

Hanging in there

Perhaps no company reflects the gutter industry's evolution from spikes and ferrules to hidden hangers better than Raytec Manufacturing. For decades, Raytec manufactured spike and ferrule products, and they are still a large part of the company's business, but in the past 10 years hidden hangers have become a product in high demand.

Raytec's sales manager, Barry Spector, attributes the transition to two factors: a tightening of the construction labor pool, and improvements in hanger technology. In the mid-1990s, Spector says, the booming home building market and low unemployment rates conspired to make construction workers — especially those skilled in the practice of installing spikes and ferrules — scarce. Unskilled spike and ferrule installers are more prone to hammer mis-hits, which can easily ruin a length of gutter and send waste expenses through the roof.

The market was ripe for a more user-friendly product like hidden hangers, but some issues needed to be worked out. "The hidden hangers weren't as strong as spikes and ferrules," says Spector. "With the development of the ring shank spike, spikes and ferrules were very strong."

The Raytec engineers set on a goal to design a hidden hanger that would not only be easy to install but also be very strong. "What we've learned through bench testing, field testing, and surveying customers, is that where hangers normally fail is not necessarily



in the body," Spector says. "That's where everybody was beefing them up. We've learned that the points of greatest stress on a hanger are the two ends. Our patented product is self-bracing at the points of greatest stress."

The evolution to hidden hangers has not happened overnight. "We've had to prove to the contractors in the industry that it's OK to use these, it's going to be strong like the ring shank spikes," he says, "however, there is still a market for spikes and ferrules."

From its original hidden hanger, Hangtite, Raytec had evolved to offer a one-piece hanger with a built-in screw. With its Hangfast offering, Raytec aimed to produce a one-piece product with the strength that would satisfy the most skeptical spike and ferrule installer. GO

