

# The Ashland SOURCE

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**BUILDING  
SUPERIOR  
CUSTOMER  
SERVICE**



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*Ashland's Purchasing and Logistics (PAL) Department was recently identified as "one of the best places to work" for purchasing professionals by Purchasing magazine. That's quite an honor. Read about the secrets to their success.*



#### On the cover:

*This may look like a traditional wood or metal trimmed house, but it is not. The exterior consists of ceramic-enhanced, composite resin distributed by Ashland Distribution and manufactured by Ashland Specialty Chemical. It is fabricated to resemble conventional materials. Four-plus years of support and customer service is helping one of Ashland's customers realize his vision. See page 4 for details.*

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For more company news and information, visit Ashland's Intranet site at: <http://firsthand.ashland.com>

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Another important aim of The Ashland Source is to encourage employee involvement in the publication. If you have a question, comment or concern, or if there is a topic you would like to see covered

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# Superior customer service and technology help vision become reality

When Rod Brecht and Ron Moor of Ashland Distribution's FRP Supply Division meet, it wouldn't be surprising if their conversation turns to the possibility of revolutionizing the home construction business. That "revolution" is the vision of Nate Pingel, a Columbus, Ohio, industrial designer, and a customer Brecht and Moor have "shared." Moor, an FRP Supply market development specialist, first worked with Pingel, CEO and director of PDG Domus. But now Brecht, an FRP Supply sales representative, manages the account.

Pingel uses a special formulation of resin to manufacture exterior walls in his prototype home. Ashland Specialty Chemical's Composite Polymers Division worked with FRP Supply to develop the new resin, a mixture of Ashland's MODAR® 814 modified-acrylic, halogen-free thermoset resin and FRP Supply's ceramic system.

Combining ceramic filler with the MODAR resin resulted in the house's attractive composite exterior, which is also maintenance free, insulating, and fire retardant. In



addition, use of the ceramic resin material enables PDG Domus to achieve a wide range of exterior treatments replicating the look of wood, brick or stone.

"Ceramic filler allows reproduction of intricate detail in the composite panel," says Don Belock, source manager for the FRP Supply Division of Ashland Distribution Company. "It also provides a durable, protective, fire-retardant layer that acts as a heat shield, thereby lowering homeowners' costs for cooling and heating."

The Composite Polymers/FRP Supply combination is impressive. Composite Polymers is a leader in providing products, processes and composite technologies to the global marketplace for reinforced-plastic composites and one of the world's largest producers of poly-

ester and vinyl ester resins. The resins are used mainly in construction, transportation and marine applications in products such as piping, automobile parts and body panels, boat hulls and decks. FRP Supply is the leading North American distributor of resins, reinforcements and associated materials to the fiberglass-reinforced plastics and cast-polymer industries.

FRP Supply distributes about 13,000 products covering approximately 200 suppliers.

However, the work didn't end with the development or sale of the resin. Pingel has worked with Ashland on his composite home idea for about four years. PDG Domus completed construction of a prototype house in Columbus, Ohio, in September 1999.

Perhaps the most impressive aspects of the house are those one doesn't see. The exterior of the two- and one-half story, modular house was made using a variety of products supplied to PDG Domus by FRP Supply.

The ceramic-enhanced composite panels were bonded to the modular house's treated steel structure using adhesives supplied by FRP Supply. Sandwiched



*PDG Domus modular homes are manufactured in an environmentally controlled work space. PDG Domus does not use organic elements in construction, thus eliminating health hazards from cement dust, decaying wood, organic decaying materials, and exposure to airborne molds from damp foundation walls. The completed components are shipped to the homebuyer's site and assembled in two days, ready for occupancy.*



**The PDG Domus homes will come with an environmentally friendly color — green!**

**The composites used in the homes have no VOCs to escape into the home. If a wall should be severely damaged, it can be replaced with another wall.**

**The damaged wall is returned to the factory to be ground up and reformed into a new wall.**

*The exterior of the PDG Domus house is fabricated with the detail of a house built with traditional materials. It replicates every knot, nail head and small imperfection of the original wall from which the mold was fashioned.*

between the exterior composite panel and the interior drywall is a two part, fire-retardant, UL-approved polyurethane foam, which provides insulation and helps bond the structure together. All exterior panels that made up the house, including the roof and rock foundation skirts, were made using that methodology. FRP Supply also provided gel coat and fiberglass reinforcement to PDG Domus.

"People want their homes to

have a classic look and feel, yet they require homes with all the modern conveniences. Blending these two ideals has been cost-prohibitive using traditional construction methods, until now," says Pingel.

"The potential for this idea is huge — not only for homes, but for townhouses and apartment complexes, from the low-income market through the luxury market," says Pingel. Today, PDG Domus is tooling up for full

production, which it hopes will begin by the end of this summer.

Pingel praises Ashland and the company's people.

"Throughout the prototype development, which began in spring 1996, Ashland has been working to help PDG Domus turn this concept into a complete house," says Pingel.

Dean Doza, a product manager for specialty resins, a part of Composite Polymers, met Pingel about three years ago. "He's an

Rod Brecht (right) and Ron Moor (left) meet regularly with PDG Domus CEO and Director Nate Pingel to help keep Pingel's vision moving forward. The PDG Domus interiors are completely finished in the homebuyer's choice of fixtures, cabinets, appliances, countertops, lighting and floor coverings.



"We learned a lot from the survey we took before we began to plan the composite homes," says Nate Pingel, CEO of PDG Domus. "For example, men wanted really low maintenance.

"Our homes will be extremely low maintenance, because they won't rot, bugs won't eat them, trim isn't separate from the siding, the windows are built-in, and painting the outside isn't necessary except to change the color."

enthusiastic person — and it's 'catching' when you're around him. I was impressed with Nate, because he wanted to provide the very highest safety standards in his composite homes. That's how we ended up with the MODAR 814, which is a high-strength resin. When it is subjected to flames, it produces very low levels of smoke and doesn't burn easily, which makes it acceptable under building codes," says Doza. "The combustion by-products of MODAR resin are very low in toxicity."

"Our group helped Nate and his employees learn about the resin and even held some hands-on

classes here at our Dublin facilities so they could get some experience with MODAR resin," Doza adds.

"So many I work with are visionaries like Nate," Moor says. "Seeing ideas spring up from entrepreneurs makes each day more interesting. Some need help, and some don't," he says. "The keys are making sure you provide commitment and bring all of Ashland's resources to the customer."

It is that kind of "200 percent effort" that makes Jud Smith, vice president and general manager of the FRP Supply Division, know that superior customer service is more than words.

"We have many employees like Ron and Rod, who don't talk service; they live it. It is often trivialized, but it is true, 'when our customers succeed, we succeed.' We like our customers to succeed," he says.

The FRP customer service team is well positioned and centralized in two locations in the United States. "Our sales force of 80 highly trained and technically competent individuals is unmatched," adds Smith. "Ashland's mission is to provide 'Superior Service,' and everyone in the organization is committed to making this mission a reality for our customers." ■