



Making People's Lives Better

**An Interview with Mike Thaman,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Owens Corning**

EDITORS' NOTE *Mike Thaman is the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Owens Corning. He was elected to the Board of Directors in January of 2002, elected Chairman later that year, and was named CEO in 2007. Since joining the company in 1992, Thaman has held positions in manufacturing, corporate development, and international business, including Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Vice President and President of Owens Corning's Exterior Systems Business, and Vice President and President of the company's Engineered Pipe Systems business headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.*



Mike Thaman

COMPANY BRIEF *Owens Corning (owenscorning.com) is a leading global producer of residential and commercial building materials, glass-fiber reinforcements, and engineered materials for composite systems. A Fortune® 500 company for 60 consecutive years and in business for more than 75 years, Owens Corning is a market-leading innovator of glass-fiber technology with sales of \$5.3 billion in 2013 and about 15,000 employees in 27 countries.*

What is the secret to the success of Owens Corning?

Owens Corning is unique, because we make useful products that make people's lives better. This has been true since our founding. We have product lines that make people's homes more energy-efficient with our insulation and weather-resistant with our shingles; we help make cars lighter weight so they get better fuel economy and we enable greater use of wind energy by providing the materials for longer and wider wind blades.

We have been in the business of helping our customers invent solutions to real problems that increase the quality of life throughout the world. It feels aspirational to say that, but if you look at what we do, the way we do it, and the reason why we have prospered for 75 years, it's that simple.

Is brand awareness important for Owens Corning?

Brand awareness is important to Owens Corning's business, and we are proud of the power the Owens Corning brand has in the marketplace. If you look at any of the markets in which we compete – industrial, retail, or contractor markets – we ask people about brands they know and they're aware of, and Owens Corning comes out on top in virtually every market in which we compete.

When you get to the homeowner level, the types of products we make are not products that a typical homeowner interacts with on a daily basis. So we benefit from having homeowners be aware of Owens Corning.

How critical is innovation for the company?

Innovation is critical to any company that has a track record of staying on top over a long period of time or has an ambition of staying on top, and Owens Corning has both.

Our innovation is broad-based. We invest a significant amount of money in the research and development of our products and the processes for making them. We believe we have market-leading products and process technology in virtually every one of our businesses.

But we also believe in innovating with our customers, in helping them solve real-world problems through the use of our products. This is the real skill of our company.

We're also innovative on the marketing and branding side by helping retail channel partners understand how to present our products in an appealing way, and get homeowners and contractors interested in buying our products.

Is there still strong opportunity within the U.S. market or are the opportunities more global?

We see both. We have organized our company to have a great footprint around the world that will benefit from growth in developed and developing countries. Owens Corning operates in 27 countries worldwide, so we're on the ground and taking opportunity in virtually all of the major economies of the world.

We also have a significant portion of our sales and activity in North America, and

specifically the U.S. We are optimistic about the U.S. economy, because of some of the things we've seen happen over the past couple of years, not the least of which is the explosion of energy production in the U.S.

Beyond that, we continue to be optimistic about housing. Obviously, it was at the epicenter of the financial crisis. It not only had a big impact on the banking system, but it also had a big impact on the net worth of a lot of homeowners and consumers in the U.S.

We believe the U.S. economy is slowly working its way through a significant debt restructuring in this recovery, which is why the recovery has been slower than most economists would have predicted.

The home-building industry and the construction industry may have been the most challenged in this recovery of all of the major industries, but it's coming along.

How critical is it that the diversity of your client base be mirrored within your workforce?

Diversity is very important to running a successful global enterprise.

In every market where our employees live and work, our goal would be to have employees who mirror the employment market where we hire, but just as importantly, mirror the customers we face.

How important has the issue of safety been for you in the leadership role?

We're very proud of the progress we have made in safety. We care deeply about our employees. More than a decade ago, about 4.5 percent of our employees were having some type of serious injury in any given year.

Our CEO at the time took a stand and said that's unacceptable, and that the company needed an unconditional commitment to the safety of our employees.

Over the course of that decade, we have reduced the number of injuries across our global company by 95 percent. We're now operating the company at best-in-class safety performance. But, the fact that we're continuing to have injuries is still unacceptable to us and inconsistent with our commitment. We wake up every morning focused on how to make Owens Corning a safer place to help us achieve our overall objective, which is creating an injury-free workplace. ●