



**MATERIAL INTELLIGENCE**  
FOR FURNITURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN

## **Branding Decorative Panels for Architects and Interior Designers:**

### **A Crucial Role for Upstream Suppliers Beginning in 2016**

**- DRAFT -**

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*“Particle board is cheaper, denser and more uniform than conventional wood and plywood and is substituted for them when appearance and strength are less important than cost.*

*However, particleboard can be made more attractive by painting or the use of wood veneers onto surfaces that will be visible.*

*Though it is denser than conventional wood, it is the lightest and weakest type of fiberboard.”*

- Wikipedia entry on particleboard.

Is this the best brand message for our products?

Should we try to do better?

Let's finally take control of our messaging.

## Executive Summary

Upstream suppliers to laminate producers and users can make a real, positive and lasting impact by combining their marketing efforts to create a unified category brand that emphasizes the many positives of decorative panels.

Rebranding messages will focus on architect and designer specifiers of commercial and residential furniture and interiors, because the materials they use inform and inspire consumers.

By blanketing the media frequented by these specifiers, we can change our brand from “Cheap imitation surfaces that don’t last,” to “The planet’s most environmentally responsible design solutions, inspired by global décor trends.”

- Suppliers of print, texture, chemical/resin and processing technology generally have a small number of direct customers worldwide.
- Traditional marketing – i.e., print campaigns – are limited in their effectiveness, since these suppliers already have close relationships with all of their clients.
- The best marketing investment these suppliers can make is one that improves the category brand of our final product – decorative panels for commercial and residential furniture and interiors.
- The goal of this “rebranding” effort is to increase both the perceived value and use of our decorative panels.
- This directly benefits the entire value chain – your direct customers, their customers, and their customers’ customers.
- By working together, we can develop and execute a powerful, sustained messaging campaign targeting the highest-value users of our materials – architects and interior designers.
- The choices made by these specifiers inform consumers. To make them our best salespeople, we must give information and resources they need.
- The messaging and materials developed in this effort will serve as a “brand bible” for the entire value chain – fabricators, distributors, etc.
- With your commitment we can begin making a difference in 2016.

## **You're at the top of the laminates industry value chain.**

Your customer universe is small enough that you not only know all of them by their first name...you probably also know their favorite restaurants – in several cities! – *and* what they usually order.

That's a great way to maintain those relationships. But what can you do help your customers actually increase their sales *and* margins?

By helping them market their materials to specifiers who influence consumer trends, and who buy on value rather than price. In other words:

### **Make marketing investments that directly help increase your customers' sales.**

Architects and interior designers still have a very limited understanding of composite wood-based decorative panels. I know this from the hundreds – yes, hundreds! – of conversations I've had while hosting Materials Pavilions at NeoCon, GlobalShop, Hospitality Design Expo and the Healthcare Design Conference and Expo.

These are real people looking for solutions to the real-world challenges they face designing hotels, schools, hospitals, banks, retail stores, and on and on.

When they are presented with all the positives of our products – better than carbon neutral, saving rare and fragile natural woods from harvest, LEED-friendly, superior durability, design matching – you can see several lightbulbs clicking on over their heads.

The lesson here is, **we truly have a message that resonates with A&D specifiers, and it must be spread (and repeated) far and wide.**

This is where you come in.

As a founding sponsor of “Decorative Panels: 20/20” by 2020\* you'll be an industry visionary, taking control of our industry brand and clarifying the positives we bring to furniture and interior design.

20/20 is a concentrated, coordinated, consistent effort by upstream suppliers to increase use of our materials by A&D specifiers, by creating a brand for our category based on value, not price. Let's start in 2016 with a four-year commitment to spreading the word and opening channels of communication with designers.

Because designers, after all, should – and can – be our best salespeople.

Let's start getting the word out. Please read on.

\* Program name is not final

## Decorative Panels: 20/20 by 2020

Our industry has long been challenged with a serious image problem – **“Cheap imitation materials that don’t last.”** This is why (or is it *because?* or *both?*), we too often focus on selling at such low prices.

In reality, what we offer are **“The planet’s most environmentally responsible design solutions, inspired by global décor trends.”**

Effecting this change requires a team effort and a commitment to a long-term, comprehensive program – equivalent to a fairly major brand rollout campaign.

Below, an outline for getting this project off the ground.

- **Participants:**
  - Upstream suppliers to the laminates industry – suppliers of print and texture design, resin systems, and related products and technology have a limited number of direct customers to market to.
- **Purpose:**
  - To help share the positives of decorative panels – the finished products as specified by architects and interior designers, not the individual elements that make them up.
  - This will be the Brand Story for our entire category – composite wood-based decorative panels and related products.
- **Audience:**
  - Commercial architects and interior designers
    - Why? The materials specified for their projects – hotels, restaurants, offices, retail stores, banks, airport lounges, clinics, hospitals – influence consumers’ perceptions, and ultimately, their purchase decisions
  - Design schools and students – the next generation of specifiers are loyal to brands that reach out to them in
  - The entire laminates value chain – producers, distributors, value-added processors.

- **Strategy:**
  - Level One:
    - Targeted editorial/advertorial placements in the major magazines reaching these specifiers in each market, at least four times in each publication in 2016.
    - Educational exhibits featuring our finished products at the major fairs visited by these specifiers – Materials Pavilions, Pop-Up Resource Libraries.
  - Level Two:
    - Creation and presentation of Continuing Education Unit (“CEU”) slideshows to be offered at regional conferences attended by these A&D specifiers
      - These presentations may also be used by individual companies in visits to specific design firms
- **Media Content:**
  - Boilerplate for every placement:
    - Any surface with a composite panel core is “better than carbon neutral”
    - Designs are the result of tracking global design trends
    - Textures are incredible and are continuing to evolve
  - Updatable content:
    - [CEU \(Continuing Education Unit\) articles](#)
    - [Materials-focused installation/case studies with pro photography](#)
    - [Materials-focused global exhibition coverage with pro photography](#)
  - Material Intelligence will create the content with the input and approval of 20/20 program sponsors
- **Benefits:**
  - Recognition for playing a key role in taking control of our category brand.
  - Increasing the value and specification of decorative panels made with your materials.
- **Projected Budget**
  - \$20,000/year per sponsor