied its capabilities in polypropylene (PP) edgebanding with Herman Miller, Inc., a global leader in office furnishings, workplace consulting and related services.

Herman Miller has recently taken the next step in sustainability through its company-wide initiative, "Perfect Vision," which sets aggressive standards in corporate environmental performance.

"Designing products with consideration for their environmental impact is a central corporate strategy, and something Herman Miller has been doing for decades," said Scott Charon, program manager at Herman Miller. "Perfect Vision speaks to the company's focus on incorporating increasingly more environmentally sustainable materials, features and manufacturing processes into new product designs."

The Perfect Vision initiative builds on Herman Miller's commitment to sustainability in all areas of operations by establishing significant, measurable corporate targets for elevating environmental responsibility. These include goals of eliminating VOC air emissions, process water use, and hazardous and solid waste produced by the company, while striving for 100 percent renewable electrical energy use - all by the year 2020. Perfect Vision also includes efforts to attain zero landfill and to construct company buildings to minimum LEED Silver certification standards.

To help meet the Perfect Vision goal of using 100-percent non-PVC materials across its product lines, Herman Miller approached longstanding supplier REHAU Inc. for an innovative edgebanding solution.

"Developing a more sustainable and cost-effective alternative to PVC edgebanding was a huge hurdle for us," said Charon. "It was important we find the right solution, one that delivered on these points and that maintained the quality our customers expect."

To address Herman Miller's needs, REHAU capitalized on its breadth and depth of knowledge in polymer engineering, and specifically its 20 years of experience in producing polypropylene (PP) edgebanding for the European market.

"A number of compounds are being looked to as 'green solutions,' but polypropylene is a true cradle-to-cradle environmental answer that speaks to an elevated green consciousness," said Mark Kraus, technical team manager for REHAU's furniture group. "As a closely beneficial solution to that of bio-based materials, polypropylene—or PP—is also fully recyclable and literally burns as clean as a candle."

Beyond general environmental friendliness, PP offers enhanced chemical and heat resistance, greater flexibility and ability to receive tension, and a wider scope of processing possibilities than other plastic polymers. In addition, PP offers a higher UV resistance to fading, better solvent resistance, and greater suitability to contour processing than other non-PVC compounds.

Coupled with its cutting-edge color-matching technology, REHAU's multi-decade work with PP made for a rather simple translation of Herman Miller's existing color selection to the new non-PVC edgeband line.

"We successfully matched all 39 of Herman Miller's custom colors in polypropylene," said Kraus. "The transition to PP, which presently equates to replacement of more than half the existing edgeband line with a green solution, was also quite smooth, and we are continuing to work on solid strategies for the company's remaining PVC volume."

Project: Herman Miller's Sustainable Answer to PVC

Location: Leesburg, VA, 2008

Type of Project: Mixed Use

Scope of Project: REHAU has specifically applied its capabilities in polypropylene (PP) edgebanding with Herman Miller Inc., a global leader in office furnishing workplace consulting and related services

REHAU Systems Used: Polypropylene (PP)

According to Kraus, REHAU also provided ongoing on-site assistance, with engineers from the company conducting sample runs throughout the process to ensure product consistency. In addition, REHAU engineers were on hand during the pilot production launch to ensure a smooth, seamless transition to polypropylene.

"It's another step forward in meeting our ambitions for all of our products," Charon said regarding REHAU's provision of a non-PVC solution in its PP edgebanding. "We look forward to continued advancement toward delivering on each of Herman Miller's Perfect Vision goals."

"Going green, the right way, is definitely a continual process," Kraus said. "At REHAU, we are committed to helping our customers become more environmentally responsible, while also maintaining the highest level of product quality and long-term viability."

The designs and services of Herman Miller enhance the performance of human habitats worldwide, making customers' lives more productive, rewarding, delightful, and meaningful. The company's award-winning products, complemented by furniture management and strategic consulting services, generated over \$1.9 billion in revenue during fiscal 2007. Widely recognized both for its innovative products and business practices, Herman Miller is a recipient of the prestigious National Design Award for product design from the Smithsonian Institution's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, and in 2008 was once again cited by FORTUNE magazine as both the "Most Admired" company in its industry and among the "100 Best Companies to Work For" in America. The company trades on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol MLHR. For additional information, visit www.hermanmiller.com

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