

◀ Demetrius Rankin, speaking in his role as Phoenix Committee Vice Chairman at the Phoenix banquet in Prague in October 2024.

Phoenix chairman looks to 2025

Demetrius Rankin was named Chairman of the Phoenix Committee earlier this year. Among his duties will be to name and present the Phoenix Award to the 2025 Glass Person of the Year. He discusses his responsibilities as Chairman as well as his career.

1. Congratulations on your appointment as Phoenix Chairman. How honoured do you feel to be chairman?

Very honoured. I join a long list of Chairpersons who are very respected in the glass industry. When I see a list of past Chairs, past members and current members too, it is humbling to know that I am part of this group.

2. How long have you been a part of the Phoenix Committee for?

I had the pleasure of attending in 2016 which recognised Chairman Cho Tak Wong as the recipient that year. I represented my company as a sponsor that year. I had the pleasure to attend the following year as well in 2017. Again, as a sponsor which recognised Professor James O'Callaghan. I'm of the belief that it was these experiences that gave me exposure to the Phoenix Award Committee members and prompted their belief that I could be a good fit within the group. I was brought into the Phoenix Award Committee in 2018 as a member and have enjoyed every moment since.

3. Why did you decide to join?

One must be asked to join the committee. Hotwork has been a sponsor for many years. Needless to say it was a group that I knew about. George Kopser was a past member and Chairperson. I knew of his involvement when I was first hired into our company.

4. What benefits does being a member of the committee bring?

Within this committee of suppliers, there are CEO's, Presidents, Managing Directors, Sales Directors, etc. When we are assembled at an annual meeting or simply part of an email string, there is knowledge being shared of what's best for the committee and what our path forward will be. There are thoughtful and meaningful conversations being had. There is a professionalism in each conversation. Even if there is a difference of opinion, the advantage is we move forward as one. I have never been a part of something so important to the glass industry at this level.

5. What will the role of Chairman entail?

There is a list that I am working through. Two that I'll state are high priorities and are very important. The first is leading our Spring meeting. This is where we come together as a group to nominate our next recipient. I will have the pleasure of directly communicating with this recipient following that meeting as we plan on how they will be recognised. The second will be assisting our Banquet Chair with organising our autumn meeting and our anticipated Fall Banquet.

Aleksander Pinda did a remarkable job with our 2024 Banquet where we recognised Karen LaMonte as Glass Person of the Year in Prague, Czech Republic.

The effort and detail he put into the banquet was remarkable. I am looking forward to what 2025 will bring and working with that Banquet Chair as we prepare to recognise the next recipient.

6. You have spent a year as Vice Chairman. What was that like and did you learn a lot from previous Chairman Erik Muijsenberg?

Both were eye opening. As Vice Chair, I was able to experience firsthand what it takes to assemble our group for a Spring Meeting. This consisted of communicating with 24 voting members and a number of past Chairpersons. I have a lot of respect for my committee members, so it was important for me to make sure that they enjoyed themselves but also had an environment that allowed us to

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take care of business.

Erik involved me at the start of his appointment. If you don't know Erik, he will greet you with a smile, good energy and most often, something witty. All of which I needed during my time as Vice Chair. Erik provided great leadership to our group and to me personally. Interestingly enough, our past Chairpersons are still involved. So for me, I not only have Erik to turn to for guidance, I have a list of past Chairs, if and when I need it, to make sure 2025 is successful.

If I could add, the support I have in this role is amazing. There are people who truly feel it is an honour to be a part of the Phoenix Award Committee. I 100% agree. The encouragement I have received will never be forgotten. The PAC is a family. I see this when Kevin Leviere attends a life celebration for a past recipient or committee member. When Diane Nicklas sits down with me to offer her observations. I hear this when Tim Park mentions to call with any questions. I hear the passion in the voices of Lincoln Brown and Graham Womersley when they are passing knowledge to new members. I see this in our Spring Meeting when Phil Ross, Glenn Neff and Wally Evans remind us of the PAC history. When Erica Jaspers greets you with a warming smile and asks how the family is doing. This is a special group. I'm proud that they have accepted me.

7. In terms of the Phoenix award, what are the plans for the next year?

It will start when our group gets together in late February for a couple of days. From there, as a committee we will discuss and come to a mutual agreement on the 2025 PAC Glass Person of the Year. We want to continue to honour those and select a contributor in the glass industry that has made a significant and major contribution to glass in the field of science, production, education or art.

8. Just to turn to you personally, when and where did your career in the glass industry begin and how has it progressed?

I did not take the normal path, if there is one. It was 2006 and I oversaw an elementary after-school programme. I had recently taken a second job at the same school as an assistant custodian. The purpose was to save enough money to travel out of the country. For whatever reason, Australia was a destination. My roommate at the time, Justin Jones (current Hotwork GM and President starting in 2025) thought Hotwork would get me there and provide a career at the same time. Four months after I started at Hotwork, I went to Australia for a furnace drain. I haven't looked back since. It will be 19 years in February that I will have been with our company. Time flies.



9. Were any family members in the glass industry before you?

No. I was oblivious to the glass industry prior to my work in the field as a technician for Hotwork.

10. Who has been an influence on your career?

There have been two influential people. Tom Graham who will retire as President from Hotwork at the end of the year. From the start of my management role, Tom has given encouragement and confidence every step of the way. He's a leader that will not only accompany you to client meetings but will also check on our wellbeing away from the office.

The second influence is the late and great George Kopser. The title I hold as Glass Industry Manager at Hotwork, George previously held.

He retired from our company after 49 years of service. It was with George that I developed a respect for what we as a service company offer to the glass industry. He took me under his wing, and I will forever be grateful. He was the first person I thought of when I was offered to join.

11. What do you enjoy about the glass industry?

This is simple. The people and the innovation the glass industry continues to produce.

This industry refuses to sit idle. It is about changing with the times. Forward thinking. This is true in any conversation you have, any publication you read, and any seminar you attend.

12. What is a big challenge facing the industry...and in your opinion how can the industry overcome it?

Finding young talent is important. The next generation that's excited about our industry. The conditions wherein we work are hot, demanding of hours, and require a 'boots' on the ground approach. We live in a digital age and the jobs we perform are not always the most attractive or in a great location to a young person.

We must continue to engage students at the campus level. I have seen programmes that are engaging students at the primary school ages through different forms of workshops and community service programmes.

These are important and serve a purpose. I am hopeful that the glass industry will continue to push forward and attract that talent. ■

Phoenix Award Committee,
www.phoenixawardcommittee.org/