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It is dark. It is raining. It is the peak hour. With eyes narrowed into slits, you harden your grip on the steering wheel and frantically scrutinise the road to see if the arrow on it is pointing left or right. Or is there even an arrow in the first place? But you haven't got all day to decide, as the cars behind yours are roaring to go.

If driving under such circumstances makes your blood pressure soar like a rocket, Acme Paving Consultant (APC) Pte Ltd Managing Director Michael Lazar and APC/ John Emery JV Ltd Director John Emery have come up with the perfect solution to calm you down — Reflective-mix Markings. The product won an Outstanding Innovative Exhibit Award at Baucon Asia in November last year.

The product is used for marking concrete and other surfaces. The skid resistance of the cement-based product is superior to that of paint or thermoplastic markings, thanks to its rough finish. The product is also luminous, and this luminosity lasts throughout the lifespan of the marking. In addition, it is visible under all weather conditions and requires minimal maintenance.

In an exclusive interview with TradeBuzz, Mr Lazar and Mr Emery reveal more about their innovative

product and offer insights on creating innovations.

TradeBuzz: *Why are the Reflective-mix Markings clearly visible when it is raining?*

Mr Lazar: The markings stand out very well in such circumstances, because rainwater does not remain on the rough marking surface.

What are some other advantages of using your product?

Mr Lazar: It is self-cleansing. During rainy periods, most of the dirt on the marking surface will be washed away by the rainwater. The markings are also environmentally friendly, because, unlike conventional thermoplastic markings, they do not emit toxic vapours during the application process.

Mr Emery: Since the material used to make the markings is virtually inert, it will not produce harmful pollutants, which are a threat to drainage systems and watercourses.

Will it be costly to use your product?

Mr Lazar: As a whole, the Reflective-mix Markings package costs almost twice as much as that of traditional markings. The price will, however, decline when it gains wider acceptance.

A clear mark of success



BEFORE: Thermoplastic/Paint markings on concrete block paver surface



AFTER: Reflective-mix Markings on concrete block paver surface

Mr Emery: In the long run, it is also more cost-effective to use our product, because there is no need to repaint frequently, as is the case for thermoplastic and paint markings, due to its much longer lifespan.

How much longer can the Reflective-

mix Markings last, as compared to traditional markings?

Mr Lazar: Traditional markings tend to have a short lifespan, which is usually about six months, depending on the intensity of usage. However, our cement-based Reflective-mix Markings can last for more than three years, according to the results

Sometimes you see them, sometimes you don't. But with Acme Paving Consultant Pte Ltd's (APC) latest Reflective-mix Markings, road markings will no longer play hide-and-seek with your eyes, as they literally stand out. The company's MD Michael Lazar and his consultant John Emery reveal the secret behind their product.

By Ho Chan Chan



DAY VIEW: Reflective-mix Markings on bitumen surface



NIGHT VIEW: Reflective-mix Markings on bitumen surface

we have obtained so far. In fact, we provide a two-year warranty for them.

How did you come up with the idea for this product?

Mr Lazar: Previously, both PSA Corp and the Housing and Development Board (HDB) had problems marking

concrete areas like the HDB multi-storey carparks. When the two organizations heard that we had a patented product called Reflective Pavers, they approached us and asked if we had any product that could solve their problem.

How much time and money were

spent on developing the Reflective-mix Markings?

Mr Lazar: We actually developed the product idea years ago. At that time, we had conducted some small trials on our own to make sure that we were comfortable with what we planned to do before embarking on full-scale R&D. In the end, we spent about S\$563,000 on R&D, 10 percent of which was subsidised by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA).

What were some of the difficulties you encountered while developing your product?

Mr Lazar: It was not easy to obtain grants for new products, because the authorities had to first believe in the innovative value of the products. And sometimes, they were rather skeptical about the potential of the product.

Is your product widely used?

Mr Lazar: In Singapore, PSA Corp, HDB and the Land Transport Authority (LTA) have used our product on roads such as those in the Jurong West/PIE (Pan Island Expressway) Extension and Bukit Batok Estate. The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) will also be using our Reflective-mix Markings soon at Changi Airport, as the project to apply the markings will commence

in mid-January this year. It has also been adopted for other projects in Malaysia and India.

Mr Emery: We have established contacts with interested overseas licensees. About 18 countries, such as Malaysia, Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, the UK and US, have expressed interest in our product. Product trials have already been conducted in the UK and we are in talks with one of the manufacturers near London. Preliminary product meetings in Australia have also started.

In your opinion, what qualifies as a viable innovation?

Mr Lazar: To compete in the global market, any innovation you are thinking of has to be better than existing ones.

What conditions would foster the development of innovations?

Mr Lazar: The management must welcome new ideas and be open-minded, no matter how ridiculous these ideas may seem at first. It also needs to understand that problems throw up opportunities. And it should create an innovation-friendly environment that separates ideas from people. In such an environment, ideas can fail while people survive. □