

Q&A with ColorBond and Reactive Surfaces

by Phil Phillips, PhD
 Contributing Editor
 phillips@chemarkconsulting.net

In the world of coatings and paints, there are many nooks and crannies where really neat things are going on, but we don't routinely hear much about them. Here's a couple of companies serving niche needs and doing quite well. ColorBond and Reactive Surfaces (RSL).

"ColorBond is a revolutionary molecular bonding paint that penetrates deep into plastic, vinyl and leather. It provides easy restoration and can change the color of leather, carpet, plastics or metal in automobiles, trucks, cars, boats, or motorcycles with fantastic results." -Malcom Johnson, President & Founder

CW: When did you form ColorBond & why did you feel you could have a viable product in these markets?

ColorBond: ColorBond was established in 1996 because I felt that the available coatings for refinishing automotive leather and plastics were inferior and could be dramatically improved. At that time, the idea of a premium coating for leather and plastic was not being addressed, and we felt that there was a great market opportunity for our company.

We were fortunate to be approached by Visteon, at that time owned by the Ford Motor Company, to partner with them in developing the technology. We worked with Ford Research Labs and Visteon for seven years and this collaboration culminated in ColorBond earning two Ford World Wide OEM performance specifications.

CW: According to Michael Porter (Harvard Professor of), a NICHE position in a specific well-defined market segment has the highest profits in that segment as well as a UNIQUE offering. UNIQUE is defined as having something no one else possesses. Would you say your offerings

are unique by this definition? Why?

ColorBond: ColorBond is unique because it is a one stage coating that can be used on any substrate that is manufactured for the automotive industry including, leather, vinyl, ABS, PC, TPU and TPO and metal. It doesn't crack flake or peel, is colorfast, dries within one minute and is bonded in ten minutes. Colorbond's versatility allows the user to stop in the middle of a job and resume the project at a later date. There will be no evidence of a tape line, only a seamless OEM finish.

It creates an OEM appearance. ColorBond can be used on carpet, soft interior trim, rigid interior trim, exterior trim and convertible tops. We currently manufacture and inventory 172 contemporary OEM specific aerosol colors.

CW: Can you provide some insight into why or how your Colorbond technology works with so many different type substrates?

Colorbond: The key is our unique resin. It is ideally suited for use on all of these substrates.

CW: Your literature shows ColorBond spray-on products applied over rigid, supple, and even very soft pliable surfaces. Tell me - what is the longevity of your coating system over a leather automobile seat where flexibility, abrasion and overall toughness prevail?

Colorbond: ColorBond's longevity dependent upon the preparation of the surface and the skill of the individual applying it. When the easy to use directions are followed accurately, ColorBond will maintain its flexibility and abrasion resistance for a minimum of four years.

Both Ford performance specifications require that ColorBond perform for the duration of a typical four year warranty. This includes UV stability, flex, and abrasion.

CW: Are the coating formulas you market exclusive to your use or do you also allow other coating companies to market

your unique products?

ColorBond: The formulas are proprietary however we do manufacture private label colors for many customers

CW: How do you go-to-market currently? Direct, Stocking Distributors, etc.?

Colorbond: We are nimble and have the capabilities to distribute to a wide spectrum of customers. The list includes stocking distributors, mobile technicians, retailers, catalogue houses, aftermarket parts distributors, private labels and more.

We are very pleased with the performance of our web site www.colorbondpaint.com Two years ago we invested heavily in the redesign of our web site. The platform fully engages in social media and SEO. We speak directly to the consumer on a daily basis. This allows us to never lose the connection with the most important person, The Customer.

CW: Are your target end-use markets growing and equally important, is Colorbond keeping pace?

ColorBond: Our target end use markets expand every year and we continue to grow every year. New markets continue to develop that we had never imagined such as painting 3-D substrates.

CW: As an private individual, how can I order these coatings from Colorbond? Direct? Distributor?

ColorBond: An individual can order on line at www.colorbondpaint.com or contact us at 877 882 6567.

CW: Can you tell us about the Cleo Award that you established in 2014 ?

ColorBond: The Cleo Award was established to honor a legend in the automotive world, Mr Leo Kagan. Leo is 99 years old and was responsible for moving the SEMA show from Anaheim to its present location in Las Vegas. He has been a member of SEMA for 50 years.

A \$ 500 cash prize, and crystal vase

are awarded to an individual who restores the interior of any make of vehicle using ColorBond products. Last year's winner restored a 1967 Cadillac Deville and this year's winner restored a 1954 Rolls Royce Silver Wraith. The Rolls will be on display in our booth at SEMA this year.

Austin, Texas based Reactive Surfaces is a bioengineering company that develops enzyme-based additives for paint to detoxify neurotoxins, including nerve agents and pesticides.

CW: When did you form Reactive Surfaces & why did you feel you could have a viable product in these markets?

Reactive Surfaces: "We started Reactive Surfaces with the concept that it might be possible to extract valuable functionality from nature and entrain it into coatings in a long-term stable manner."

"The attack on the World Trade center brought our self-decontaminating coatings into the spotlight in 2001. We started the company in earnest in 2002. By 2008, we had developed the technology well enough to be awarded the 2008 American Coatings Award for innovative technology.

After over ten years, we can say that it's not only possible to place biological molecules into resin systems but that it can be accomplished for a wide array of natural functions from enzymes generating self-degreasing surfaces capable of removing human fingerprints from touch screen devices and countertops, to non-toxic peptides that create anti-microbial surfaces for medical devices and kitchen appliances. The formulator can now dependably "dial in" natural functionality to its existing coating products.

CW: According to Michael Porter, a NICHE position in a specific well-defined market segment has the highest profits in that segment as well as a UNIQUE offering. UNIQUE is defined as having something no one else possesses. Would you say your offerings are unique by this definition? Why?

RSL: "We believe RSL is the first and only company commercializing bio-based molecules as functional additives for coatings. But, the competition is not far behind – since the industry is realizing just how valuable such functionality can be, and

how biological molecules such as enzymes, peptides, antibodies, and the like exist in Nature ready-made for such work. We are the only group that presently offers these bio-based additives, as well as functionalized coatings containing them. With the launch of our e-RACE line of anti-fingerprinting touch screen protectors, we can also say we are unique in offering a finished consumer product coated with a functional coating entraining a bio-based molecule (the naturally-occurring enzyme, lipase).

CW: Can you provide some insight into why or how your bio-based additive technology works with so many different types of resin systems and on a variety of substrates?

RSL: "The trick seems to be that in their natural condition, many of these molecules are actually entrained into biological surfaces. Take for instance our anti-microbial peptide products like ProteCoat®. Almost all higher organisms use anti-microbial peptides as a part of their natural defense systems against surface contamination. These peptides are present on the surfaces of the organisms most at-risk of infection. Enzymes like to "packaged" and constrained from unfolding, so the cross-linked cages created by polymerization of a wide number of resin systems do a nice job of that."

CW: Most people in the industry regard biological molecules as too unstable and short-lived to be useful as additives in coatings. What is the longevity of your additives in a coating and how rugged are they to weathering?

RSL: "I understand the sentiment, and I initially felt the same way. But, now with tons of testing and years of experience, we now have a rule of thumb around here – if the coating lasts, the functionality will last. For example, we have entrained enzymatic degreasing functionality (DeGreez™) in coatings, coated panels with them, and then subjected those coatings to MEK double-rubs down to the bare metal. Not only did the enzymatic activity remain all the way until the coating is finally scrubbed off, it actually increased as more of the surface was exposed to the grease challenges it was designed to combat. Additionally, we entrained enzymes capable of detoxifying

nerve gases (OPDtox®) into military coatings and placed panels coated atop black rotor blades of military helicopters. These coupons were left in the desert sun for months, and they demonstrated virtually the same enzymatic activity they had the day they were made. This is also true our peptide biocides (ProteCoat®), being subjected to long-term (4+ years) outdoor weathering at USM. The panels coated with the peptide-containing outdoor white paints remain virtually microbe-free throughout the testing period as opposed to heavy contamination of control coatings."

CW: Are the bio-based additives, coatings and coated products you market exclusive to your use or do you also allow other coating companies to market your unique products?

RSL: "We have a manufacturing facility in Hattiesburg, MS where our labs are also located. We build the additives, formulate the coatings and manufacture the sheet materials for touch screens there. Our marketing capability is somewhat limited. We are the epitome of the "Little Engine That Could" mentality. However, it has always been the overriding goal to partner commercialization of the technology we have developed with others in order to access the larger commercial markets."

CW: How do you go-to-market currently? Direct, Stocking Distributors, etc.?

Colorbond: "We directly market our bio-based functional coatings applied to adhesive sheet materials, such as are designed for anti-fingerprinting touch screen protectors (e-RACE™), through mass-marketing channels (internet, TV, printed catalogs, etc.). We use fulfillment services for some of this. We also spend a considerable amount of manpower publishing articles in industry publications. www.reactivesurfaces.com. Using these approaches, we have been able to garner the attention of larger corporate partners who are interested in incorporating our additives or bio-based coatings containing these into their own product lines, and we are presently moving toward commercialization with several of them."

CW: We will revisit you and RSL again in the near future and look forward to much anticipated progress. **CW**