

# Quality forever



**Having had the honor to Chair the Glass Performance Days Conference for a quarter of a century lends itself to some very personal reflections. In the Spirit of the GPD - Knowledge grows when shared - I would like to share some thoughts on why this event rose to its number one position in the glass industry and how it has managed to hold on to such a position over so many years. In a way the explanation is simple. All it takes is following the times and never compromise on quality. The problem is that the times are truly changing and quality is measured in different ways by different observers.**



By Mr Jorma Vitkala,  
Chairman Emeritus of the Glass Performance Days  
(est. 1992)



Our industry, the glass industry, has been labeled by some as an industry that is slow to change. The clock-speed of change has been considered inadequate – critics say that little has happened in the last 50 years. This is certainly true when comparing with new and emerging technologies such as information systems or mobile communications. The need for the glass industry to move faster has of course grown and we have responded to the challenge. In retrospect, change in our industry could be said to have been substantial particularly in recent years. The work we have done together through the Glass Performance Days has contributed significantly to the acceleration of industry development. We are quite ready to confidently label ourselves as advocates of change. This we do by sharing and distributing new technologies and practices throughout the glass world. A current example is our new program module for innovators, investors and start-up companies. We call it “Step Change” to mark its potential for quantum leaps in the glass industry.

The properties of glass have been boosted by extremely advanced coating technologies, energy-saving properties have been augmented by revolutionary IGU designs, the performance of glass structures has lead to new construction applications as glass sizes have grown and glass elements have become a structural part of buildings which has become evident all around the world. The applications of thin glass are projected to go through a period of fast evolution and smart glass contributes to the performance and looks of the advanced “machine” that a building is today. Technologies interact to boost the efficiency performance of buildings and their designs are out of this world in shaping dynamic skylines and images for our cities. Impressive changes!

**Dynamic drivers**

Could it be that our modesty has pushed the development incentives within us to the extent that the result actually exceeds our reputation? In my view we are a very dynamic industry. We capitalize on major drivers around us and change with the times by integrating with our developing environment. It is tempting to take a look at the major drivers behind the glass industry, the “partners” we have developed with, almost invisibly. For me, with a customer service background in glass machinery, it is natural to say that we have learned to produce our expensive end-product efficiently, saving energy every step of the way. That would not be possible without advanced machine engineering and the required sophisticated controls.

The exponential development of electronics and information systems is another forceful driver. Optimizing the operational efficiency of large building complexes makes use of many different technologies that are interconnected. The Internet of things (IoT) is here to stay and there is much more to be gained from this technology through interaction and coordination between component suppliers.

The drivers of development deal with technology but they also deal with people. Skilled professionals stand behind the technologies that we use and cooperation carries the use into ever broader areas. Advanced architectural designs extend the borders of what has been thought to be possible and glass has a lot to do with that. Style and daylighting lie behind designs for comfort and safety. Glass is part of that, too. The ideas of what is possible and what can be achieved are efficiently nurtured at the GPD which serves as an essential “Think Tank” among the leading glass professionals who meet, network, exchange ideas and share visions together.

**User experience – Ux Design**

In putting together the program for the 25th Anniversary of GPD another eye-catcher emerged. One of our keynote speakers, Michael Robinson, made a special point out of what he called Ux Design. He made the point that one thing all consumers ask for today from their homes, their jobs, the stores where they shop and eat and from the products that they buy is wellbeing, everybody across all sections of society, all disciplines are talking about wellbeing. Form follows Function was an old saying, meaning that if something worked it had to be beautiful. In the Digital Age this is not necessarily so. Advanced technology allows us to do amazing things with just a simple click. The form surrounding the click has very little to do with function and therefore has lost importance in modern consumer electronics and even modern automobiles. User experience – wellbeing. Designers are well aware that physical beauty is not the only path to a positive user experience. Certainly this poses a challenge for builders as well - and subsequently for glass users.

Very little stands still over time as this reasoning illustrates. Just as one can feel comfortable even over a boosted clock-change, somebody comes in with quite another type of clock. But that is the very reason why we develop. Drivers improve our performance and at the Glass Performance Days – we perform.



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**Sterling Silver Service on GPD 25th Anniversary**

Coming up with the 25th Anniversary of GPD and all its new formats and innovations risk-taking seems comfortable. We have a strong sense in the industry that we are doing this together. Not just the organizing committee, not just the field organization and not just the program committee. The participating professionals, lecturers, session chairmen and commercial sponsors are all chipping in. Team spirit is strong and there is a lot of cohesion among the GPD-attendees, the famous "Spirit of GPD".

But however strong the joint commitment is, one thing is certain – there will be no compromising with the participant services, program quality or basic conferencing services. Rising to the number one position is tough enough but it is even tougher to stay there for any length of time.

**Special features**

In light of our Anniversary Conference I would like to draw your attention to two more particularly special features you can expect to see.

Some years ago we introduced an initiative for the creation of a neutral data bank with glass industry information. We called it the Glass Innovation Institute, and tasked it with the objective to collect and distribute the accumulated knowledge and network contacts to the younger generations in the industry. Sometimes we also called this initiative the Old Foxes Club. Special appreciation goes out to these old foxes who were able to amass and share information at a time where they

had no benefit of today's information technology, Internet and e-mail. The knowledge was stored in the heads of these admirable people, not always harvested by technology or the printed word. The Old Foxes Club is masterful in facilitating knowledge sharing and information transfer. Their ability to build and nurse understanding for the industry was exceptional. It is good to keep in mind that there are skills and feelings that drive development even if they are not documented formally on web sites or in printed sources. Seasoned professionals possess a "gut feeling" of how things ought to be done. The GPD respects this knowledge capital and invites recent professionals to share insights with the Old Guard. Knowledge alone is no substitute for first hand experience, that is something the Old Foxes have in abundance and stand willing to impart to the younger generation at GPD.

Honorable mention also goes to members of the international trade press – friends of the GPD since its inception. It is not customary nor always wise to compliment the media. Too much compliment might make journalists think that they are not doing their work of objective reporting. But in the case of the trade press and the GPD we have always had a most fruitful relationship. We have shared the objective of promoting the glass industry. Since 1992 you – the gentle people of the press - have reported and published conference papers and played a vital role in serving the sharing of knowledge within the glass industry. This is a constructive approach that we value very highly and consider a historic contribution - Together we are so much stronger.

