

Daniel Robbins: Here we are again for another episode of Above It All, a podcast dedicated to the industry by Johns Manville. Today is very special because we have our new EPDM Product Manager on, Curt Friedholdt. Curt, how are you sir?

Curt Friedholdt: Doing great. Thanks for having me, Daniel.

Daniel Robbins: So before we get kind of into what we're doing with JM stuff, I wanna hear your story. Where did you come from and kinda what got you into the whole roofing industry and then what brought you to Johns Manville?

Curt Friedholdt: Oh, pretty long story there. So I was living in Nashville, Tennessee, lived down there for a number of years out of college and grew up in Indianapolis. So at the time, Firestone Building Products was based in Indianapolis. And so as our son was getting to school age, my wife and I had made a conscious effort to try and get back closer to family, so that was important as he was a youngster. So that was when I started looking for opportunities and found one with Firestone in their national accounts department. So most of my career has been in sales, so product management is a little bit new to me, but I've done a lot of product management type of things over the years.

Curt Friedholdt: So yeah, and then Firestone sent me out here to Colorado and now here I am at JM. So throughout those years, I was a regional manager for the specialty product division. I was in national account sales, I was in architectural and consultant sales, and now some product management for Johns Manville, so happy to be here.

Daniel Robbins: And they call it the product manager role, but it seems like it's that healthy mix of sales and communication styles and all the things that go into building, maybe even launching a product at times. Have you launched products before with your product lines that you've been part of?

Curt Friedholdt: I've been part of teams. So with product management though, you generally put a team together to analyze potential products going out into the field and I get some ideas. So I've been on a few of those teams for products, but as far as launching the product myself, no, this will be new to me. And then we have some things that will be coming up that I'm not sure how much I can talk about just yet, but we're pretty excited about some of those offerings, so no, it's gonna be great.

Daniel Robbins: It's very cool.

Curt Friedholdt: Yeah, it's a good role. This is a great role to really learn the company, learn all the people, 'cause I touched so many different aspects of the business.

Daniel Robbins: Absolutely, you get to work with... That's what I always liked about the product manager role here, is you get to work with the plant, you get to work with the people that are formulating and creating the products, and then you're getting to work with customer service and other aspects of the business, kind of like full life cycle of the whole JM experience, which is cool. It's a great position to be in. So when you were younger, were you like, "Oh, I'm gonna get into roofing. That's my passion. I enjoy it."

Curt Friedholdt: Yeah. When I was like five I'd wanted to be a roofer my whole life. I had no idea. No, so I went to school for business, so I have a degree in Marketing and Economics. So I knew my parents were both in sales one way or another, so my mom was a realtor and my dad was an industrial gas salesman.

Daniel Robbins: So you were in the business route and this is kind of where that pulled you, is into this industry?

Curt Friedholdt: Yeah. So I figured they know how to sell things, maybe I do too. So hopefully, the apple didn't fall off too far from the tree. So I went into sales directly out of school, and that was most of what I did with some industrial products and then actually industrial gas as similar to what my father did for a little while too, and then roofing. So, no, it's been an interesting journey. It's just you always have to be open to opportunities. So when the right opportunity comes around, don't be afraid to walk through that door.

Daniel Robbins: Well, JM is definitely a great company to try an opportunity out with, that's for sure. So let's move on to let's talk about EPDM. Specifically, I know recently we launched the new R... It's not that new. It's R Fit. Can we talk about that? Let's talk about what we changed up in that and why it's benefiting the customer and maybe even how we got to that change in the first place.

Curt Friedholdt: Sure. So the reintroduction was more or less a similar product to what we had already had in the field prior. So the last couple of years, prior to when I was with this company, but I saw enough of it that it was a lot of raw material issues for everyone and trying to service their customers. So I know JM made a conscious effort to try and focus on the products that were primary to their customer base. It was a smart move and during that time they decided not to sell reinforced products for a little while.

Curt Friedholdt: So as things started to get a little bit better halfway through 2022 here, it seemed like it was time to start introducing some of that stuff. So, yeah, not only had we started doing reinforce, which is a lot of times done for mechanically fastened EPDM, whereas most EPDM is fully adhered down. So there's applications for that where you don't have to use primers at times, there's applications where you can do it in a little bit cooler weather, still get really good uplift, still get some of the codes that you need. So it was a good time to get back into that as things are starting to somewhat normalize. It's been a pretty crazy couple of years.

Daniel Robbins: So let's move on. What are some things that you're looking forward to as a product manager at the company? Just in general, it can be anything, whether it's a JM experience, whether it's a corporate experience, or what would you like to do with the product line? Anything.

Curt Friedholdt: Yeah, well, one of the things that I'm starting to work on now after I've got my feet wet over the last few months, learning everything there is to know about the manufacturing process and all the ins and outs of that, I'm gonna try and get back out of the field a little bit. So hopefully my years of selling experience will come in handy and so I'm looking forward to getting out there and meeting the customers. I wanna hear what they have to say. What are we doing well? What could we improve upon? What are some things that they'd like to see us work on? How can working with JM be a better experience for them? So I try to be very customer-focused. I think that being close to the customer is really important, especially for a position like this when you're trying to come up with what's gonna be the next thing. What kind of things can we work on? So getting that direct feedback I think is critical.

Daniel Robbins: I guess that leads into my next question. What is that gonna be in your eyes right now? With the feedback you've been getting and the ideas that you have, what's the next thing related to? Is it really that we're moving away towards... I guess we're moving towards more of a stronger self-adhered technology, or are you seeing adhesive use but just with certain styles and manufacturing to it to make it safer per se? What are you seeing?

Curt Friedholdt: Yeah, there's been a lot of improvements on the adhesive side of things. We have an All Season Sprayable that's been really, really successful. It's just a really easy application. It has canisters rather than having big, huge pumps, so it doesn't require nearly the equipment for the contractors to get up on a roof and do it. It's got better temperature control. It's been really, really successful. We have a great water-based bonding adhesive for summertime that's really fantastic.

Curt Friedholdt: Again, you gotta be a little bit careful on the weather as to when you're putting that down. But it works great. It spreads out fantastic and it can be pretty economical, so that's a good thing. But then, like you said, self-adhered is something that people are looking for, and I think all of those things are a result of a difficulty in the labor market. So just like restaurants and everybody else, finding qualified workers can be difficult. So the quicker you can make jobs go, the least amount of training you might have to do to do some of the more artistic aspects of putting down systems, the better off our contractors are gonna be and the happier they're gonna be.

Daniel Robbins: Yeah, I would say that too, seeing the All Season in action, it's a two-person job. And it's fast and it's easy, and I know maybe people might say, I've heard this before, "Well, it's more expensive." But it's like how fast you're going is night and day compared to the other styles of install.

Curt Friedholdt: Yeah, Time. Time is incredibly important.

Daniel Robbins: It's easy to work with too. It's not all over you. It's not all over the place. It's where you want it.

Curt Friedholdt: Clean-up is simple. It's easy to put down. It actually spreads down. The square footage you get out of it's more than you would think, so you get a pretty good bang for your buck if you do that.

Daniel Robbins: You just reminded me of this. This All Season Sprayable bonding adhesive is the same that we use for our TPO line, or is this different for a EPDM? It's its own product.

Curt Friedholdt: No, it's the same.

Daniel Robbins: It's the same? Okay. Perfect.

Curt Friedholdt: So if you have a contractor that does both TPO and PVC and EPDM, you use the same bonding adhesive.

Daniel Robbins: So, the only separate one was with PVC?

Curt Friedholdt: Correct.

Daniel Robbins: So, for our listeners, not to get everything confused, we do have two separate All Season Sprayable bonding adhesives, but one covers TPO and EPDM, basically single-ply, and then the other one covers PVC. With that water-based too, I like the point, you brought that up, it seems like the water-based that we came up with is really reliable, but it doesn't have the same, what is it, VOC?

Curt Friedholdt: Yeah, it's a low VOC product, so a lot of states, especially in the northeast and out west, have adopted some policies to reduce VOCs. Understandably so and so this product meets all those regulations, so pumping less up into the ozone, always a good thing.

Daniel Robbins: Well, I always like that, and maybe some contractors don't care as much, but I always felt like too, whenever we've been working around different types of adhesives. When we do our boot camps and when we work with the details, as the JM experience is called for employees here, it becomes kind of like this rough experience when you're constantly getting the fumes in your face. It becomes an extra level of needing to be more aware of what you're doing. I guess that's the future of maybe a lot of the lines that we have too, because it's safer and people can maybe go faster, would you say, too?

Curt Friedholdt: It can. Yeah, certainly. So taking care of the environment is important and it's become more and more of a priority for every business especially those that deal with these types of adhesives and the need flashing off time and things like that. So yeah, the improvements that are coming throughout that aspect of our business have been great.

Daniel Robbins: Exciting. Well, we are out of time. Curt, thank you so much for being on the podcast.

Curt Friedholdt: Thanks for having me.

Daniel Robbins: Until next time. We'll catch everyone later. Be safe. Bye.