

SURFACES ASIA 2014: A THOUGHT-PROVOKING MEET ON THE FUTURE OF PANELS



Panelists speak at the panel discussion, "Is the Asian growth an opportunity for many or few to capture?"
From left: George Goroyias, Senior Principal, Poyry Management Consulting; Robert Busch, Managing Director, Arauco Australia; Neil Sookee, Group Design Director, Laminex Australia; Reaz Sheriff, Group Managing Director, Panel Plus

Surfaces Asia 2014 concluded with much to think about. What are the key opportunities and challenges going forward in Asia? Which geographies will drive growth and how can the industry make the most out of this potential?

These were some of the issues covered during the two-day event held at the Millennium Hilton in Bangkok, between 7 and 8 October. Perhaps more importantly, the conference left delegates going home with this to think about: how can businesses across the board continue to be successful in light of a global slowdown in the panels market?

Neil Sookee, Group Design Director of Laminex Australia, answered this himself by sharing on how the company's focus on product originality and quality were key factors in capturing market share for Formica's range of products.

"It is the need for constant innovation, and a whole suite of integrated solutions beginning from quality to post-sales service," said Sookee. He also added that having a strong design philosophy helped elevate the company from what was once a very technical business to a whole new level on the value chain.

On design philosophy, founder of Material Intelligence and Panels & Furniture Asia's Contributing Editor, Kenn Busch, offered a different perspective. In his keynote address on global design and material trends, he spoke on the importance of integrating design and materials in furniture, architecture, and interior design. Having a story behind each material and design, he said, takes the project beyond what it is and allows people to share and connect in a dynamic way.



Neil Sookee, Group Design Director, Laminex Australia

The event was also a great opportunity to learn about the latest tools and technologies in digital printing, scanning, installation and visualisation, and their application across a diverse range of products from trains to toys.

The personal one-to-one meetings organised by TCM Asia Matchmaker also enabled long-time industry colleagues to reinforce old ties, establish new partnerships and discuss on how best to collaborate on bringing value to the client.

Surfaces Asia 2014 ended with much food for thought. It will be exciting to see how the global panels and surfaces industry has addressed these outstanding issues when it meets again at Surfaces Asia 2015. **PFA**

Dr George Goroyias, Senior Principal at Poyry Management Consulting brought much value to the table with his strategic insights on global trends, future investment opportunities and challenges in panels manufacturing for each region.

With more than 10 years of experience in management consulting for the timber and energy industry, Dr Goroyias also engaged delegates in an in-depth discussion on the topic, "Is the Asian growth an opportunity for many or few to capture?"

While the Asian market, particularly China, took centre stage during the conference, Latin America was also highlighted as a potential market for consideration in the future. Robert Busch, Managing Director for Arauco Australia, shared his optimism for the business in Brazil, in a time of recession.



Delegates network and share ideas during coffee break at Surfaces Asia 2014

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