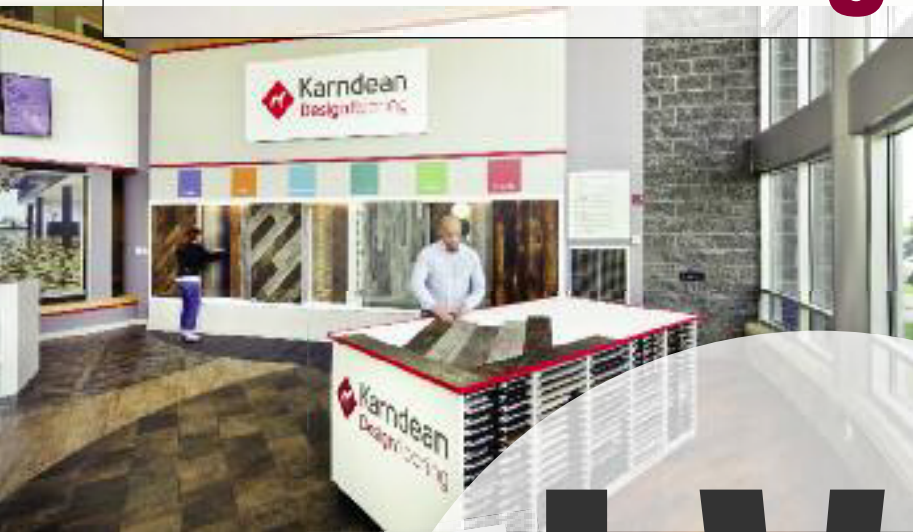


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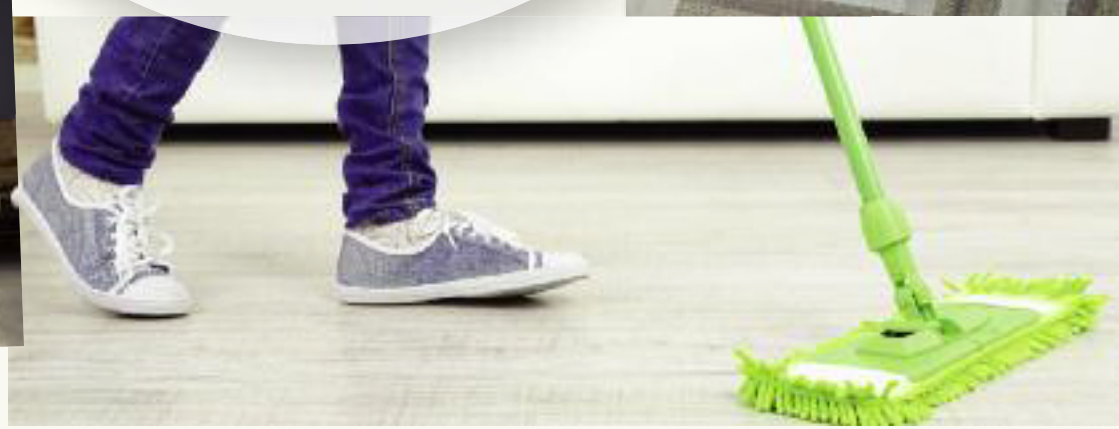
A SUPPLEMENT TO

# floor covering news



# LVT

## SELLING GUIDE



4th edition

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## state of the industry

# LVT: The primary force driving resilient sales

The crest of the resilient category's wave continues to rise as the segment posts significant gains in both dollars and volume. Statistics compiled by FCNews show the category as a whole grew 13.9% to \$2.724 billion in 2015 with volume rising 15.5% from 2.688 billion square feet in 2013 to 3.145 billion square feet in 2015. This growth, experts say, is largely due to the popularity of LVT, which accounted for approximately 35.6% of residential volume in 2015—the most recent period for which reliable numbers are available.

Residential LVT raked in \$874.1 million in 2015, which accounts for 56.9% of overall residential resilient sales. According to industry executives, multi-family and residential remodel were the markets that drove the category's unprecedented growth. In comparison to 2014, when residential LVT sales checked in at \$630.5 million, a dollar increase of 38.6% was posted.

"For 2015 we felt there was much steadier business at retail," said Kurt Denman, vice president, sales and marketing, Congoleum. "This seemed to be consumer confidence driven along with the recovering housing market. The combination of those two things made people willing to cut loose a few dollars. The other part of that is the shift from soft to hard surface; LVT is really benefitting most

from that movement."

Other experts agreed. "The driving force for 2015 was multi-family," said Russ Rogg, president and CEO of Metroflor. "We do a lot of business there with some of our more entry-level dry back/glue-down LVT specifications and with a fair amount of our Konecto



LVT's popularity is linked to a shift to hard surfaces. Shown is Triversa from Congoleum.

[click] products. We did more in 2015 with just standard retail, residential remodel and replacement business. These are products sold through [specialty retail]."

The shift from soft to hard surface in the multi-family channel was also cited as a growth factor by Mannington. "This growth has definitely been a large contributor both in

rental and owned properties," said Dan Natkin, vice president, wood and laminate. "Multi-family overall has been a tremendous area of growth. LVT has played very well there."

Jamey Block, vice president of product management for resilient, Armstrong Flooring, said the growth in multi-family and manufactured homes was disproportionate. "The strength in the multi-family new construction segment was partially offset by a weak general remodel market. As the market becomes more dynamic, we expect to see higher design in residential with builders and property management more focused on aesthetics."

Other LVT manufacturers that specialize in the product have observed growing acceptance and sale surges in the subcategory across the board. Jonathan Train, president and CEO of EarthWerks, which has been making LVT for four decades, said LVT is taking market share from other flooring categories in both residential and commercial segments. "With the tremendous detail in design and performance attributes we are able to incorporate into LVT, it has become a strong competitor for all hard surface options. The ease of installation, durability and overall styling has catapulted this category to find a home in all sectors."

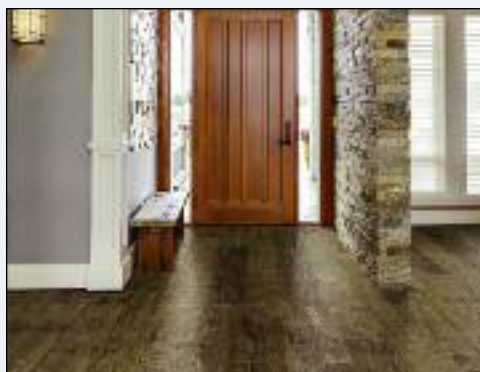
**Continued on page 48**

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: METROFLOR

### The LVT specialists find growth in multilayer arena

During the "golden age" for luxury vinyl tile, the LVT specialists at Metroflor have heightened their focus on developing new technologies that offer innovative, multi-faceted solutions for residential and commercial environments alike. In the modular multilayer arena, two bold products have debuted following four years of rigorous R&D: Engage Genesis and Aspecta Ten Commercial.

The foundation for these products—Isocore Technology—establishes a new standard for rigid core quality. The highly engineered, closed-cell extruded PVC excels when compared to other multilayer solutions. Its unique composition allows it to be strong and rigid, yet lightweight; 100% waterproof, unaffected by water, spills and moisture. Manufactured from 100% virgin resins without any wood,



Metroflor's Engage Genesis represents a breakthrough in the modular multilayer category.

plasticizers, phthalates or formaldehyde, Aspecta Ten and Engage Genesis Isocore are

FloorScore certified for indoor air quality.

Always on the lookout for advances in technology that improve the overall experience with its floors, Metroflor has embraced the new DropLock 100 locking technology in Engage Genesis and Aspecta Ten. Beyond outstanding technology and performance, Metroflor's portfolio continues to forge a bold and beautiful design narrative where form meets function in flooring.

Metroflor's LVT specialists constantly strive to evolve and explore the possibilities. Find out more about the expertise and passion of the Metroflor staff in a new series of videos, representing the diverse functions—from design, shipping and customer service to sales, technical and sustainability: [youtube.com/watch?v=uG2j9cDABck](https://youtube.com/watch?v=uG2j9cDABck).

## the basics

# Learning the ABCs of LVT

Luxury vinyl tile (LVT), also known as luxury vinyl plank (LVP) and luxury vinyl flooring (LVF), is a type of resilient flooring that loosely describes a vinyl-based flooring product that closely mimics the look of a natural material through realistic images and textures.

Using the words “luxury” and “vinyl” in the same sentence may have once seemed like an oxymoron. But new technologies have

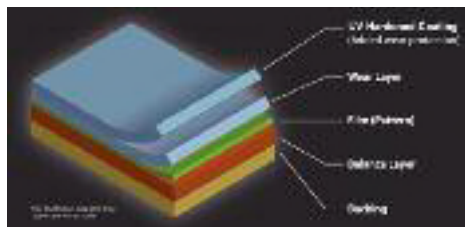
yielded a product that offers striking visuals and performance attributes that often make it a preferred flooring choice to natural materials like hardwood and stone. In addition, the long economic downturn that began in 2007 created a desire for value-added products, and LVT certainly fit the bill.

**Visuals:** Luxury vinyl flooring takes on either of two forms: stone (slate, travertine, marble, etc.) or wood. The ability to replicate real hardwood and stone using advanced photographic technologies is LVT’s foundation.

**Shapes:** One thing that distinguishes LVT from other types of vinyl flooring is the shape of individual pieces. LVT products are usually square, ranging in size from 12 x 12 to 24 x 24, but are now available in 12 x 24 rectangular and even hexagonal shapes. As well, because

LVT often imitates wood flooring, it comes in standard plank shapes such as 3 x 36, 4½ x 36, as well as an extra long and wide 7 x 48 size.

**Composition:** LVT can be composed of virgin vinyl, recycled content or a vinyl/limestone mixture. Any wood-look LVT will be made of all vinyl, while stone-look LVT might have some stone composition.



**Construction:** LVT construction usually consists of

four layers fused together. From the top down:

1. **Finish:** An aluminum oxide, urethane or ceramic-based layer prevents light scratching and shoe scuffs.

2. **Clear film:** This layer protects against rips and tears.

3. **Design layer:** This is the photo-realistic print of stone or wood.

4. **Core:** The bottom layer gives the product structure and solidity.

Other benefits of LVT include:

- **Ease of maintenance:** Damp mopping is the recommended cleaning procedure for LVT.

- **Water resistance:** LVT is pretty much impervious to wet spills.

- **Scratch, stain and dent resistance.**

- **Durability:** It’s not unusual to see 20- to 25-year warranties on LVT.

## OVERVIEW

### LVT product knowledge at your fingertips

Ten years ago, *Floor Covering News* published its first educational supplement, the *Retailers’ Guide to Hardwood Flooring*, to great acclaim. Floor covering dealers across the country continued to request copies long after the publication hit the streets, citing the guide as an optimal training tool for new salespeople as well as a refresher for existing sales associates.

Every year since, *FCNews* has added to its Educational Guide franchise, publishing one for laminate flooring and then ceramic tile and resilient flooring while updating each every other year. We have also published a number of *Green Guides*.

With that as the backdrop, welcome to our fourth *LVT Selling Guide*. The industry’s

fastest-growing category now accounts for more than \$1 billion in annual sales, so it only makes sense to delve into a segment where retailers are thriving.

This supplement to *FCNews* covers all the basics and then some, with articles on selling, merchandising, marketing, trends, installation, maintenance and sustainability.

Aside from the pieces written by *FCNews* staff, the sponsors of this guide were given the opportunity to submit some educational articles of their own, as well as information on their respective companies that retailers and their sales associates may find helpful.

We hope this guide increases your knowledge, professionalism and profitability.

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**albert wahn**  
1920-2011

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## Meet the LVT Specialists



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FACTORY  
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**Disruptors. Risk-takers. Achievers.** Those are the common traits of The LVT Specialists at Metroflor. As a leading global brand, the Metroflor team lives and breathes to take luxury vinyl flooring to the next level. Watch the latest episodes in our Meet the LVT Specialists series on YouTube to learn more.

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to watch  
the latest  
episodes.



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## the basics

# Next-gen fiberglass boosts LVT's performance

By K.J. Quinn

While there has long been a divide between felt and fiberglass on the sheet side of the resilient business, LVT is now employing glass construction as well. Fiberglass is particularly helpful in loose-lay/dryback products as the heavier planks or tiles are kept in place due to the stable addition.

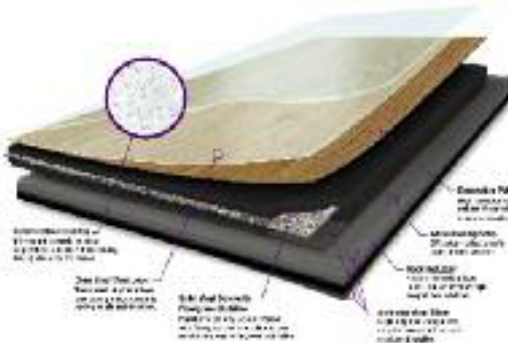
Raskin Gorilla Floors is just one LVT company that uses fiberglass in its products. Its Elevations lines include a proprietary fiberglass sheet that Michael Raskin, president and CEO, said is exceedingly strong. "This sheet prevents the product from moving in either direction much better than mesh or chopped fiberglass. In order to keep the product from moving, it has to be stable. That's why we use fiberglass—it is the best for stability and the perimeter is locked in with the spray adhesive."

Elevations' products consist of seven layers, a feature Raskin said further improves stability. "Like engineered hardwood, each layer keeps the other from moving. With the fiberglass sheet layer you have the most stable LVT. Whether loose lay or glued down, the product is not going to move. LVT without fiberglass or a multi-layer construction might experience shrinkage around ends and sides, which creates a sort of picture frame appearance around the floor. Fiberglass keeps that from happening."

Metroflor uses fiberglass in its solid vinyl floating products, which includes Konecto and Engage. The fiberglass layer is "sandwiched" between the base layers of vinyl to add both dimensional stability and overall strength. The manufacturer has been using fiberglass in Konecto for over eight years and Engage was launched with it.

"We soon learned [with Konecto] that without the benefit of adhesive, like what you would use with traditional glue-down LVT, something more was required to ensure the product remained flat and that it did not react adversely with temperature changes," said Russ Rogg, president and CEO of Metroflor.

The company first experimented with the material by way of chopped fiberglass within its vinyl formulation. "While this did provide some added benefit, we ultimately found that a continuous [filament] sheet of fiberglass layered within the product was the best [way] to create a more dimensionally stable product."



The solid vinyl core with fiberglass stabilizer provides enhanced dimensional stability for Metroflor's Konecto products.

In its Engage product, Metroflor uses fiberglass mesh that resembles a window screen. This type of glass is better suited for thicker LVT products, Rogg said.

Other suppliers attest to the benefits of

fiberglass. Nox US, an OEM private-label LVT manufacturer, began considering fiberglass for its products about two years ago. The company saw the added benefits of integrating fiberglass into loose-lay and click products, including enhanced stability and resistance to wear and tear.

"From a technical point of view, fiberglass steadies the product," said Fred Giuggio, vice president, North American sales. "The fiberglass sheet layer holds the core down and enhances performance."

### A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: CONGOLEUM

## Consistently raising the bar in styling, design and performance of LVT

Design, quality and innovation have been the hallmarks of the Congoleum brand for more than 130 years. One segment of the market that continues to benefit from an unwavering commitment to those core tenets is LVT.

More than a decade ago, Congoleum brought to market the world's first groutable luxury vinyl tile. DuraCeramic revolutionized the perception of vinyl tile by creating an alternative to costly ceramics. DuraCeramic continues to deliver incredible value with unsurpassed design realism, comfort under foot and ease of installation. DuraCeramic is the only LVT to include

Scotchgard protectant, making it perfect for active families with children and pets. With all of these benefits, it's easy to understand why DuraCeramic is currently ranked No. 1 in hard surface flooring by *Consumer Reports*.

Today Congoleum leverages its innovation and design expertise in the latest emerging categories. Introduced in 2016 with its

triple layer construction, Triversa delivers exceptional durability with a 20 mil wear layer, stability through a rigid core and versatility with cork backing and SmartLock clic installation system. Where Triversa clearly stands apart from the competition is with the latest introduction. The Triversa ID (Innovative Design) series brings to market an amazing array of design options including mixed-width woods, longer planks, enhanced edge treatments and tile visuals with truly unique textures.

Looking to the future, Congoleum continues to invest significant resources

into research and development. The company has recently announced plans for an expansion of its domestic LVT manufacturing plant in anticipation of a major product launch scheduled for 2018. While the specifics of the product are not yet being released, it promises to deliver a platform for unprecedented performance and design versatility.



The Triversa ID (Innovative Design) series comes in an array of design options.



DuraCeramic, DCR01



Triversa, TV100



Triversa, TV200

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THAT  
UNLOCKS  
NEW VALUE

**DESIGN, QUALITY** and **INNOVATION** have always been the foundation of the Congoleum® brand. Congoleum pioneered the LVT category with DuraCeramic®, the original groutable tile, that is currently ranked the #1 hard surface flooring by Consumer Reports. Continuing its legacy of innovation, Congoleum introduces Triversa ID™ featuring mixed-width woods, longer planks, enhanced edge treatments and unique textures. This is design like you've never seen before!

**Congoleum**

DESIGN • QUALITY • INNOVATION

## selling

# Proven methods to upsell the consumer

There's no denying LVT's growing popularity among consumers. After all, the product segment offers a wide range of colors, designs and patterns to suit a variety of scenarios and tastes.

But along with that popularity comes more players, intense competition and, subsequently, aggressive pricing as players seek to gain share. That's why it's so important for RSAs to have a firm grasp of the nuances of the various products available so they can convey the many benefits of LVT and creating trade-up opportunities in the process.

Seasoned retailers offered the following upsell strategies.

### Strategic positioning

Some dealers like to have lower-grade planks of LVT on hand to compare to the higher-end products. The better goods should be installed on the showroom floor so consumers can see how well the floors stand up. The belief is if they hold up well in a high-traffic area like a retail store, they surely will stand up inside a home.

"The best way to go from low-end LVT to a better quality product is to set the two samples down next to each other," said Billy Mahone III, manager of Atlas Floors Carpet One in San Antonio. "The larger visuals, more realistic styles and depth of color are typically very evident when you look at a low-end LVT and higher-end LVT side by side."



Installed vinyl floors underneath a display can help the customer visualize how her floor might look in the home.

### Creative displays

When showcasing LVT, dealers do not always have to use traditional display systems. In fact, Crest Flooring in Allentown, Pa., creates a guessing game for customers by setting up a display that depicts hardwood, laminate and luxury vinyl in a similar visual. "It's pretty cool when consumers tell us they don't want something that looks like fake wood and then we ask them to tell us which of the three is real," said Steve Weisberg, owner. "Displays on the floor as well as visual displays

## lvt 101: selling

# Why LVT can be the best choice for your customer

BY JEREMY KLEINBERG

Product manager, Armstrong Flooring

When it comes to flooring, a top-selling choice is vinyl. And, among vinyl, LVT is the rising star. No longer an option that customers reserve for the laundry room, luxury vinyl's great looks, installation options, durability and easy maintenance has brought this flooring into the main living areas of the home—from kitchens to family rooms, bathrooms and beyond. The luxury vinyl flooring category includes collections that reflect the look of real hardwood, ceramic and stone in a durable luxury vinyl material.

With so many retailers on board with LVT, and so many new products and companies entering the category, the question becomes: How can retailers profitably sell LVT in a competitive market? LVT, with all its benefits, definitely does not sell itself; specialty retailers need to understand the homeowners' goals and objectives so they

can recommend the right LVT product.

When selling LVT to consumers, there are several considerations a retailer should keep in mind in order to make a successful sale. As the popular sales adage goes, "An informed consumer is our best customer."

The first task is to educate the consumer about the product and how it benefits her. It's also important to explain the differences between LVT and other flooring options—both outside and inside the category. There are so many innovations in LVT that deliver performance with true value to customers.

Clearly speak to the key benefits that drive value for your customers—from the floor's striking, on-trend designs to its superior durability and performance. In general, don't go right to the lowest price option. Price alone never sells a product—you do.

Ultimately, the most important aspect of the LVT shopping journey is to make the

experience as enjoyable as possible for the consumer and to make sure each customer selects the right product for her needs.



The luxury vinyl flooring category includes collections that mimic real hardwood, ceramic and stone. Pictured is Vivero from Armstrong.





Positioning LVT prominently in the showroom demonstrates a dealer's commitment to the category.

are the best way to show it and to emphasize the durability and practical nature of the product.”

### Evoked the senses

People need to see, touch and walk on LVT to get a better feel for how the product will perform in the home. For some, nothing works better than installing LVT on the showroom floor and telling its story. “Once you tell the story, consumers are more likely to be upsold,” said Adam Joss, co-owner of The Vertical Connection Carpet One in Columbia, Md. “People need to see it to believe it. Often when you explain the ‘V’ stands for ‘vinyl’ we receive a negative reaction assuming the customer had wood or ceramic in mind. Considering the benefits of LVT, their attitudes do a 180-degree turn when they see samples installed on the showroom floor. Oftentimes, there’s no going back to the category they think they wanted.”

### Aim high

Olga Robertson, president of the FCA Network, Shorewood, Ill., used to upsell her customers from LVT to hardwood or tile but as pricing has eroded, new strategies are needed. “Now we have to upsell them from low-end type of products from lumber yards and home centers that sell for \$1.19 to better goods that sell for \$2.69 to \$2.99 or more per square foot—that’s quite a leap and it requires salesmanship.”

### Be selective

Being able to upsell a product depends heavily on the variety of products a retailer has in his store. That begs the question: How many brands/lines should the average retailer carry?

“I think you need to have a large enough assortment so the customer thinks she has seen everything she needs to see and don’t need to go to another store to look at more options,” said A.J. Boyajian, president/co-owner, A.J. Rose Carpets & Flooring Burlington, Mass. “With that being said, I think three to four lines minimum but the lines should complement each other rather than being redundant. You don’t want too much of the same. You want a nice assortment so the customer thinks she has exhausted all her options and is confident in the decision she made to buy a certain product.”

## Lvt 101: selling

# Probing the customer's mind will help close sales

BY JIMMY TULEY

Vice president, residential resilient, Mannington Mills

**L**Vt and its cousin WPC continue as the hottest categories in flooring today, generating excitement among consumers in the market for designer products that lend themselves to customization.

Specialty retailers are in a unique position to capitalize on their rising popularity, but only if they focus on asking the customer the right questions at the point of sale.

Top of mind for any consumer is style and design. If she doesn’t already know what she wants, a salesperson can guide her to a display to help her narrow it down. There are plenty of choices given all the various products that are available, so start with a basic question such as, “Would you prefer a wood look or a tile design?” Next, determine if the customer’s décor is traditional, rustic or modern. A more contemporary décor, for example, might warrant a rectangular marble tile. Or perhaps she’s looking for more of a rustic plank visual. (Many of the better ones are embossed-in-register and feature realistic beveled edges.) Conversely, traditional rooms might call for something simple that blends with what’s already there.

Next step: Ask the customer about her color preference. For

instance, does she tend toward light, medium or dark shades? Also, find out if the new floor is going to be a backdrop for exist-



This open floor plan is the perfect setting to showcase a product that comes in a variety of sizes. Shown here is Meridian.

ing furnishings or if it will set the stage for a full-scale remodeling project?

Now move on to size and shape. LVT and WPC offer options that let a customer design a layout that’s all her own. Find a manufacturer that offers a wide range of sizes and shapes. Bottom line: The layout possibilities by mixing and matching planks and tiles are a huge selling point, allowing the homeowner to create a truly custom look.

Luxury vinyl is aesthetically pleasing, durable and already a top selling category. By having the knowledge, asking the right questions and being enthusiastic about the customer’s project, retailers will be well on their way to closing the sale.

## selling

# Groutable LVT offers trade-up opportunities

The industry is well aware that LVT is the hottest category in flooring. While innovations and variations appear to be limitless, one subcategory of luxury vinyl that maintains a solid standing is groutable LVT. Several key manufacturers are in the groutable game, offering consumers a high-end design option at an affordable price point. Following are some helpful groutable LVT facts to remember when presenting the product to consumers.

Groutable LVT is a lower-cost alternative to ceramic tile, offering the aesthetic appeal of “the real thing.” According to Gary Keeble, director of marketing for Metroflor, a primary benefit for groutable LVT is its appearance. “The imaging technology that is being used to create LVT designs today has become so sophisticated that it is extremely hard to distinguish between an LVT floor and a ceramic tile or stone floor. Adding the grout to the LVT installation further enhances the tile or natural stone visual.”

Dan Natkin, hardwood and laminate, Mannington, also cited the visual appeal of grouted LVT. “It makes the floor look so much more realistic as compared to porcelain or ceramic when it is fit together. Plus, there is much more you can do when grouting it as far as patterning and the ability to mix sizes as well as creating aesthetic contrast.”

The right grout can provide an accent color to a floor, “or it can pick up just the right color in a décor,” said Julie Foster, director of marketing, Novalis Innovative Flooring.

Grouted LVT won’t crack or break if something is dropped on it, and it is more slip resistant, making it a safer option for homes. “Glassware, dishware—drop it on ceramic/stone/porcelain and you can break the dish or glass easily, or crack [the tile],” explained Brian Parker, director of product management, residential tile, Armstrong. “LVT is more forgiving and able to absorb that impact and not crack.”

Grout used with groutable LVT is different than that installed with ceramic. It is typically easier to clean than traditional, pre-sanded grout, which requires sealing to avoid staining. “With groutable LVT you are primarily using pre-coloring grouts, which don’t need to be sealed, are easier to use and you can use less of because it is at a lower profile than the LVT itself,” Natkin explained. “It’s really a win-win. And you can continue to see grouts



Successful RSAs make it a point to inform the customer that she has options when it comes to installing resilient tile with grout.

becoming easier to work with. Some of the first grouts that came out were particularly difficult to clean up [off the] LVT and you would get a haze.”

Grout strips and borders are available to help with installation and maintenance. “These strips enable customers to get the style they want with any type of product, whether they’re installing tiles or planks,” said Emil Mellow, director of public relations, Karndean Designflooring. “Installing grout is a time-consuming process, whereas vinyl grout strips are quick

**Continued on page 12**

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: FORBO

# Achieve endless design options with Marmoleum Click

Creating beautiful, custom floors for your customers is easy and fun with Marmoleum Click CinchLOC. Available in 28 colors and two versatile formats (12 x 12 squares and 12 x 36 planks), homeowners can mix and match colors and sizes to create endless design possibilities unique to their home and personal style. Marmoleum Click CinchLOC breaks out of the traditional vinyl earth tones, providing a stunning color palette that includes vibrant pops of color, rich neutral shades and stunning striated designs. Whether her style is classic or contemporary, Marmoleum Click CinchLOC can help the customer create the home of her dreams.

This naturally healthy, water-resistant flooring is made primarily from renewable resources such as linseed oil, wood flour and pine



Marmoleum Click CinchLOC is made of natural linoleum on water-repellent HDF with a cork layer backing for an ecologically and acoustically sound solution.

rosins. These natural ingredients provide Marmoleum Click CinchLOC with inherent anti-static properties to repel dust and dirt, making it easy to clean while reducing exposure to al-

lergens and contributing to better indoor air quality. Marmoleum Click CinchLOC also features antimicrobial properties that halt the breeding of harmful microorganisms, including MRSA and C-difficile. These features, combined with Marmoleum Click CinchLOC’s easy, glue-free installation, provide an ideal floor covering for people with asthma and allergies.

Marmoleum Click CinchLOC is produced of natural linoleum on water-repellent HDF with a cork layer backing for an ecologically and acoustically sound solution. The panels and squares easily “click” into place using the Valinge 5G locking system for a secure, glue-free installation. The panels are approximately 12 x 36 and can be used alone or in combination with the 12 x 12 squares.



TURN YOUR DREAMS INTO  
**REALITY**

Marmoleum® Click Cinch Loc is a high quality, easy to install flooring system made from natural materials. Available in a wide choice of colors, this water-resistant floor is ideal for every room in your home. Marmoleum® Click Cinch Loc comes in 12" x 36" panels and 12" x 12" squares and features a patented click system, which guarantees easy, problem-free installation. Because it's easy to clean, Marmoleum® Click Cinch Loc makes life easier for people with asthma, allergies and other respiratory disorders. With Marmoleum® Click Cinch Loc, it really is easy to turn your wildest dreams into a beautiful reality.

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**Forbo**  
FLOORING SYSTEMS



Grouted resilient tiles give consumers the look of the real thing without the maintenance issues. Shown is Travertine from Armstrong.



Grouts are available in a variety of colors, making it easier to coordinate with a specific pattern or design.

## Selling

Continued from page 10

and easy. They won't discolor or harbor dirt over time."

In terms of where in the home groutable LVT is installed, Parker specifically noted kitchens, bathrooms and foyers. "You'll see it in prominent areas where it can really be showcased. As we get into more contemporary designs you will see it start to reach into different areas of the home, more living areas like family and living rooms where there are more fashion-oriented designs."

Selling groutable LVT requires some creativity. "Install a display floor with grouted products and ask consumers to 'foot test' it against a ceramic floor," Foster explained. "Also, when possible, show full-size samples to enhance the look of the LVT and stress its maintenance features—damp mopping only and using a neutral pH cleaner for heavier soils. No chemicals or harsh cleaners are needed."

There are two schools of thought when it comes to how groutable LVT should be promoted to the consumer, according to Russ Rogg, Metroflor's president and CEO. The first is to market, sell, position and promote the product for what it is, which is LVT. "But with

this approach, it must also be communicated that the addition of grout is an aesthetic improvement to add realism to the installation versus an LVT without grout. It's very important to emphasize this attribute to make the groutable LVTs stand out from the non-groutable varieties."

The second option, he noted, would be to market, sell, position and promote groutable LVT as a direct alternative to real stone or ceramic. This gives consumers the look they want without the inherent maintenance issues. "This allows you to promote value, speed of installation, warmth underfoot, ease of maintenance and all the virtues of LVT—without the drawbacks of ceramic."

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: RASKIN INDUSTRIES

### Taking style and design to the next level

Raskin Industries continues to build on its legacy of style and design with Acrylx, its latest example of a product offering that sets the bar for innovation. Acrylx is a solid surface waterproof floor available in three collections: Premier Home, Premier XL and Premier G-Core XL, which features a G-Core sound barrier backing for added acoustical absorption. Acrylx's high density core is made of pure materials and minerals that are tightly bonded with polymers to create a solid core that is said to be 10 times more impact resistant and 50% denser than some products on the market. Acrylx will not cup or warp due to temperature changes or telegraph due to its advanced solid surface technology structure.

Acrylx features a patented interlocking system, is extremely durable and requires minimal sub-floor preparation. Put it all together and you have



Raskin's Elevations Loft, thanks to loose lay technology, can be floated with perimeter adhesive or installed with full spray or trowel adhesive. The product is also waterproof.

the ideal flooring for home and commercial applications. Acrylx collections feature Raskin's G55 advanced ceramic coating system for easy main-

tenance and upkeep over the long term.

Elevations Loft by Raskin Industries is now being made in the U.S. with phthalate-free virgin vinyl material. Loft features a 20 mil wear layer with an eased edge, 4mm gauge and the company's G88 advanced coating system that provides antibacterial/antifungal treatment and requires no waxing. Loft offers a loose lay waterproof technology that can be floated with perimeter adhesive or installed as full spray or trowel adhesive. Elevations Loft features a seven-layer construction to offer extra dimensional stability as each layer is engineered to prevent the other layer from moving. Included in the construction is a proprietary fiberglass sheet that keeps Loft from shifting after the perimeter is locked in place, resulting in one of the most stable LVT products on the market.

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## merchandising

# Proven ways to present LVT

Walking into a showroom can be an overwhelming experience for consumers, especially if they enter your store with no preconceived thought of what they are looking for. With LVT becoming one of the most popular choices among the various flooring options, it is important to display the product not only where people can see it, but also in an organized fashion to ease the selection process.

By Nicole Murray

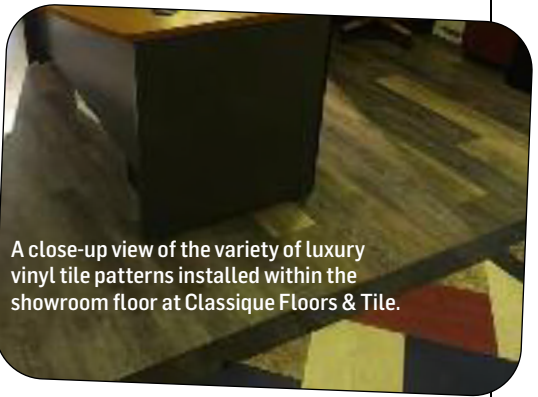
### 1 USE PALLET TOPPERS

By using pallet toppers as a form of display within your showroom floor, the consumer is given an example of what the product will look like after installation. That's one of the methods employed by Steve Weisberg, president of Crest Flooring, Allentown, Pa. "There is a full pallet that fits underneath and then on top we place a 4 x 5 sample of the material so consumers can not only see an example but are more easily able to visualize what the product will look like in their own home."

### 2 USE DISPLAYS THAT SAMPLE PRODUCTS AS A FINISHED UNIT

There are many types of displays that retailers can use when showing products within their store. However, the larger displays that are simple and can be used to set up different LVT products as a cohesive design are more impactful, experts say.

"Customers want to see more than just a board or a panel," said Rick Weibe, owner of Carpet Colour Center, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. "Displays that put tiles side by side



A close-up view of the variety of luxury vinyl tile patterns installed within the showroom floor at Classique Floors & Tile.

with a picture in the background allow the consumer to imagine the entire design as a whole."

Proponents say this method encourages shoppers to purchase LVT products that are used within the display they just viewed. It also allows to readily see the differences between panels when they are placed side by side.

### 3 STRATEGICALLY PLACE SIGNAGE

Once the consumer enters the store, draw her attention to the LVT displays with

## lvt 101: merchandising

# The science of selection

BY LINDSEY NISBET

Product development/marketing strategy manager, EarthWerks

With the ever-growing options of flooring available for consumers today, how does one find the right flooring? The answer is actually quite simple: Ask the right questions.



The layout possibilities for LVT allow homeowners to create a truly custom look. Pictured is EarthWerks' Sherbrooke.

Are you matching the best product to your customer's needs? Find out what is most important to Mrs. Consumer. Is it price point or style? Is she concerned with durability? The durability of an LVT product is very much attributed to the thickness of the wear layer. For example, if you're wondering why you have two 3mm products and one has a better warranty, it is likely that it has a better wear layer. This is also true in the difference between entry-level products and commercially rated items.

Be sure to ask where the product is. Is it a commercial or residential space? Is it a water prone area? Are there pets in the home? Find out who is installing the flooring. DIY or a professional crew? No matter the challenge, there is an LVT offering that will stand up to the task.

Check to see if the flooring is environmentally friendly. For example, all of EarthWerks' products carry a Green4Living label, showing that each of its products bring awareness to reclaim, recycle and reuse. You should also find out how long she plans on living on this new floor as warranties may come in to play.

Selecting new flooring truly is a science. That is especially true for a product like LVT, which is suitable for residential and commercial. It takes the perfect combination of features and benefits to match exactly what the customer may or may not even know she needs. To create a satisfied customer every time, make sure you know what is most important to achieve her dream space.



Large sample boards go a long way in helping the consumer visualize how a particular floor might look in her home.

prominent signage. “We have signs that hang from the ceiling that highlight LVT’s location,” Wiebe explained. “It is in plain sight so it can be easily located within the store.”

In addition, signage can be used as another form of educating customers. “Signage is displayed next to the LVT,” said Lee Courson, president of Carol’s Carpets, Montgomery, Ala. “It tells the story of what the product is and the most beneficial situations that it should be used for.”

## 4 LAY IT DOWN

When it comes to convincing consumers to go for that high-end luxury vinyl tile, there is no better way to achieve that goal than to show the customer how it might look in her home. Sure, she might have a general idea of how the product might look based on samples or room scene photography. Or perhaps she has clips from shelter magazines showing a flooring installation that has likely been photographed by a professional. But if you really want to make an impact and guide her along the decision-making process, you have to engage all her senses, beginning with sight, touch and maybe even sound.

“We have a variety of LVT in different colors, designs and brands installed on our showroom floor,” said Judith Huck, owner of Classique Floors & Tile, Portland, Ore. “They are all in an area where there are computers and chairs that roll around. We are able to show customers what their floors will look like with LVT installed, even after heavy wear and tear.”

## 5 USE CREATIVE APPROACHES

Once you have decided to commit to presenting LVT on your showroom floor, it’s time to employ creativity in terms of how you execute your merchandising strategy. Try thinking outside the proverbial box by showcasing LVT in unconventional ways.

## lvt 101: merchandising

# How to educate consumers about WPC

BY MARK HOWE

Western regional sales manager, WPS

Despite the popularity of the wood plastic composite category, many of today’s consumers have not heard of WPC or any number of the brand names seen in the market today. So, if they aren’t asking for it, we as an industry need to introduce it because the product will sell itself.

This category is taking share from laminate and click LVT. To that end, the displays are best placed near laminate and low cost wood.

The retail sales associate who takes some time to ask questions and qualify her customer will almost always get the business.

A good question to ask a customer is, “What type of floor do you have now?”

If she has carpet on the floor it would be wise to point out the ease of maintenance of WPC. There’s no heavy vacuum to pull out. Just a quick wipe down with dry or wet mop will suffice.

If she has laminate floor, point out the natural hush of WPC; and without the need for underlayment or T-molding transitions in doorways, your customer can save money.

If your customer has a ceramic tile floor, remind her that WPC can be installed directly over it, thus saving money on demolition.

The most talked-about benefit of WPC is the fact it’s waterproof. For a customer who has suffered an insurance loss due to a flood, or who lives in a flood zone, touting

“At one point we put a vase filled with water and a piece of LVT on the front desk to highlight the waterproof aspect,” Huck said. “In front of the setup we placed a sign that encouraged people to check out the display and did not reveal exactly what they were looking at so they were forced to ask questions to open the line of communication.”



For the consumer seeking a high-end look without a high-end budget, LVT is the perfect solution. Pictured is Fusion Max from WPS.

the waterproof qualities of WPC is a no-brainer.

For the DIY customer, WPC floors make perfect sense because they install quickly with basic tools. In addition, the top brands are Greenguard Gold certified.

## merchandising

# Creative ways to showcase LVT, WPC

Chances are many consumers who ultimately purchased a LVT or WPC/rigid core product for their homes probably initially came in asking for laminate or hardwood, dealers say. Once customers see the product and hear about its benefits, they are usu-

ally sold. And as luxury waterproof vinyl increasingly takes over, dealers are actively and creatively using their showroom space to display these products.

Following are some valuable tips on how to promote the category effectively.

“There’s no better way to show the product than to have it installed on our showroom floor. We have it in front of two wing displays. When we take customers to that section and explain the nuts and bolts, the unmatched colors and styling take over and the product then sells itself.”

—Steve Lipp, Carpet One Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, Ind.

“We merchandise it right in the front of the stores and have 12-13 display floors laid down. WPC/LVP has become our largest hard surface category in the last two years and continues to grow.”

—Dan Mandel, Sterling Carpets  
Anaheim, Calif.

“It is said that a presentation without a demonstration is merely a conversation. The demonstration of actual samples in the water container is a perfect representation of demonstration. These tools have added to our success. The larger take-home samples sell themselves.”

—Cathy Buchanan, Independence Carpet One Floor & Home  
Westland, Mich.

“I currently use the manufacturers’ merchandising displays specific for each WPC product. My laminate and wood programs are all displayed in a universal generic type stacker display centered in pods in the middle of the showroom; the WPC products are wall units that surround the laminate and wood stackers. For me this alone sets it apart from other hard surface products on my showroom floor.”

—Eric Mondragon, R.C. Willey Home Furnishings, Salt Lake City, Utah



Customers check out a COREtec Plus XL display at Independence Carpet One Floor & Home, owned and operated by Cathy Buchanan.

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: KARNDEAN DESIGNFLOORING

# Offering flooring retailers a one-of-a-kind experience

Karndean Designflooring sees flooring differently and believes in creating spaces that inspire a personal connection. With a focus on sourcing natural products, enhancing their character and developing floors that are beautifully designed and easily designable, Designflooring makes a considerable impact on both homeowners and retailers.

Designflooring opens the door of imaginative possibilities through the creative use of design and feature strips, borders, special cuts and blending products. If a homeowner wants to blend products, run an inlay around the perimeter of the room or create a grouting effect between tiles, these scenarios can be made possible with Designflooring, offering consumers something that cannot be bought at a big box store.

Retailers will find that Designflooring offers a significant competitive edge in the market and



Karndean has been creating LVT since 1973 and is consistently recognized in the industry for its quality.

a way in which they can set themselves apart from the competition, increase margins, create

referrals and gain repeat customers. Karndean owns each of its product’s visuals and has a low claims rate due to the high quality of the product. This means a retailer can enjoy the best visuals and texture in the market with fewer call backs. Karndean has been creating LVT since 1973 and is consistently recognized in the industry for its quality today. This quality level is offered across three different formats—glue down, loose lay and rigid core. The simple addition of a design strip or border to a glue down sale leads to an increase in profit and a happy customer who is likely to recommend Karndean to a friend or return to that retailer for her next home project. Plus, because Karndean sells direct, retailers can reap the benefits of increased profits.

With Designflooring, everyone benefits: consumers get a unique, personalized floor, and retailers enjoy an increase in business and profit.





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## issue

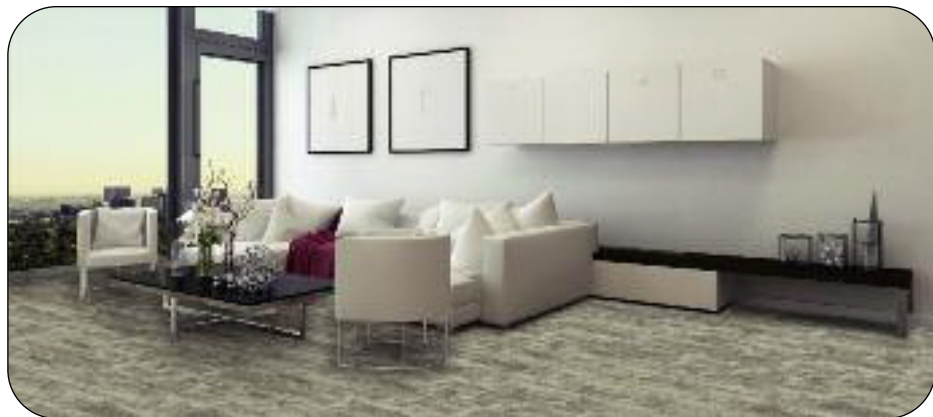
# Avoiding the 'me-too' commodity game

By K.J. Quinn

**L**VLT is arguably the hottest flooring category in the market today as evidenced by the many manufacturers currently active in the arena. With that, suppliers are working hard to avoid commoditization of the category by applying innovation and creative marketing strategies to stand apart from the pack.

"Everyone wants to get into the LVT market because it's such a hot category," said Michael Raskin, president and CEO of Raskin Gorilla Floors. "A lot of times companies that are trying to get into the LVT market don't really know how to market or position the product so they [compete based on] price. We give our customers [price options] but offer high-end patterns and colors. We put an effort into the marketing of design."

Some experts cite entry-level products as some of the most difficult to differentiate. "Depending on the specification or the grade/type of product, in some instances it can be difficult to create separation from the pack," said Russ Rogg, president and CEO of Metroflor. "A simplistic 2mm gauge with a 6 mil wear layer is very ordinary from the perspective of construction and performance; with a basic product like that it's hard to create a lot of [differentiation]."



Acrylx by Raskin Industries is designed to deliver greater impact resistance.

It is not a platform on which you can offer lots of bells and whistles. We try to offer a good value for the money with design, embossing, etc."

Lindsey Nisbet, head of product development and marketing strategy at EarthWerks, specifically noted the enhancements of more value-oriented products. "There are more 2mm products that now have a coating, giving it better performance warranties and longevity. There are many ways to value engineer as well as upgrade LVT. The product truly can fit any

market and appeal to so many decors. The designs keep getting better with more products having registered embossing and 'outside of the box' colors and designs."

LVT leaders have cited style and design as the No. 1 area where manufacturers can create something unique, keeping LVT out of the commodity product categorization. Producers continue to innovate when it comes to visual appeal and realistic mimicking of materials like wood and stone, whether in an effort to offer

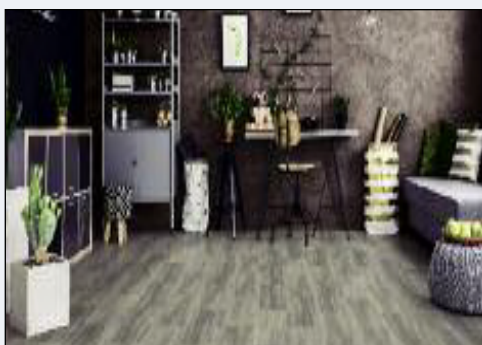
**Continued on page 22**

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: EARTHWERKS

# Focus trained on style, service, product availability

It is often said that "Experience is the best teacher." As an EarthWerks customer, flooring retailers can take advantage of years of experience in creating today's quality LVT and WPC products. EarthWerks has led the market in innovative design, manufacturing, technology, supply and customer service. These are the assets that give dealers the assurance when doing business with EarthWerks—style, service and availability you can trust.

EarthWerks has been in LVT longer than most of its warranties. With almost four decades of experience, the company embraces the ability to confidently back its product. LVT is at the core, and the core in EarthWerks' LVT is quality crafted. Its factories use production methods and technology advancements that continuously meet the highest global standards. This attention to quality comes from the family's involvement at the factory level that



EarthWerks offers an extensive assortment of floating luxury vinyl plank and tile in its collections. Pictured is Parkhill.

spans generations. EarthWerks is also supported by one of the best and largest distributor/dealer networks in the country. The company has tens of millions of square feet in


inventory available for their retailers' immediate needs. It is a secure feeling knowing you can get what you need, when you need it.

LVT/P has been the fastest-growing flooring category in recent years, in large part due to its beautiful designs, diverse functionality and affordability. With so many options, it is important to select a trusted brand that can provide dealers with peace of mind. With a proven track record, EarthWerks has truly stood the test of time. From distributor to dealer to customer, RSAs can depend on EarthWerks. As the company slogan says, "Some Offer LVT—We Are LVT."

Headquartered in Houston, EarthWerks is a division of Swiff-Train Company. This combination of manufacturer and distributor provides the best understanding of the industry and allows the company/brand to service its customers so they can reach their utmost potential.

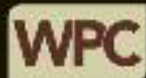


## GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND.



We were reaching for the stars when we created EarthWerks® Luxury Vinyl Floors. Attention to detail and perfection, from ground up, helped launch the industry leader in LVT. Style, ease of installation, waterproof durability and enhanced warranties put us light years in front of the competition. You can be assured we're the flooring to match your lofty goals.

For information regarding our extensive line of sustainable vinyl flooring, please call 800-275-7943 or visit us online at [www.earthwerks.com](http://www.earthwerks.com)



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## marketing

# Effective tips for marketing LVT

By Nicole Murray

## 1 USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO EDUCATE

A lot of companies utilize the various social media outlets to spark consumer curiosity regarding ongoing promotions or to draw attention to current products. In order to make the most out of each post on social media, it is most advantageous to include a link that will bring the consumer to a landing page that will educate them on how LVT will be best suited for their design needs.

“Our goal is to educate people about what the product is for, what it can do and what it can’t do,” said Brad Millner, owner, Millner Flooring America, Yuma, Ariz. “We usually post a teaser on Facebook to encourage consumers to click on the link, which will then bring them to a landing page with all of the information.”

Once the consumer is given knowledge about LVT, they are able to decide exactly what they want before they even walk in your store. This makes closing the sale that much easier because they are set on which product that want based on the information your company provided for them.

Luxury vinyl tile is rapidly becoming one of the most sought out flooring options, flooring experts say. However, it’s not necessarily a product that sells itself; consumers still need to be informed about the many options available as well as the product’s strengths and limitations, etc. Following are five effective marketing tips.

## 2 DO NOT ADVERTISE PRICING

Joe Elder, general manager, Hillers Flooring America, Rochester, Minn., encourages retailers to avoid listing prices when promoting luxury vinyl tile. Reason being: By revealing a small fraction of the information, the consumer is forced to initiate an interaction and ask specific questions. “In our ads, we never list prices because we want people to come in and ask questions so we can get a better feel for the products that they are interested in. Consumers could lose interest immediately if the initial price you give is unsatisfying. Besides, it takes a price down the street that is one dollar cheaper to lose business.”

By omitting the prices of products, retailers place a stronger focus on the actual quality of the product as opposed to immediately attaching a numerical value. “Within our posts, we use expressions such as ‘It’s On Sale Now!’ or ‘Featured Now,’” Elder explained. “It gives just enough information for the consumer to understand the reason for the post without having zero questions.”



Millner Flooring America uses Facebook to promote LVT.

## lvt 101: marketing

# More choice is better—right?

BY KURT DENMAN

Chief marketing officer, EVP sales, Congoleum

Many flooring retailers believe offering as many options as possible will increase both their perceived value and the likelihood that shoppers will find their ideal floor. But research shows that too many choices can leave consumers feeling either less satisfied with their selection (decision fatigue) or in many cases less likely to buy anything at all (decision paralysis).

Several years ago, a study conducted by two renowned psychologists disproved the notion that “more is better.” The researchers set up a display table at an upscale food market with 24 varieties of gourmet jam. If shoppers sampled the jam, they received a coupon for \$1 off their purchase. They repeated the study on a subsequent day but instead offered only six varieties. While the bigger display attracted more interest, consumers were one-tenth as likely to buy as those who shopped the smaller display. Subsequent studies have shown similar results across a wide variety of products from jeans to investment options.

The point here is not that consumers don’t want or need choices; it is to underscore the fact that retailers can add meaning-



Understanding the functional and aesthetic needs of a customer is the first step in helping her find the best solution. Pictured is Congoleum's DuraCeramic.

ful value by applying customer psychology. Try the following:

**Taking a curated approach to their product offering.** Offering several brands that meet the same need isn’t just redundant but also confusing.

**Being knowledgeable.** Retailers must make sure they understand the products they offer as well as the ones they don’t offer. Consumers have unprecedented access to information, but information alone doesn’t mean it’s easy to find the right product. Retailers are a trusted resource whose job it is to help make sense of it all.

**Take the time to listen.** Understanding the functional and aesthetic needs of a customer is the first step in helping her successfully navigate the myriad choices to find the best solution.

### 3 LINK WITH WELL-KNOWN BRANDS

A useful tactic when marketing LVT, experts say, is to establish a strong connection with well-known brands.

By making a clear connection between your store and strong brands, consumers will know the type of products that are available within your store and associate their high quality with your personal products. “When I am out shopping, if I know who had made the product it is given a better perceived value,” Elder explained.



Retailers report having success using signage that focuses on LVT's waterproof abilities.

### 4 UTILIZE TELEVISION AND RADIO

Even though some consider these traditional mediums to be outdated, both forms are reliable ways to reach consumers on a regular basis. Proponents say radio and TV advertising keeps retailers top of mind when shoppers are in the market for flooring. “We do a lot of radio ads and plan on re-implementing television ads soon,” said George Gilbert, owner, Gillbert Flooring Covering, Big Rapids, Mich. “We use these ads as a way to get people excited about a product, even if it is not necessarily new but because it sparks curiosity.”

Gilbert explains that radio ads are cheaper and make a major impression when done consistency. Television ads, on the other hand, are much more expensive but seem to have a longer lasting effect with consumers.

“Even though we plan on restarting our television ads, there are still customers who mention a commercial done about our company that they saw some time ago,” Gilbert said. “It remains more prevalent within their minds.”

### 5 POST MESSAGE BOARDS OUTSIDE

Many companies post large reader signs outside of their stores and rotate the messages that are being relayed to the customer. Consumers passing by are involuntarily exposed to your promotions and products by simply walking or driving past the store.

“We post a large 5x10 signs directly outside, which has brought in a considerable amount of traffic,” Gilbert stated. “If our messages relate to what they are looking for, they ask questions immediately and if they are not looking for flooring at all, hopefully they come to us when they are ready.”

However, it is important to keep your messages short and sweet because the exposure time is normally only a few seconds. “For LVT, our message board contains a generic picture illustrating water droplets to promote the waterproof aspect,” Elder said. “We try to keep the message five seconds or less so it is right to the point.”

## Lvt 101: marketing

# LVT is made for families

BY ANGIE ALEXANDER

National sales manager, Novalis

When you see a young family enter your store be ready to show them luxury vinyl flooring. That's because there has never been a flooring option so amazingly suited for a family with small children as LVT. You could say it was practically made with children and pets in mind.

Why? Here are some reasons to share with them:

- **Durability.** There's not a floor made that can take it quite like LVT.
- **Low maintenance.** Wet mop and you're good as new.
- **Covers large areas with ease.** The new high performance core LVT is more stable than laminates and runs further without the need of a transition molding.
- **Cash and carry.** Because clic LVT is easier to install than other flooring types, it's ideally suited for your cash and carry business.
- **Water-resistant.** Bath time can get, well, wet. But LVT can handle it.
- **Looks great now; looks great years from now.** Who wants to refinish a floor when you've got soccer practice? Who wants to hire professional cleaners when you're paying for piano lessons? Tell your customers that with LVT, they don't have to.

We call these types of situations and issues “life factors.” Some may seem trivial. Some may not even apply to you. But

they are very real to your customer. And while they may be happy the day you sell them a new floor for their kitchen, you'll want them to be singing your praises a few years from now as the dealer that steered them to the right floor in the



Novalis' NovaCore Barnwood comes in 6 x 48 HPC planks and features NovaClic Fd installation.

first place for their family. You can with LVT.

For more helpful information about LVT selection, installation and care, be sure to check out Novalis' blog at [novafloor.us](http://novafloor.us).

## issue

Continued from page 18

value options or to justify higher prices.

Paul Murfin, president of IVC and Mohawk resilient—now part of the Mohawk family—specifically noted increased realism as helping the status of LVT. And as it looks more like the “real thing,” it is still more affordable than hardwood. “I think consumers are starting to react to the visuals you can now get in LVT that you can’t necessarily get at an affordable price point in real wood,” he explained. “You’re seeing things like embossed-in-register designs and larger pattern repeats so there are fewer repetitions in the planks themselves. Different methods of beveling also help the product look more attractive along with varied gloss levels and sizes.”

Other major manufacturers are also benefiting from these latest developments. “We continue to push the envelope in styling as far as sizes, designs, etc., and that creates a very differentiated product,” said Dan Natkin, vice president, hardwood and laminate, Mannington. “For example, we launched Meridian residentially which comes in a 6 x 48 plank, tiles and a new 6 x 18 brick format. It’s an example

Moduleo LVT products are suitable for both residential and commercial applications.

of a product you can do so much with, that can extend across different rooms with different visuals.”

Jamey Block, vice president of product management for Armstrong Flooring, noted the importance of taking advantage of LVT’s numerous selling points as well. “You need trendsetting designs, breakthrough installation and performance features, and merchandising to educate the consumer while making it easy for the retailer,” he explained. “Retailers want an established, seasoned and reliable supplier to provide them with a proven product that will be here for the long term. How you prevent—or at least forestall—commoditization all depends on your ability to innovate and how you differentiate your offering from everyone else.”

Manufacturers are seeking to accomplish this goal while maintaining respectable margins for retailers. Such is the case with Novalis Innovative Flooring, which is banking on a well-rounded marketing strategy coupled with making an LVT product designed to excel in every facet of the category. “We believe the best



way to [prevent commoditization] is by building a strong brand,” said John Wu, president and CEO. “Over the last few years, we’ve been focused on doing just that in the American market with our NovaFloor brand. We are delivering a true luxury vinyl and solid vinyl floor line made with the latest standards for quality, sustainability and unequaled styling. We are also providing top-notch merchandising, service and online brand support.”

Developments in LVT construction also help products stand out from the pack. Rigid-core offerings (a term being used to refer to WPC/composite-type products) are creating a new platform for showcasing LVT’s design and performance attributes.

### A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: SHAW FLOORS

## Building on the success of Floorté through innovation

When meeting vinyl needs of any kind, look no further than Shaw Floors. Uniquely positioned to supply high-quality, striking resilient products, Shaw proves its category commitment through significant capital investment and unmatched product innovation.

Shaw has made substantial investments to

its new LVT facility in Ringgold, Ga., which came online in 2016. The benefit of this investment will be more fully realized in 2017 as the plant enters a full year of operation. By the end of the third quarter, Shaw will have completed the USFloors manufacturing installation in Ringgold’s facility to further expand capabilities there for this growing sector. While Shaw will continue working with trusted and respected partners internationally, the incorporation of U.S. manufacturing will positively affect flooring retailers through elevated product offerings that are delivered quicker to market.

2017 brought meaningful product updates within the resilient category for Floorté, Shaw’s revolutionary enhanced vinyl plank (EVP) collec-

tion. Floorté was designed to bridge the gap between cleanability and beauty through compelling realistic visuals and industry-leading performance characteristics. Floorté’s waterproof qualities make it kid- and pet-friendly and give consumers the ability to have the desired look of wood in any room of the home, even wet areas historically off limits due to moisture concerns. Floorté now also comes with an antimicrobial attached pad offering providing a healthy dose of noise reduction in the following styles: Classico Plus, Premio Plus, Valore Plus and our Alto collection of products.

Featuring the latest technology in resilient flooring, Floorté’s Alto HD is offered in four high-definition visuals, with five more available by summer. The embossed in register treatment of these four new styles provides superior realism and unique beauty. With hand-scraped detailing and rustic shading, each collection was designed to blend effortlessly with varying design aesthetics. Shaw has also introduced six new styles in the popular Alto Mix line boasting multiple lengths and widths in each carton for extreme realism for the consumer and easy installation for the retailer.



The Alto HD collection is a selection from Shaw Floors’ Floorté enhanced vinyl plank product line featuring high-definition, realistic visuals.

# Shaw Floors Is Leading The Way In Resilient

Offering a comprehensive assortment of all resilient flooring options, Shaw Floors continues pushing the envelope with tremendous commitment to investment, innovation and design excellence. No matter the product need, we make it easy to do business—all from the name you trust.

For more information, contact your Shaw Floors sales representative.



Resilient Solutions Center



Array® Easy Avenue, 208



Quarry™ Explorer Tile, 111



Floorté® Alto HD, 158



5th Main® City Lights, 136

## issue

# Product mix shifts in face of new technology

By Reginald Tucker

**W**hile the majority of LVT sold in the U.S. today is still sourced out of Asia, domestic manufacturers are seeking to change the game by building plants or increasing capacity out of existing facilities. This is forcing a gradual shift if the mix of products hitting the market as domestic and Asian suppliers tout their respective strengths and advantages.

### Focus on innovation

While the product range manufacturers offer is not always defined by region, the changing mix of different product constructions has been impacted by global resilient production trends as it pertains to technological capabilities. “In order to remain competitive with worldwide producers, our U.S. manufacturing focus is not only about competitiveness in cost and speed to market, but also innovation,” said Eric Erickson, vice president of marketing, Beauflor USA. “The

Shaw prides itself on its technological production capabilities.

technology we have developed in our Pure LVT line, for example, brings features and benefits that other products simply do not have. Our Blacktex Collection, which we will begin producing soon in the U.S., is in a category all its own: Luxury Vinyl Roll (LVR). Our LVR has all of the best qualities of LVT and cushion vinyl combined into one great product.”

### Homegrown advantages

When it comes to resilient flooring in general, domestic production has historically been strong. Stateside suppliers expect that will con-



tinue as LVT's popularity rises. “We've been producing resilient flooring in the U.S. since 1909, starting, of course, with linoleum,” said Jamey Block, vice president, product management-resilient, Armstrong Floors. “Today we produce heterogeneous and homogeneous vinyl in the U.S. for residential and commercial applications. We manufacture CushionStep fiberglass-backed vinyl in the same Lancaster factory where we also produce our new sensation, Vivero with Diamond 10 Technology.”

In terms of construction, some observers believe domestically produced LVT is still primarily focused on glue-down LVT with a few manufacturers producing click LVT. The ability to make enhanced designs such as embossed-in-register, some say, is still very limited domestically. “Imported LVT continues to be innovative and able to manufacture in large volumes with enhanced visuals,” said John Wu, president and CEO, Novalis Innovative Flooring. “For LVT, the mix has definitely shifted more from traditional glue-down LVT to floating LVT of various formats such as click LVT, loose lay LVT or WPC-type LVT. Within floating LVT, loose lay and WPC-type currently have the greatest momentum.”

### Upping the ante on realism

As the resilient market has matured, offerings that boast a wide variety of styling and price points have emerged. “It's no longer just a low-cost option thanks to innovations in aesthetics and performance, particularly waterproof performance and durability,” said Clark Hodgkins, resilient category manager, Shaw. “As that diversification continues, it's helpful to have a mix of sources to meet customer price and delivery expectations.”

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: IVC US

# Moduleo has something to offer everyone

As the industry leader in resilient style and design, IVC US has its finger on the pulse of today's most popular LVT trends. Its new U.S.-made Moduleo LVT collection provides the look and feel of real wood planks and ceramic tiles without the upkeep or expense.

Available in either click or glue-down installation options, Moduleo was designed with the consumer in mind.

- Horizon—Urban Revival. A blend of high-end design set to the gritty tempo of today's city trends, Urban Revival celebrates fashion-forward flair while welcoming mid-century appeal.

- Vision—Everyday Classics. In Everyday Classics, timeless splendor and tried-and-true styles intertwine in beloved designs and colors that have stood the test of time. In addition to these three impressive

offerings, the Moduleo collection is designed for an active home.



With a well-rounded style portfolio and superior livability, Moduleo was designed with the consumer in mind.

- 100% Waterproof. Perfect for any area of the home, Moduleo delivers protection from spills, warmth, comfort, excellent insulation and sound absorption.

- SuperGuard Stain Shield. Durable Moduleo offers the ultimate defense against stains, scuffs and scratches with SuperGuard Stain Shield.

- Easy to Clean. Moduleo's QuickClean wear layer repels dirt and grime and doesn't require harsh chemicals or cleaning agents. Cleaning is easy with a broom or mop with warm water.

With a well-rounded style portfolio and superior livability, Moduleo truly offers something for everyone. For more details, visit [ivcfloors.com](http://ivcfloors.com).





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## the latest looks of LVT

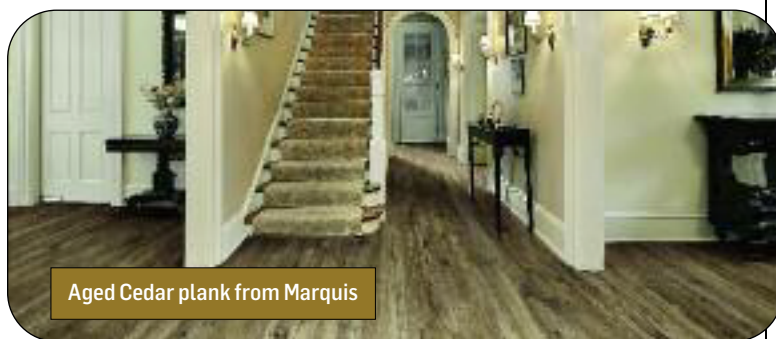
As competition heats up in the LVT arena, suppliers are working harder and more creatively to stand out in a crowded field. To that end, they are focusing their attention on the factors most important to consumers: style and design. Whether it's mimicking the natural features of real wood or stone, or developing products that reflect popular colors, suppliers are striving to create eye-catching designs. Following is a sampling of the latest looks in LVT.



Blacktex from Beauflor



Metroflor's Konecto line



Aged Cedar plank from Marquis

## lvt 101: selling

# Building customer confidence in luxury vinyl tile

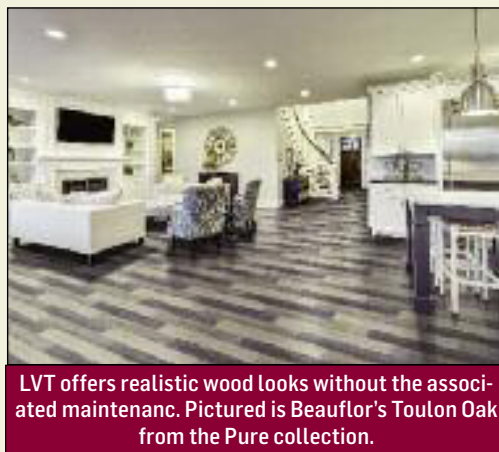
BY ERIC ERICKSON

VP sales, marketing, design & business development, Beauflor USA

It is important for retailers to not only educate consumers on the many benefits of LVT but also be able to address any worries they may have. All purchases are emotionally based, and LVT is no exception. With LVT being a newer option for consumers, they may not know how to feel about the product or the perceived value of the category. It will benefit retailers to reassure the consumer they are making a smart decision.

LVT is a smart decision for homeowners, builders, property managers and commercial business owners alike. With innovative locking systems, the no-glue installation is quick and painless, requiring minimal effort to change out styles when compared to its wood and stone counterparts. Some vinyl planks have a rigid board composition, giving consumers freedom to customize a space without an expensive and time-consuming tear-out of an original tile floor. Vinyl planks give access to beautiful, durable flooring

without the commitment associated with tile or wood. And for multi-family developments, LVT provides a competitive advantage, allowing them to undergo renovations more often, attracting potential tenants looking for finishes that are up-to-date and on trend.



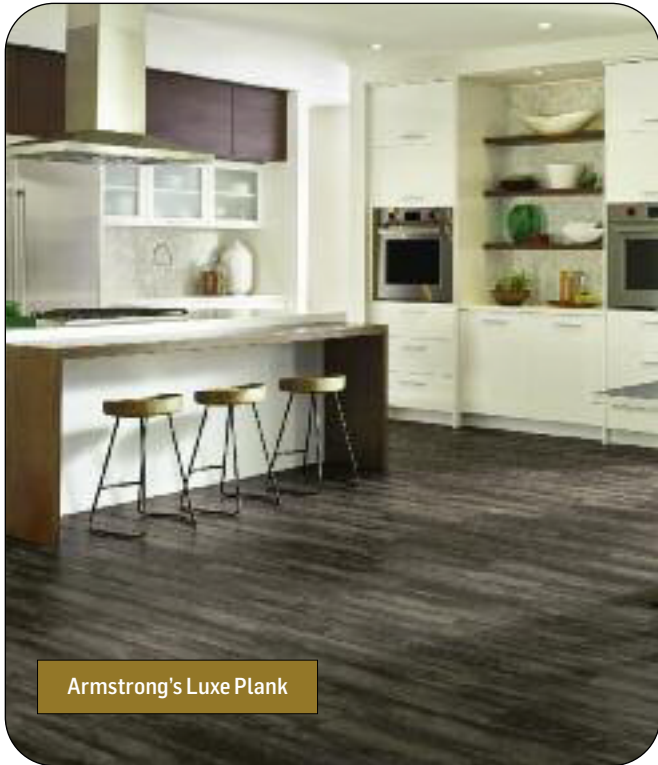
LVT offers realistic wood looks without the associated maintenance. Pictured is Beauflor's Toulon Oak from the Pure collection.

The benefits of vinyl planks far exceed aesthetics. With a multi-layered, 100% recyclable composition, LVT is scratch, stain and dent resistant while remaining environmentally friendly, giving consumers peace of mind that their homes are designed with quality materials.

LVT is water resistant and as a result serves as a smart solution for applications throughout the home, providing a seamless transition from kitchen to living room, bathroom to bedroom and all the areas in between. It is also easy to maintain with simple damp mopping. LVT is warmer and

softer underfoot than some alternative flooring products and does not require installation of a separate underlayment. And because of its inherent sound absorption qualities, it can be easily installed directly over an existing floor.

SolidTech from Mohawk



Armstrong's Luxe Plank

Korlok from Karndean Designflooring



## lvt 101: design

# Don't forget — every room in the home needs love

BY RICH OWEN

Senior director of market development, Mohawk

We often think of selling flooring in terms of the home's biggest rooms or an extended layout, like a striking carpet entryway that carries into the living room. Maybe it's a prominent hard surface foyer and hallway that extends into the kitchen and dining room as well. It's a home run type of sale that every retailer and salesperson loves to facilitate.

However, we need to make sure that when a customer walks into a store looking for flooring we remind her there are a vast amount of options for every single room in the home—even the forgotten areas that seemed beyond repair or even worth the effort. Thanks to a combination of style, performance and value, every room can feel the love.

There's no need for a basement to remain unfinished and completely underutilized, only serving for unsightly storage when it could easily be outfitted into a favorite functional space.

And a laundry room that is beginning to resemble an indoor version of a cluttered garage? It can be transformed and uplifted into something versatile, eye-catching and enjoyable.

Are your customers aware of how dazzling the latest LVT looks are? In addition to being engineered for high performance, resiliency and durability, LVT boasts some of the most realistic, wire-brushed hardwood looks and textured, natural stone visuals ever produced. It offers high-end appeal without maxing out a consumer's budget yet remains moisture resistant, maintains a constant temperature, is easy to install and instantly ready for traffic. This is the perfect flooring for rooms that have been neglected for far too long.



LVT designs can transform any room in a home. Pictured is Mohawk's SolidTech Variations Steelgate waterproof vinyl plank.

Retailers and manufacturers alike want to accommodate whatever flooring needs a homeowner has. And if we are being honest—the bigger the job, the better. But let's make sure we also offer the overlooked rooms some TLC. In addition to making a sale that might not have otherwise been considered, you may end up giving customers completely new joy for their beloved homes.

...because *sometimes*



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 **US FLOORS**

## wpc

# Reinforcing the fundamentals of WPC gives

**A**s WPC (wood plastic composite) quickly gains traction as the hot new product in the flooring industry, specialty dealers are faced with some challenges. These range from explaining the features and benefits of WPC to their customers to effectively merchandising this new classification of product in their showrooms.

FCNews spoke with industry experts about what dealers need to know regarding WPC:



**USFloors put WPC on the map with its breakthrough COREtec line.**

board and cork underlayment is attached to the base for sound abatement and enhanced comfort underfoot. COREtec Plus is positioned as a premium engineered waterproof luxury vinyl floor.

Shaw calls its product EVP, for “enhanced vinyl plank.” Named Floorté, the product is dimensionally stable, waterproof and offers a greater density than WPC, the company said.

“In addition, our locking system is the only one in the industry that we are aware of that is tested using the same standards as laminate flooring,” said Carr Newton, vice president of residential resilient and laminate, Shaw Floors. “We pass the caster chair test

with flying colors—in excess of 25,000 cycles. Other products in this category have shown to come apart at 3,900 cycles. Based on those differences we consider our product to be in a category by itself.”

**How does it differ from LVT?** The main differences from a consumer standpoint are that it is waterproof and can go over most subfloors without much preparation. Traditional vinyl floors are flexible, which means any unevenness in the subfloor will transfer through the surface. Compared to traditional glue-down LVT or solid locking LVT, WPC products have a distinct advantage since the rigid core hides subfloor imperfections. In addition, the rigid core allows for longer and wider formats, such as a 9 x 72. COREtec, for example, can be installed over hard surface floors, including ceramic tile. With WPC it is not necessary to worry about the tedious preparation LVT would require for use over cracks and divots in concrete or wooden subfloors.

Casey Dillabaugh, owner of Dillabaugh’s Flooring America in Boise Idaho, takes other

**What is WPC exactly?** WPC is a composite material made of thermoplastics, calcium carbonate and wood flour. Extruded as a core material, it is marketed as being waterproof, rigid and extremely dimensionally stable. In the case of COREtec Plus, a veneer of luxury vinyl is layered on top of the core-

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: USFLOORS

# COREtec The Original: Often imitated, never duplicated

COREtec The Original continues to dominate the landscape of the waterproof composite core category by offering an alternative to glue-down and/or floating luxury vinyl products, along with features and benefits that other engineered flooring products, including laminate and hardwood, can only dream about.

The fact that COREtec is waterproof, kid-proof and pet-proof, requires no acclimation and can be installed over existing hard surface flooring with minimal prep and with no subfloor telegraphing, makes it the clear choice for today’s busy family.

As always, success and popularity leads to imitation. Retailers continue to hold strong their support of the COREtec brand. All the while, USFloors remains committed to providing its retail partners with innovative and cutting-edge COREtec products. Consumers now ask for COREtec by name and some competitors refer to their similar products as “like COREtec,” further emphasizing the strength of the brand and its overwhelming popularity in

the composite core category.

By summer 2017 the COREtec portfolio of



**COREtec The Original has been a hit with flooring retailers including Independent Carpet One, Westland, Mich.**

products will comprise upwards of 200 SKUs across the COREtec One, COREtec Plus, COREtec Plus Enhanced Plank and Tile, COREtec Plus XL, COREtec Plus HD, COREtec Plus Design, COREtec Plus XL-Enhanced and COREtec Basic Plus collections. This breadth of offering is second to none in the industry.

The specifications across the scope of the collections range from 36 to 72 inches in plank length, while widths range from 5 to 9 inches; 12 x 24 and 18 x 24 tile formats are also available. Embossed in register technology accompanied by four-side enhanced bevel edges are employed on the COREtec Plus HD, COREtec Plus Enhanced Plank and Tile and COREtec Plus XL Enhanced collections.

COREtec The Original takes pride in leading the WPC category in design, innovation and quality. It is the company’s mission to remain the leader in this category while offering the retailer, consumer and commercial end-user a superior flooring product that outperforms the competition in all facets.

## RSAs an edge

benefits of WPC into consideration when stacking the category against competing products. “The WPC category saved—at least in our market—the LVT category as a whole simply because entry-level LVT was not performing. Enter COREtec and Floorté—WPC has changed the game for our clients.”

**What are its advantages over laminate?** The big advantage over laminate is WPC is waterproof, which makes it more suitable for environments where laminate should not normally be used (i.e., bathrooms and basements, which are prone to moisture infiltration). WPC products can be installed in large rooms without an expansion gap every 30 feet, a requirement for laminate floors. The vinyl wear layer of WPC provides cushion and comfort and also absorbs the impact sound to make it a quiet floor. WPC is also suitable for large open areas.

**Where is the best place to merchandise WPC in the retail showroom?** Some retailers choose to sandwich WPC between laminate and LVT or vinyl, referring to it as the ultimate “cross-over” category. Jim Mudd, president of Sam Kinnaird’s Flooring in Louisville, Ky., however, merchandises his WPC offerings in the laminate section. “I consider [WPC] laminate even though I don’t think it matters,” he said. “All I care about is that the product is waterproof and quiet to walk on.”

Manufacturers offer display units to help dealers better position WPC. For example, USFloors’ COREtec Original Foolproof Floor wing display shows the entire COREtec Plus and COREtec Plus XL collections in a space-saving footprint of 13 square feet. Meanwhile, a COREtec Plus extra-large plank display features a full-size 9 x 72 system displayed prominently by the samples so the consumer can experience firsthand the expansiveness of the longer, wider planks. Jamann Stepp, director of marketing and product management for USFloors, said dealers can find creative ways to merchandise products like COREtec. “Many of our dealers will display pieces of COREtec Plus in a fish tank full of water to demonstrate the waterproof features of the products,” Stepp said.

Shaw recommends Floorté EVP be mar-

ked in the resilient section. Floorté is a key component of Shaw’s Resilient Solution Center, which includes four merchandising units that showcase Floorté, Array click, VersaFit loose lay and 5th & Main commercial options.



## lvt 101: WPC

# Emerging formats stir interest

BY CHARLIE KELLEY

Vice president, hard surfaces, Marquis Industries

**T**here is a new kid on the block. Most people refer to this new product group as SPC (solid PVC core) or rigid core flooring. While WPC floors are hotter than ever, this new product is doing well and growing in popularity. Rigid core products are a natural spin-off of the WPC product group, with the biggest difference lying in density ratings between these products. Both are highly stable with very little expansion or contraction.

SPC floors with density ratings as high as 1800 to 2000 are not uncommon. The higher density comes from less foaming agents and fillers and more compaction. SPC products are also being made by a new extrusion manufacturing process that is much more efficient. This process extrudes the core, applies the décor/wear layer and texturizes the product in one continuous process, which helps reduce costs. In order for most WPCs to boost density ratings, they incorporate a 2mm LVT top glued to the core after the décor and wear layer has been applied to the LVP and set with a heat press process. Another benefit of higher density ratings is the ability to offer a more reliable locking system in floating floors. The industry has tried for years to



The industry has tried for years to find a better, more waterproof product and has reached that goal with rigid core and WPC. Pictured is Williamsburg, Marquis’ best-selling WPC product.

find a better, more waterproof product and has reached that goal with SPC and WPC products. The product provides a thicker wear layer with aluminum oxide or ceramic bead along with a high-quality, closed-cell attached cushion.

While both products will continue to grow, the real key to success lies in choosing the right décors. The options run from soft, sophisticated patterns to very rustic looks, both in wood patterns as well as stone looks. Take the time to study trends in your market area. The consumer is willing to pay for quality with convenience.

## wpc

## Category fuels distributor excitement

Retailers are not the only ones getting excited about the wave of LVT/WPC products hitting the market. Distributors are also jumping on the bandwagon. “The growth curve of this category is like nothing the industry has ever seen,” said Jeff Striegel, president of Elias Wilf, Owings Mills, Md. “Most new products have a primary usage in a given channel. Laminate zoomed in the retail channel but it never cracked the builder market or commercial sector in a meaningful way because of noise-abatement issues. It went from 0 to \$1 billion quick, but laminate was a one-trick pony.”

### More than a fad

LVT/WPC is here to stay, experts say. Distributors believe the two products are poised to travel parallel growth paths rather than one product cannibalizing the other. “I don’t know that one is Betamax and the other is VHS,” said Scott Rozmus, president and CEO of FlorStar Sales, referring to a videotape format war that blazed during the late 1970s and 1980s. “I don’t know if one wins and the other loses; I think both have legs. WPC is a very hot product, going well in all markets, and LVT is still red hot as well. There is an acceptance that a WPC core LVT is a different category than a dryback traditional core LVT. We see dealers merchandising them separately.”

### Seizing share from laminates

Where WPC is likely to take share is from laminate and other vinyl products. To keep up with this robust growth, distributors are increasing their overall mix. FlorStar, for example, was 6% LVT/WPC in 2014; it is already into double digits now and growing.

What separates LVT from, say, laminate is channel diversity—multifamily, contract, residential; it’s hitting on all cylinders in every category and it is waterproof. Pat Theis, vice president of sales and marketing at Herregan, said the paths to success for WPC and LVT are similar but both have inherent traits that can make one more appealing or a better solution than the other.

Theis said both are waterproof and can go into myriad rooms and applications. Both can reduce subfloor prep. But he believes WPC has an edge in terms of overall product con-

struction, as WPC-type floors tend to be thicker.

Herregan has been particularly bullish in LVT/WPC, with more than one-third of its business devoted to the category. While other top 20 distributors are perhaps not as high, they are all in double digits percentage-wise in terms of product mix, with that number expected to rise in 2017.

Some distributors now separate LVT from the rest of the resilient category, namely sheet goods and VCT.



RSAs advise selling WPC based on color and design as well as performance capabilities.

### A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: ARDEX AND HENRY

## Training makes all the difference

In 2001 Ardex Americas acquired The W.W. Henry Adhesives Company, creating one of the flooring industry’s only full-service providers of high-performance specialty building prod-

ucts for all aspects of substrate preparation, floor covering, tile and stone installation systems and architectural concrete systems for commercial and residential applications. As a family-owned company built on a foundation of product performance and a global focus on training,

Ardex and Henry leads through training the customer.

What differentiates Ardex and Henry is the attention to comprehensive training, provided in English, French and Spanish through the global Ardex Academy locations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Many of the Academy locations are anchored near a manufacturing facility for the customer’s convenience. Locations include: Aliquippa, Pa. (corporate headquarters near Pittsburgh), Dallas, Ga., Mansfield, Texas, Stockton, Calif., Toronto, Ontario, Vancouver, B.C. and Latin America.

Ardex Academy technical training seminars provide classroom and hands-on training,

allowing attendees to work directly with Ardex and Henry high-performance products and learn the newest installation techniques. Attendees return to the jobsite with the latest

knowledge and skills necessary to increase job efficiency and maximize profits for their company. Premium technologies require critical training, and it is the goal of the Academy to benefit the specific needs of the contractor.

“It is important for the contractor or installer to be comfortable with

[his or her] installation system,” said Seth Pervarnik, Ardex and Henry director of technical service. “We spend a great deal of time ensuring an understanding for both product and application. Partnering with national trade associations also allows us to educate on the latest industry trends.”

Being a full-service supplier goes beyond having great products or systems; it requires a consistent and dedicated approach to support the contractor—both in the field and in training. Ardex and Henry continue to develop programs that support the customer while helping to support industry growth and success.



At Ardex Academy, attendees spend a great deal of time learning both product and proper application.



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## wpc

## LVT, WPC share spotlight

The two hottest products in the flooring industry today come from the same family with many of the same characteristics siblings might have. You might say LVT and WPC are fraternal twins, similar but different—each with their own strengths.

At the end of the day, many believe there's ample room for both categories.

### Parallel paths to success?

Some flooring executives say there is no reason LVT and WPC can't be successful, suggesting these two products will travel parallel growth paths rather than competing for the same customer or application. "Both have legs," said Scott Rozmus, president and CEO of FlorStar Sales, a top 20 distributor. "WPC is a very hot product, going well in all markets, and LVT is still red hot as well. There is an acceptance that a WPC core LVT is a different category than a dryback, traditional core LVT. We see dealers merchandising them separately."

There are installation scenarios in which WPC is the preferred product, as well as instances where LVT is the choice. "WPC is thicker and thus has a higher perceived value," said Pat Theis, vice president of sales and marketing at Herregan, a leading Midwest whole-

saler, "and because it's thicker, a quality WPC can hide subfloor imperfections better than LVT, which means less subfloor prep."

Others believe while WPC is the hot new product, LVT has been dominating the flooring landscape for several years.

### A rising tide lifts all boats

In the ever-expanding market for resilient flooring, the growing demand will allow both WPC and LVT to flourish, according to Billy Mahone III, manager of Atlas Floors Carpet One in San Antonio, who merged his laminate and resilient sections in his showroom in order to display a larger amount of LVT.

Lindsey Nisbet, head of product marketing and development for EarthWerks, which markets both LVT and WPC products, believes the products will coexist. "As the resilient category expands, it takes share from other flooring groups due to the diverse functionality, affordability, performance and styling. Depending on the performance needs of the application, LVT and WPC can each provide different attributes to fulfill the requirements of the customer. Therefore, while they seem to overlap in so



RSAs advise selling WPC-type based on color and design as well as performance capabilities.

many aspects, each one does carry certain qualities that make it stand apart from the other."

### Market differentiation

Many retailers are currently merchandising WPC within the LVT section, but some opportunistic dealers are displaying WPC in a new waterproof area. That makes sense because, as Josh Elder of Gainesville CarpetsPlus noted, we are talking about two different customers here. "The WPC customer tends to be a retail or residential customer," he said. "She is looking for a product that is easy to install and maintain. With LVT, we use a lot of it in multi-family and commercial work.

"In the end I think the market still needs both products, and as long as they stay priced right they will not cannibalize each other."

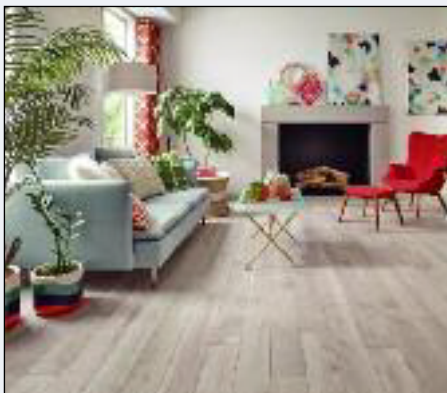
### A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: ARMSTRONG

## Flooring that feels like home

LVT-type products have been around for about half a century but recent innovations in both design and performance have helped to make LVT the fastest growing product in flooring. LVT offers, on average, better performance, lower maintenance, easier installation, beautiful visuals and more design options for specifiers than are available in other categories. LVT has evolved a great deal over the last few years with the designs, performance and installation options greatly enhanced. Armstrong Flooring in particular has won several awards for its original use of design and new technology, and introduced product innovations like Vivero luxury flooring with Diamond 10 technology and now Pryzm, its exclusive hybrid product offering the ultimate protection from dents, water, scratches and stains. It's a resilient floor but does not contain a vinyl layer like other LVT products. Pryzm will be transformative for the industry.

Aside from the flooring product itself, the

company has taken steps to create value for its customers through improved merchandising systems, selling tools and integrated marketing programs to create demand and pull-through



Pryzm, Armstrong's exclusive hybrid product, offers the ultimate protection from dents, water, scratches and stains.

sales for channel partners and Armstrong's customer-centered retail program, Elevate.

One of the biggest trends in the LVT market this year was the growth and expansion of WPC/PC (polymer composite) and combination LVT flooring with a composite core. Products like Luxe Plank with rigid core technology—offering a combination of LVT and PC—solve common challenges such as irregular subfloors; it also does not need to be acclimated before installation in most cases. Rigid core has helped boost sales in the resilient flooring category beyond the vigorous double-digit growth already afforded the category by booming sales of traditional LVT.

Armstrong continues to support U.S. manufacturing. Alterna, its engineered stone, is produced in Kankakee, Ill. Also, within the last few years, the company added an LVT plant in Lancaster, repurposing an unused building and outfitting it with state-of-the-art equipment to manufacture Vivero luxury flooring and Natural Creations with Diamond 10 technology.

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## wpc

## Understanding the distinctions in the variations

**W**PC, the composite product also known as enhanced vinyl plank, waterproof cork and even structural LVT, is generating excitement in the flooring market. Manufacturers are trying to take advantage of this opportunity by marketing their own version of WPC-type products that are differentiated by brand name or construction.

FCNews takes a closer look at what makes up some of these products.

### Amorim: HydroCork

New from Wicanders (an Amorim brand) comes HydroCork, a truly differentiated product that debuts at the highest end of the spectrum due to the features and benefits provided by its cork core vs. the more com-

The HydroCork board is waterproof and will not swell when exposed to humidity.

Decorative material  
with a protective wear layer  
Agglomerate cork  
composite core  
Underlay  
for a balanced structure



mon HDF core. While HydroCork's vinyl top layer offers the same realistic looks as other WPCs, it differs in three key areas: sound absorption, walking comfort and natural thermal insulation. HydroCork reduces walking sound up to 53% compared to laminate because of the cork core material, according to

independent testing. Third-party studies have also shown that after 45 minutes walking in contact with five different materials, cork has a much higher comfort perception than laminate, linoleum or ceramic. Cork also has the ability to insulate hot or cold temperatures from the subfloor, the company said.

### Armstrong: Vivero

Vivero is notable for its composition, specifically its rigid core made of

limestone and PVC, and the Diamond 10 technology used in its coating—a patent-pending, diamond-infused layer for extra durability. Diamond 10 allows for excellent scratch and stain resistance in addition to cleanability. According to Armstrong, the product is also waterproof; testing shows liq-

## lvt 101: wpc

## How to keep up with the fast-moving WPC/RCB categories

BY JAMANN STEPP

Director of marketing and product management, USFloors

**T**he excitement around the WPC (wood plastic composite) and RCB (rigid core board) categories continues to take the industry by storm. With so much movement in the category, specialty dealers need to keep up with the latest trends.

Here are several facts that all dealers need to know when it comes to WPC and RCB:

- WPC is a composite extruded core produced from calcium carbonate, wood/bamboo byproduct, virgin PVC and a foaming agent. These ingredients provide an extruded rigid platform that is also waterproof.

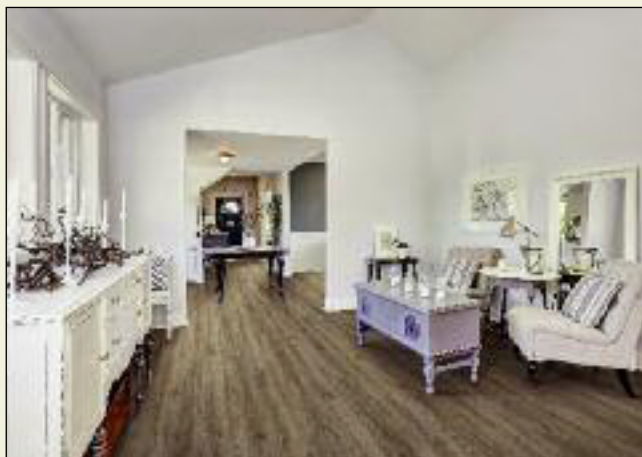
- RCB is a waterproof product produced in similar manner to WPC with the main difference in core ingredients. There is no PVC or foaming agents included in the manufacturing process, thus giving the product a thinner yet denser core but with added

weight. Rigid core products can be produced with no vinyl layer between the core and the décor film layer. Thus, the décor film is directly laminated onto the rigid core platform or in some cases, a digital print process creates the décor visual directly onto the core.

•As additional products in the composite waterproof category continue to hit the market, demand on raw materials can

become a challenge. Key components or raw materials in the manufacturing process have been and will be value engineered by manufacturers, resulting in a lesser quality product. When this happens quality, standards are driven down and the overall quality of the product suffers.

As composite core products continue to grow in terms of market share, it is imperative that retailers continue to educate themselves. Price should not be the only factor when selecting a trade partner. Ask the right questions when it comes to core density, dimensional stability and core ingredients.



COREtec is produced to specific and precise standards to ensure quality, performance and dimensional stability. Pictured is COREtec Plus Enhanced.

# of WPC

uid will bead on Vivero’s surface, making it easy to wipe away. Another standout feature of Vivero is its installation flexibility. All “good” SKUs come with simple and secure angle-angle locking technology while the “best” and “better” options both feature the IntegriLock system, which utilizes 5G technology from Välinge. All Vivero products are also offered in glue-down options.

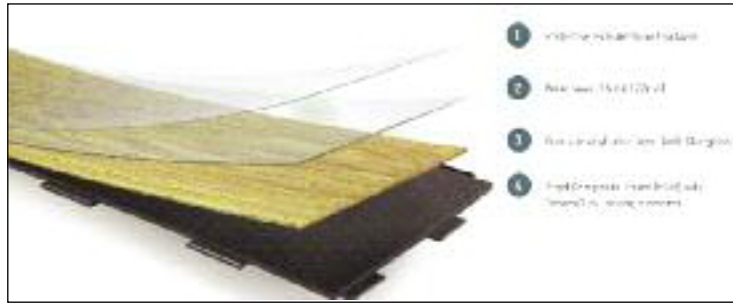
### Beauflor: Pure

Pure differentiates itself from the many composite products on the market due to its extruded rigid backing and the vinyl used—components that are made in Beauflor’s own facilities in Belgium. It is cost competitive with other products in the marketplace even though it is unique in terms of construction. And thanks to the Dream Click four-sided click installation system, planks and tiles can lock together without transition strips. Pure is also 100% waterproof and offers impressive sound ratings.

### USFloors: COREtec Plus

USFloors first developed the WPC category while researching composite outdoor decking that was created using a sophisticated extrusion process. The company saw an opportunity to incorporate the waterproof characteristics of this material into a new engineered flooring product. Add an LVT wear layer and a cork backing, along with further

**Continued on page 38**



The product’s rigid composite board is unaffected by high moisture levels.

## lvt 101: manufacturing

# Hot press vs. continuous press: A world of difference

BY GARY **KEEBLE**

Director of marketing, Metroflor

**A**t a time when the Made in America mantra increasingly applies to the rapidly expanding U.S. production of luxury vinyl tile flooring, Metroflor is touting the benefits of manufacturing its products in Asia, where there is a lot more than meets the eye. While domestic production focuses on the continuous press method—a long production line where the slab-making process is done in one fell swoop—the benefits of the hot press approach are numerous.

- **A denser LVT layer for better performance and resilience.** LVT produced using the hot press method generally performs better in static load

testing for residential indentation (ASTM F1914). Dents are more likely to rebound.

- **Deeper embossing during the hot press process.** This allows for crisper, more realistic-looking visuals, particularly with In-Register Embossing (IRE) finishes.

- **Greater quality control.** Throughout the various stages of hot press production, many more factory workers will

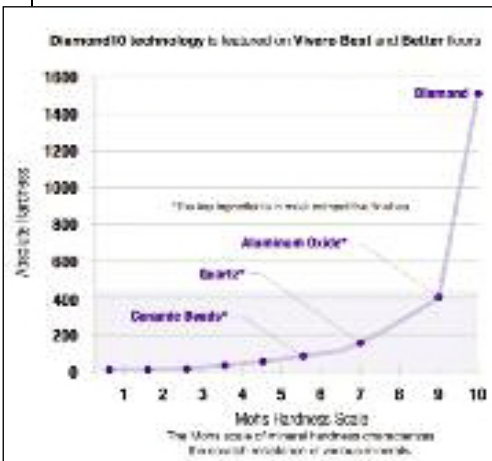
touch and see the product. Workers are empowered to remove product that does not meet stringent quality standards. The line production of the continuous press is less controlled, and quality issues are more likely to slip by and be passed along to the consumer.

- **Lower cost of manufacturing hot press products in Asia.** Because the hot press process is so labor intensive, it is



Deeper embossing during the hot press process allows for crisper, more realistic-looking visuals, according to Metroflor.

not feasible from a cost perspective to employ this type of manufacturing in the U.S., so companies take the lesser, continuous press route. By producing its LVT in China with this superior method, companies can be cost competitive while creating high-performance products in modern factories where good worker pay and treatment are the norm, not the exception.



Suppliers are looking to differentiate their products from the pack by touting specifications and performance capabilities.

wpc

Continued from page 37

research and development, and COREtec was born.

Now the pioneer of this category owns three patents for COREtec, which covers engineered waterproof plastic composite flooring as well as wall covering planks. Its latest offerings, COREtec Plus HD and COREtec Plus Design, employ embossed in register technology along with four-sided enhanced bevel edges for a more realistic visual. “The playing field is going to change,” said Jamann Stepp, USFloors’ director of marketing and product management. “This last patent

**Technology at its CORE**

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- provides superior stain resistance
- provides superior scratch resistance
- provides superior wear

**Luxury Vinyl Top Layer (1.0mm)**

- provides superior wear
- provides superior stain resistance
- provides superior scratch resistance
- provides superior color

**ARMORBEAD™ Core Structure (3.0mm)**

- provides superior moisture barrier
- provides superior stain resistance
- provides superior scratch resistance
- provides superior color

**Armored Edge Reinforcement (1.0mm)**

- provides superior moisture barrier
- provides superior stain resistance
- provides superior scratch resistance
- provides superior color

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- WILL NOT EXPAND OR CONTRACT!
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- NO UNDESIRABLE REQUIREMENTS
- Can be installed over other hard surface flooring
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- NO NEED TO ACCLIMATE FLOOR!
- WILL NOT TELEGRAPH without imperfections
- Composite core contains recycled wood & bamboo + virgin vinyl + limestone
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Fiber Layer  
Core  
Backing Layer  
Impact™ Core

Shaw Floors sees EVP as as category unto itself.

strengthened the context of the previous patent. Before people were trying to find loopholes with their products’ cores being made from [various] ingredients which then eliminates them from any patent infringement on what we’ve established. I think this last [patent that we were awarded] solidifies what the construction is really about.”

**Shaw: Floorité**  
This enhanced vinyl

plank with a Fold-n-Tap locking system is constructed of PVC and resins. Its Life-Guard core and Armorbead nano-ceramic finish prevents water from penetrating the floor; in fact, water can sit on the seams and joints for 48 hours and remain completely unaffected, the company said. What’s more, Floorité does not need to be acclimated; the product is able to go from 55°F to 85°F without growing or shrinking due to changes in temperature. Shaw has added two new Floorité platforms: Alto, which brings Floorité into the popular longer/wider category with 12 new 8 x 72 high-end looks, and Valore, an entry-level WPC.

**A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: NOVALIS**

**A pioneer continues to innovate**

Novalis is not new to the LVT flooring category. In fact, it is one of the pioneers. All Novalis makes and has ever made is luxury vinyl flooring, whether it’s glue down, clic, loose lay or the new multilayer flooring. Those two facts alone differentiate the Novalis brand from the majority of LVT product lines on the market today.

But upon closer examination, retailers will discover how Novalis is better than the typical LVT product offering. No other manufacturer gives you all five key qualities you’ll need in the LVT brand on your showroom floor.

**1. Expert service.** LVT is not a sideline for Novalis or something it just picked up along the way. The company knows the product and the market.

**2. Stunning designs.** Truth be told, Novalis has been behind some of the most realistic designs in planks and tiles since the 1980s. It understands that this is a fashion business, first and foremost.

**3. Complete product line.** With the Novalis residential line, dealers get the com-



Novalis has been behind some of the most realistic designs in planks and tiles since the 1980s.

plete range of sizes, warranties, thicknesses, cores and installation methods for their customer. They’ve got them all covered.

**4. Merchandising support.** In addition to products, Novalis offers smart and easy to assemble, space saving displays that go up in a jiffy

and sell like crazy.

**5. Quality all the way.** Since the company’s beginning, Novalis has set the standard for quality engineering that is environmentally responsible. What the company puts into its product is right there for everyone to see.

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PERFORMANCE  
TO THE

CORE

IN REGULAR

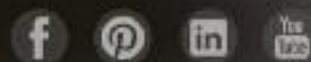
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**A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR:**  
**MANNINGTON**

## Adura and Adura Max: The complete package

Specialty retailers searching for the very best in design and performance need to look no further than Mannington. With Adura LVT and Adura Max WPC, Mannington offers the most complete line of luxury vinyl planks and tiles in a variety of designs, sizes and installation options for any application.

Mannington has long been known as the industry's style

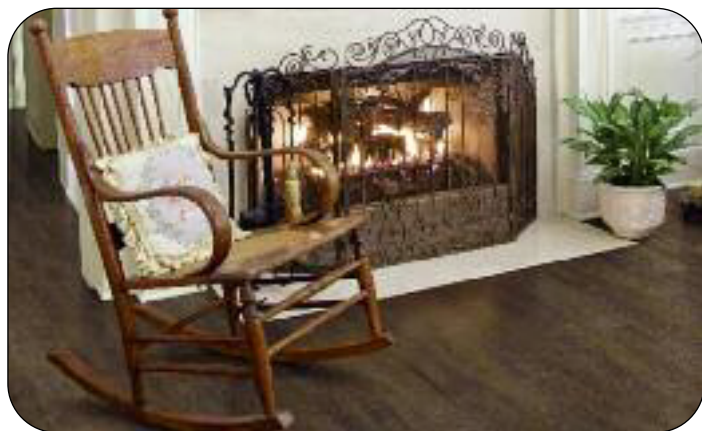
leader. Recent Adura Max introductions include Aspen, a 7 x 48 natural European oak plank design with natural fuming and grain pattern; and Graffiti, an urban-inspired concrete look in a 12 x 24 rectangle. In some cases, designs are adapted for both product lines. For example, Legacy, a luxurious Carrara mar-

ble look in a 12 x 24 rectangle, is available in both Adura and Adura Max. Every design is created in-house by Mannington's award-winning design team. Adura offers a variety of sizes and shapes, giving customers greater flexibility and design options. Tiles come in a 16 x 16 format, with rectangles measuring 12 x 24 inches. Planks are available in several different versions, including 4 x 36, 5 x 48, 6 x 18, 6 x 36 and 6 x 48. This gives consumers the opportunity to mix squares and rectangles, or planks and tiles, for a truly one-of-a-kind floor. Adura Max planks are 6 x 48 or 7 x 48, and rectangles are 12 x 24.

Most Adura products can be installed either with or without grout, and using glue down or LockSolid. Adura Max WPC is ideal for those areas where its trademark "waterproof, noise-proof, oopsproof" characteristics come into play—it's got an attached Ultra-Quiet pad and a waterproof HydroLoc Core. Mannington products feature ScratchResist patented surface coating with alu-

minium oxide to resist everyday household scratches and keep floors looking newer, longer.

The Mannington brand can't be found at big box stores; it's exclusive to the specialty retailer. Mannington also enforces a minimum Internet pricing policy so pricing cannot be undercut by online sellers.



Congoleum's Highland's collection offers a selection of split planks with a slight whitewash or 'pickled effect that carry the distinction of decade's old wood in a 100% waterproof format.

### issue

## Diversity of sourcing breeds variety at retail

By Reginald Tucker

The continued influx of imported resilient flooring products combined with incremental increases in domestic production is changing the dynamics of this highly competitive market sector. In some cases the market is seeing fluctuations in pricing; in others, a change in product mix and channel marketing strategy is evident.

One thing that virtually all resilient flooring manufacturers have observed is an increase in activity across market sectors and channels. "Certainly we're seeing a lot of movement in the builder/multi-family sector and the big box piece of the market that's primarily served through imported LVT," said Kurt Denman, chief marketing officer and executive vice president of sales, Congoleum. "Domestic residential is—and has been for quite a while—a bit of a stronghold for us in domestically produced LVT."

Other executives also see higher activity on the domestic side. "Right now the need to import resilient flooring from overseas is based on volume and the

capacity to produce is in line with strong customer demand," said Eric Erickson, vice president of marketing, Beauflor USA. "As the U.S. demand for resilient flooring grows, it is becoming important for domestic producers to not only keep up in volume but also with new product innovations. At Beauflor, we are now able to do that with our new U.S. manufacturing capabilities. As more competitive capacity comes to the states, along with increased investments in domestic innovation, it will challenge the companies importing from overseas to remain competitive."

Some domestic producers are already ramping up in that regard. Shaw, for example, has witnessed a significant amount of investment in resilient manufacturing in the U.S. with a number of new facilities being completed over the past year. "This includes our own LVT manufacturing facility in Ringgold, Ga.," said Clark Hodgkins, resilient category manager. "Domestic manufacturing provides significant opportunity

**Continued on page 46**



Legacy, an elegant Carrara marble look in a 12 x 24 rectangle, is available in both Adura and Adura Max.

leader. Recent Adura Max introductions include Aspen, a 7 x 48 natural European oak plank design with natural fuming and grain pattern; and Graffiti, an urban-inspired concrete look in a 12 x 24 rectangle. In some cases, designs are adapted for both product lines. For example, Legacy, a luxurious Carrara mar-





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## trendspotting

# Suppliers apply different spins on design

**W**ith LVT holding its strong position as the most popular flooring category—according to manufacturers and end users—companies that manufacture and design the product must stay ahead of the

curve. Unprecedented designs and updated technology allow leading companies to offer something new seemingly every year. There is no room for boring in a flooded, competitive category.

### Planks with non-wood visuals

While it seems that wood visuals in tile are everywhere today, LVT manufacturers on the cutting edge of design are making an attempt to think outside the box when it comes to keeping the category in its top ranking.

One example of such innovation is Mannington's Meridian product from its Adura line. Meridian planks are smaller in comparison to the longer, wider trend of late coming in at a 6 x 48 format. In analyzing what's hot

now, Mannington took the opportunity to create an evolving trend and translate it to LVT.



Pavilion from EarthWerks

“When you think about plank for the most part they have been about wood visuals,”

said Joe Amato, vice president, residential styling. “As we looked at porcelain trends, which kind of drive a lot of the imitated products [like vinyl], we were seeing a movement toward non-wood visuals in a plank format. So we thought it would be a great idea for LVT to create that same kind of visual. The challenge was getting a [non-wood] visual that looked nice in a plank, but we were able to come up with this concrete stone look. And then we gave it a lot of character and color variation. When these are down on the floor it looks like real marble or painted concrete.”

## lvt 101: trends

# How to talk design with consumers

BY PAMELA RAINEY

Vice president, hard surface product design, Shaw Floors

**D**o you ever have difficulty engaging with consumers on flooring design trends? Perhaps they come into your store spouting various design terms that sound like a foreign language to you.

What exactly are consumers looking for when they enter your store? If it's hard surface they're after, chances are it's a combination of the following:

**1. Long and wide planks.** The trend of longer, wider planks has taken hold and isn't showing any signs of stopping. Consumer magazines are covered with photography highlighting aesthetically appealing planks that have unprecedented lengths and widths. Many LVT collections now also feature an assortment of plank sizes for even greater realism. The look is perfect for today's open floor plans and focus on naturally inspired design. Do yourself a favor and make sure you have an impressive selection of this steadfast trend.

**2. Variety is the spice of life—and floors.** It has been interesting to watch the transformation of wood looks. Popular gray visuals are warming and incorporating taupe shades for a more

dynamic and diverse aesthetic. An emerging trend is greater color and size variation between planks so that resilient floors have a more realistic wood look. Be prepared with LVT that highlights realistic wood characteristics.

**3. Cersed finishes.** Keeping with the theme of color variation, cersed finishes—white fill in the wood grain—remains popular with consumers. Not only does this provide greater color depth and dimension by highlighting contrast, it also beautifully complements the continuing trend of white cabinetry. Today's design-savvy consumers are likely conscious of this style, so wow them with your own knowledge by pointing out how LVT with cersed finish looks will pop when paired with white cabinets and furniture.

It doesn't take a design degree to stay current on today's consumer trends. Use social media sites like Pinterest and Houzz to search for popular flooring looks. Consumer shelter publications are another great resource for staying in the loop on current trends. Better yet, why not have those magazines in store for consumers to browse

through while shopping? It will ease fears, encourage dialogue and promote credibility. Another helpful hint: Pay special attention to the latest trends in furniture and cabinetry as both almost always predict what is coming down the pike for flooring.



Shaw's Alto Mix collection cues in on the longer, wider trend.

### Bold colors

Some companies are also experimenting with untraditional plank designs by way of color. With more end users taking “risks” in interior design, there are more playful and unprecedented flooring options that can add a pop to an otherwise muted environment.

EarthWerks’ Cocktail collection features 7 x 48 glue-down planks that are offered in various hues of primary colors in addition to more traditional browns and grays. While there is the appearance of wood grain in these bold blanks, they do not exactly mimic a traditional hardwood floor. These options help the company “not only [hit] trends but also anything and everything in between,” said Lindsey Nisbet, product development and design. These planks also allow for expanded design capabilities as end users can play with color and design in an exciting new way.

### Textile inspiration

The latest from Karndean’s Da Vinci collection, soft tones from its Limed Oak designs mimic the visuals found in natural fibers and textiles. The lime-washed finish that accentuates the unique graining of each individual plank brings refined details of natural wood to the forefront of the overall visual.

A fresh offering from Mannington’s Adura product line is Vibe, a linear textile look that is offered in muted gray/tan color blends. The 16 x 16 tiles can be combined for a clean look or checkerboard layout. For further customization, Vibe has the option of grouting as well.

### Detailed embossing

As manufacturers consider ramping up their manufacturing processes they are able to bolster their product with new technology that becomes available. One design element that undergoes enhancements from this continued evolution is embossing.

IVC US’ Embellish, for example, features 11 SKUs that all feature the company’s advanced emboss in register technology for exceptional realism and heightened aesthetic appeal. Embellish planks are not only pleasant to the eye; the embossing creates depth and grooves you can actually feel.

“Our products feature lots of new enhanced embossing,” said Amie Foster, national accounts manager. “This wood grain emboss-

### Pure from Beauflor

ing follows the graining of the entire product. This is all done in an effort to continue to be innovative and create realistic products.”

In addition, USFloors’ exceedingly popular COREtec product now includes the Plus HD collection. Selections from Plus HD are highlighted by a high-definition print on embossed-in-register planks.



## lvt 101: trends

# Solid core offers dealers a golden sales opportunity

BY MICHAEL RASKIN  
CEO, Raskin Industries

The luxury vinyl tile market is so diversified these days that many new subcategories have emerged within LVT. That was not the case 20 years ago when all you had was glue down LVT. Today there are many variations besides glue down. Some of the new iterations over the last decade—including grip strip and flexible vinyl click—may be fading away but the new ones that figure to stick for awhile are solid core, WPC, loose lay and the work horse—glue down LVT.

The hottest new LVT subcategory—solid or rigid core—offers retailers an upsell opportunity; therefore, it is crucial for RSAs to understand the benefits solid core offerings can bring and know how to properly convey that message.

For example, compared to traditional glue-down LVT or solid-locking LVT, WPC products have a distinct advantage because the rigid core hides subfloor imperfections. In addition, the solid core allows for longer and wider formats. With WPC, it is not necessary to worry about the preparation LVT would require for use over cracks and

divots in concrete or wooden subfloors.

Why the difference? Quality WPC is thicker than traditional LVT and thus has a higher perceived value; and because it can hide subfloor imperfections better than LVT, there is less subfloor prep required. Consumers will love that it is a low maintenance floor, easy to maintain and suitable



The hottest new LVT subcategory is solid core. Raskin’s version is Acrylx, a solid surface waterproof floor available in three collections.

for all areas of the home. Plus, it looks great.

Going forward, solid/rigid core products will lead the category’s growth, particularly as variations intended to address specific price points and segments are introduced. To drive growth in this burgeoning subcategory—and give dealers a compelling story to tell—the industry must continue to focus on innovation and not stand pat.

## Installation

# Loose lay method has its advantages

Innovation in luxury vinyl tile continues as the product category picks up steam, thanks to an upbeat marketplace. Improvements in installation remain top of mind for manufacturers as DIY and BIY shoppers are seeking a fast, easy job in addition to the need for low-maintenance installation due to a lack of installers and, therefore, less time for education and training.

While dry back/glue down and click products remain popular options loose lay (or floating) has held solid ground. With many suppliers creating proprietary construction in addition to enhanced backing, end users are becoming more comfortable with true loose lay, some even skipping over perimeter glue. Here are five things retailers should know about the popular LVT installation option:

**1** **Ease of installation and replacement are major draws for loose lay products.** Installers with less experience or DIY customers can easily install LVT that doesn't require adhesive or an understanding of a click/locking system. Plus, a tile or plank can easily be removed and replaced without disrupting an entire room. "If there is a tile damaged beyond repair, that piece can literally be picked up, another tile can be taken from attic stock, it can be laid in and you are done," ex-

plained Emil Mellow, director of public relations, Karndean Designflooring.

**2** **Loose lay with an adhesive option is more cost effective as less glue is needed.** "An advantage for loose lay is perimeter glue, which compared to full spread, saves glue and time," said Clark



The latest LVT products are designed to install more easily than before.

Hodgkins, Shaw's resilient category manager. "There is some cost savings there and it is more convenient for installation purposes."

**3** **More companies are focusing marketing efforts on promoting and telling the loose lay story.** As noted by Lindsey Nesbit, head of product development and marketing strategy, Earth-

Werks, loose lay is ideal for the DIY market yet its features and benefits are often missed. With that, the company is remerchandising its Aurora product, mainly by integrating it into its complete Choice display. "We are giving more credibility to what Aurora is and adding it to our line. We have a full selling system with all categories, including click, loose lay and groutable. You can just drop this product and have an instant floor."

**4** **Construction—and weight—make the difference.** Raskin Gorilla Floors, for example, touts its product construction and exclusive Gravity Grip backing for its Elevations, Loft and Interwoven product lines. "Multi-layer construction is a key selling point," said Michael Raskin, president and CEO. "It lends to stability, particularly thanks to the fiberglass layer we include. The weight—two pounds a foot—keeps it down; that's why we call it Gravity Grip. You can actually see its thickness because there is no tongue or groove taking away from that."

**5** **Loose lay lends to creativity with design.** "Without any locking profile to consider, loose lay LVT offers more design flexibility to interior designers because you can easily mix tile and plank patterns, create patterns such as herringbone, etc."

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MOHAWK

# SolidTech: A new class of hard surface flooring

Mohawk SolidTech sets the new standard for greatness in luxury vinyl tile. In fact, it is a completely new, revolutionary class of flooring that gives consumers the strength and rich visual of hardwood along with the gorgeous style, durability and cleanability of luxury vinyl or laminate in one easy-to-install product.

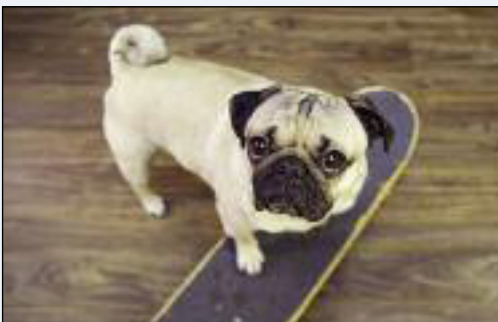
With SolidTech's fashion-forward color selections and sophisticated textures, customers can create bold, innovative floors and unforgettable rooms. Wider planks and unparallel low-frequency pattern repetition make SolidTech the most natural hard surface visual ever created.

Three gorgeous, distinctive SolidTech collections offer the latest trends and design options:

- Galvyn collection boasts 12 striking designs such as Nightfall, Pearl Platinum and

Castle Rock.

- Revella collection brings rooms to life with eight alluring colorways including Brownstone, Sandstone and Burnt Ember.



To illustrate how SolidTech can handle the everyday challenges of active pets, marketing features Doug the Pug, a pop culture phenomenon,

- Vershire collection showcases the widest plank design for enhanced elegance and inspired color selections for tremendous design potential.

In addition to lending brilliant, breath-taking style to any room, SolidTech has a Uniclic MultiFit locking system, which creates an impenetrable lock between flooring planks and makes SolidTech waterproof, odor-free and a breeze to clean.

SolidTech is also backed by Mohawk's All Pet Protection and Warranty. To illustrate how SolidTech can handle the everyday challenges of active pets, marketing features Doug the Pug, a pop culture phenomenon, to reach out to the diverse pet-owner market, which ranges from the older demographic to media-savvy, socially connected millennial shoppers.

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**MOHAWK**

## issue

Continued from page 40

for improved service in terms of time to market as well as innovation with it being located in close proximity to design teams and other flooring manufacturing resources.”

Other major domestic suppliers are increasing stateside production—particularly in LVT—to satisfy growing end-user demand. For some, this offers a clear advantage. “Our state-of-the-art U.S. LVT facility has improved our competitive edge on quality and service by taking out freight and duty costs while increasing speed in delivering innovation and leading designs to customers,” said Jamey Block, vice president, product management-resilient at Armstrong. “With labor, energy and transportation costs accelerating, importing carries the risk of rising prices and/or margin compression for Armstrong Flooring and our channel partners. We have invested millions of dollars in the domestic onshoring of LVT to produce resilient flooring in a cost-effective manner, improve styling and be more responsive in servicing key market segments.”

Industry executives are seeing an increase in domestic production capacity in the sheet vinyl and luxury vinyl plank and tile categories with several U.S. manufacturers ramping up production in newly constructed or re-tooled facilities. Relative to WPC-type products, which is USFloors’ forte, “All our WPC products [COREtec] are currently imported from Asia,” said Piet Dossche, USFloors’ CEO.

While anecdotal evidence points to a rise in domestic production, some industry observers are not convinced the additional capacity is showing up in the statistics.

“There’s no doubt that domestic production is starting to gain more momentum,” said Michael Raskin, founder and CEO of Raskin Industries, maker of the U.S.-made FloorNation brand. “From our view what we’re seeing is a lot of companies may have announced that they’re going to have domestic production, but they haven’t been able to just yet. At the same time, some companies have but they’ve had trouble.”

Other experts agree that, to a large extent, any impact from domestically produced LVT has not been fully realized. “There is a tremendous amount of competitive activity, with more and more brands entering the marketplace, both domestically produced as well as imported,” said Russ Rogg, president and

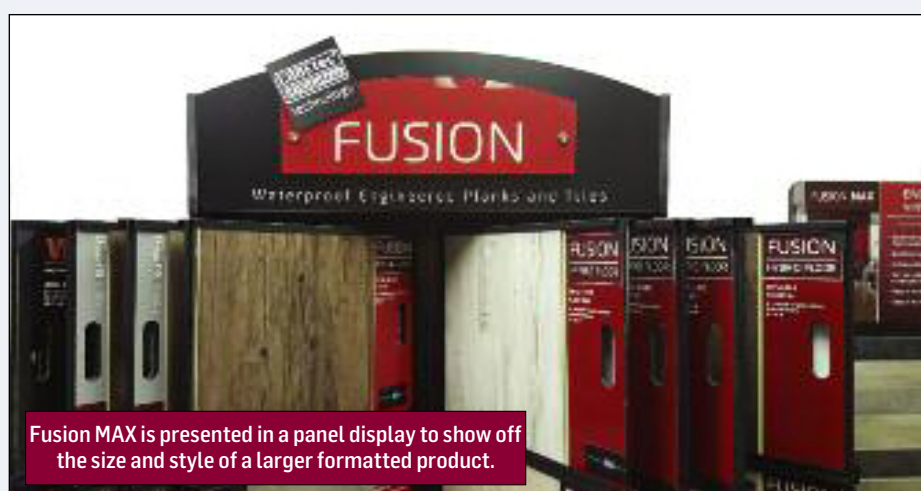
Some of Shaw’s resilient flooring products are produced locally. Shown is Woodland Mix.



CEO, Metroflor. “But it’s not as if we are seeing some type of tidal shift to domestic goods vs. imported products. The added domestic capacity is not fully operable at this time, so the majority of North America’s demand is still being met through imported products.”

Still, the volume being produced stateside can’t be ignored. “When you look at import vs. domestic, most of the domestic capacity is

just now coming online,” said Dennis Mohn, director of U.S. sales, Satin Flooring, which imports its resilient products from Asia.



Fusion MAX is presented in a panel display to show off the size and style of a larger formatted product.

### A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: WPS

## The turnkey solution is Fusion MAX

The Fusion brand from WPS is an extensive collection of 48 WPC products available exclusively through distribution to the dealer base. As the distributor arm of USFloors, it is a turnkey line that offers numerous distinct colors, sizes and textures only found in the Fusion brand. By using original COREtec technology, and being a Greenguard Gold Certified product, it gives retailers the assurance of quality and style their consumers are looking for.

The Fusion line consists of three collections, all in a 20 mil finish. Fusion original is a combination of 14 wood grains in a unique set random length look and four 12 x 24 tiles. Fusion Summit comes in nine cutting edge wood grains including 7 x 48 and three sharp 12 x 24 slate looks. Fusion MAX is an extra long 71-inch wood grain in eight visuals and four oversized 18 x 24 tiles. WPS complements the Fusion brand by offering six 12 mil wood grains called

Vision. Matching moldings round out the line to create the most comprehensive WPC distributor line on the market.

Fusion also offers a complete marketing program. The new Elite Display is a fashionable, compact unit that includes marketing cards and room scenes. The sample boards are professionally done both front and back to make selling easy for retailers. Fusion MAX is presented in a panel display to show off the size and style of a larger formatted product.

Fusion distributors showed tremendous growth in 2016 and this upward trend is gaining more steam in 2017. Visit [fusionvisionfloors.com](http://fusionvisionfloors.com) for more information.

“Our distributor partners make us successful,” said Jim Nielsen, vice president of sales for USFloors/WPS Distributor Channel. WPS is still looking to fill certain areas. Contact [jnielsen@wpssourcing.com](mailto:jnielsen@wpssourcing.com) for information.

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## state of the industry

Continued from page 3

Michael Raskin, president and CEO of Raskin Industries, said LVT no longer has to be “sold.” Customers and end users are seeking out the product instead of having it presented to them by salespeople as an option. “The market for LVT is growing. More people are using it and asking for it off the bat. It has taken on a life of its own. I think we’re in for a nice, long ride.”

### Installation

On the installation side of LVT, dry back or glue down remains the method of choice, capturing 55.3% of the market, estimates show. That’s down from 66.3% two years ago in terms of dollars. It is a less expensive product than click, evidenced by glue down’s 62.4% share in terms of volume. Click, however, is moving positively as it swelled from about 26% in 2014 to 40.8% in 2015. WPC, which some estimate to have approached \$200 million in 2015, is a big driver of that shift, experts say. Meanwhile, loose lay accounted for 3.9% of residential LVT sales in 2015.

“[Entry level] products particularly for

Suppliers are utilizing better technologies to mimic natural materials. Pictured is Parkhill from EartWerks.

multi-family and builder segments tend to focus primarily on glue-down LVT because that market is [value-driven],” Congoleum’s Denman explained. “We’ve seen growth in click, which tends to be more in residential, especially residential remodel. We are seeing some real growth in the multi-family use of click because they are better products not just at the opening price level but also at the next step up with options like 12 mil offerings. At the value end it’s always glue down because there is a worry about shrinking there and [glue down] is considered a more stable product. You can’t put a click installation system on an entry-level product because it is so thin the stability and integrity would be compromised.”

Metroflor’s Rogg said 2015 was the year the company finally saw the needle shift a little more from the usual 50/50 split in dry back/glue down vs. its Grip Strip or Clic. “It moved toward floating at 55% and dry back at 45%. I think that’s because our click business grew and we also began to see later in the year the benefits of the launch of our Engage Genesis [rigid core]



product. This is the first year we saw floating LVT overtake dry back.”

Some industry observers believe many customers are simply more comfortable with traditional glue down, especially when they have qualified installers familiar with the method available for the job. “I would say with the more conservative customers, if they have good installers, they’ll always push to glue it down,” Raskin said. “It is, in my opinion, the most

## lvt 101: design

### Go beyond the obvious when selling floors

BY PAUL MURFIN

President, IVC and Mohawk Resilient

**W**hen a customer shops luxury vinyl planks or tiles are your RSAs asking the obvious questions—or are they taking it a step deeper?

Are they asking about the amount of natural light in the space? What style or feeling is trying to be achieved? Is it a small or large area? These types of deeper questions can help build a stronger relationship and steer a customer toward a more confident decision.

Here are some design tips to guide your RSAs toward those deeper questions:

1. Lighter color designs: Lighter colors naturally reflect more light and can make smaller spaces feel larger, brighter and airy.
2. Mid-tone designs: Mid-tone colors, especially designs with higher color varia-

tion, are better at hiding dirt, grime and imperfections in high-traffic areas than very light or very dark floors.

3. Dark color designs: Dark floors add drama to any room.

4. Color and texture variation designs:

Designs that offer variation in color and texture can help hide the imperfections of subfloors and foundations that are not perfectly flat.

5. XL format designs: Extra-large format luxury vinyl planks and tiles work well in big, spacious areas because they provide a better sense of scale and make a space feel less busy by minimizing the amount of grout or joint lines.

6. Textile and linen look designs: Textile and linen looks are perfect for customers who want the soft look of a soft surface but with the ease of maintenance and cleanability of resilient flooring.

Bottom line: Go beyond the obvious. Ask deeper questions to sell better.



Lighter colors naturally reflect more light and can make smaller spaces feel larger, brighter and more airy. Pictured is IVC Vintage Wood.



proven product out there that has stood the test of time. [However], click is still growing on the residential side.”

### Domestic vs. imports

While more domestic LVT capacity is coming online, executives report U.S. production has yet to affect the market shift in terms of domestic vs. imported products. In addition, the level of comfort with Asian expertise in creating resilient products remains high for those companies that still produce overseas. The overall consensus seems to support a surge in domestic popularity with shorter lead times and more trusted goods, but that has yet to occur.

“Hardly any of the domestic production last year was up and running,” said Paul Murfin, president, IVC and Mohawk Residential. “You really saw no impact of domestic production on the U.S. market in 2015. I think in 2016 as domestic production starts to come on stream the market will continue to grow substantially to the point where it will absorb U.S. capacity.”

Murfin’s sentiments are supported by FC-News research, which revealed 78.7% of the \$1.451 billion LVT market is imported, a number that stood at 78.1% in 2014.

Raskin surmised much of LVT is still imported from Asia. Several manufacturers are currently operating like Raskin with product coming from both overseas and sites at home. This mix, proponents say, gives an edge in meeting customer needs in terms of quality, lead times and brand trust thanks to the Made in the USA label. “The majority [of LVT] is still from overseas and will be until multiple factories are up and running here—then you’ll see more of a shift,” he noted. “Dry-back value products from China are still a major market. The days of offering higher-priced products out of China are dwindling. Over time it’s going to be more difficult. Our plan is to be diversified. We’ve stuck to a formula: Value from China, technology from Korea and now service and pride from the USA.”

EarthWerks’ Train noted the element of trust that lies in Asian factories’ expertise. “So much of the knowledge and experience in LVT was created in Asia, and that country still has the bulk of the capacity and understanding of these products. U.S. production will continue to gain strength, but [some expect] it to be less than half of the capacity needed to service the market. For all of the different performance and styling options available in LVT there lies a variety of corresponding production needs. There is no ‘one-stop shop’ for fulfilling all of these attributes in one place.”

Many resilient suppliers, including Armstrong, are investing in the LVT category.

### Impact of WPC

There’s also the issue of internal competition within the resilient category. Considerable gains can also be attributed to the growth of the sub-category often referred to as WPC/composites/rigid-core products and the various derivatives.



## Lvt 101: installation

# Selecting the right glue for the job

BY BEN MACK

Director of marketing, Ardex and Henry

Thirty years ago, flooring installers had one bucket of glue on the truck labeled “multipurpose,” and it was used on just about every job where an adhesive was required. Floor covering options were simple, as well, with carpet and sheet vinyl making up a large portion of the market, particularly in the residential arena. Much has changed in the ensuing 30 years as many new flooring options have made their way to market providing the end-user with more design choices than ever.

Choosing the right adhesive requires several considerations and makes the difference between a long-lasting and reliable bond and an embarrassing and costly failure. Installers need to be knowledgeable about the floor covering and where it will be installed. For each installation, it is important to understand the unique characteristics of the adhesive and its curing process, floor makeup and the manufacturer’s recommendations.

Today’s array of floor coverings are manufactured from a variety of materials, mostly manmade, including some with recycled content, that require installers to think twice about how to create that perfect bond between finished flooring and substrate. From felt back to fiberglass, floor coverings have led adhesive formulators to develop specific

adhesives with characteristics that provide the right initial grab, tack time and curing process.

In addition to the adhesive and floor covering, the condition of the substrate is a major consideration that should never be overlooked. Along

with proper mechanical prep, installers should take the time to address moisture issues in new construction or renovation to prevent a catastrophic flooring failure.

Fast-track construction schedules can spell disaster for any flooring installation if proper RH testing is not done.



For each installation, it is important to understand the unique characteristics of the adhesive and its curing process,

Installers need to remediate with a moisture control system if necessary and make sure the RH reading of the slab is within the tolerances of the adhesives and of the floor covering.

While navigating the maze of highly engineered adhesives, complex manufactured floor coverings and RH testing can be daunting, it’s important to remember these pieces of advice: First, always check the flooring manufacturer’s recommendations. Every installation, from substrate prep and moisture remediation, to point load and type of floor covering will be unique. No. 2: No matter how long the professional has been installing, read the label to confirm if any change to installation recommendations has occurred.

## Installation

# There's more than one way to lay down LVT

By Ken Ryan

The benefits of luxury vinyl tile are not limited to the product's durability, versatility and aesthetics. LVT is also easy to install, whether by glue down, click or loose lay.

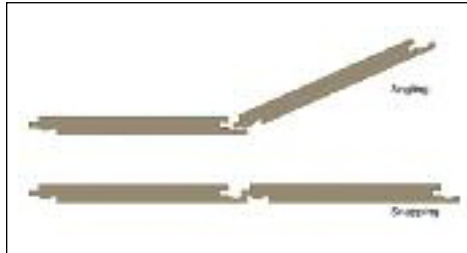
That said, the importance of correctly matching method and application is a conversation dealers must have with their customers, according to retailers and manufacturers who market LVT.

### Glue down

FCNews spoke with several retailers who prefer the glue-down method because it is a safe choice and a process with which their installers are familiar. "Recently we've started selling glue down," said Jeremy Wings, co-owner of 3 Kings CarpetsPlus in Fort Wayne, Ind. "The material itself is less expensive and our guys actually like installing it better. We now feel like the glue-down product is less likely to have problems down the road."

Bill Huss, owner of D&M Flooring America in Appleton, Wis., said glue down typically provides a more stable finished product, while Barry White, owner of Carpeteria in Santa

Clarita, Calif., said with glue down "there's no hollowness, it's more secure to the floor, a much better installation."



Uniclic's system enables users to engage the flooring panels via two methods—angling and snapping, making it one of the easiest locking mechanisms.

Michael Raskin, president and CEO of Raskin Industries, said many veteran installers are familiar with the glue-down approach and prefer that method because they are accustomed to it. If there is one disadvantage to glue down installations, it is that it takes longer to complete than loose lay and can be more expensive. "In a market with a high labor rate, that could be an issue because it comes down to

time, and time is money," Raskin said.

### Grip-strip/loose lay

Floating and grip-strip LVTs serve as more than a quick and easy glueless installation option; they're often the only suitable solution for high-moisture areas that would damage wood-based products or destabilize an adhered vinyl installation, according to experts.

Grip-strip is increasing in popularity as a faster method of installation, targeted to high-traffic commercial environments.

Retailers who opt for loose lay say a tile can be replaced easily if damaged or flooding occurs. Karndean Designflooring developed a loose lay plank that boasts superior dimensional stability, does not curl and does not move or gap as long as it is correctly installed.

Many loose lay systems must be installed flush against the wall and do not require glue or tape. A problem could arise in settings in which no two walls are straight. Some companies came up with a solution to irregular-shaped spaces: a double-sided tape and adhesive designed to secure perimeter tiles and planks.

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MARQUIS INDUSTRIES

# Sales of LVT products continue to surge

2016 was a record year for Marquis Industries both in carpet and hard surface products. The huge percentage growth in hard surface was driven by the feverish sales of LVT products. While sheet vinyl, wood and other categories

had some growth in 2016, the strongest growth came with the popularity and durability of LVP, LVT, WPC and SPC (solid PVC core) products. Marquis has committed to a concentration of effort in these product categories in 2017 with

new constructions, specifications and visuals.

Some companies are experts in sheet vinyl or wood products. Marquis is now a premier source for the new "waterproof" categories of LVP, LVT, WPC and rigid core products. Research is under way to improve expansion/contraction, design and other issues.

Marquis continues to certify and recertify the safety and quality of products while offering the best in value. Marquis' success has always come from one simple business model: "Quality products at value pricing." Marquis has always been efficient in sourcing and manufacturing and is one of the lowest-cost producers in the industry. The company stays close to its customer base discussing customer needs and trends in pattern, design and color. Williamsburg, one of the hottest new looks introduced at Surfaces, is a new multi-width pattern designed with the latest in grays and tan/browns. This WPC product, measuring 7 x 48 with a 20-mil ceramic bead finish, was a big hit. Marquis is in the midst of developing new designs in "high-contrast" wood patterns in wider width and longer length boards.



Realistic patterns continue to distinguish the luxury vinyl and WPC categories, such as this offering from Marquis.

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## cleaning and maintenance

# Five quick and dirty tips

Once a retailer has closed an LVT sale, it's important to properly advise the customer on how to care for her new floor. The right cleaning and maintenance means a lower chance of the end user contacting the dealer from whom she purchased with complaints that could have been easily avoided.

For the first 24 hours, a newly installed LVT floor should remain untouched; cleaning should be avoided for the first two days. A number of manufacturers suggest using protective mats on floors to help protect against dirt, grit and any substances that can cause wear or damage. Rubber- and latex-backed, along with coco-fiber mats should be avoided as they cause staining and discoloration of the floor.

Regular cleaning for LVT is fairly basic. Loose debris should be removed with a soft broom/sweeper or dust mop. After that, a damp mop with a recommended cleaner is ideal. Bleach, household cleaners or any other detergents should not be used on LVT. Some LVT manufacturers make their own cleaning solutions, an easy sell when closing the deal

Cleaning products provide add-on sales opportunities for retailers.



on a new floor.

Spills should always be cleaned up immediately to avoid any residue or spots and stains. A number of common products such as nail polish, lipstick and permanent markers can cause discoloration, so any contact they have with LVT should be addressed right away.

The following steps work best when cleaning spills that may potentially cause damage:

1. Wipe immediately with a paper towel or cloth.
2. Spots that have already dried might be removed using a plastic scraper.
3. The area should then be washed with a recommended cleaning agent (diluted) using a damp cloth or sponge.
4. More stubborn spots might be removed with a nylon sponge.
5. Should the spot still remain, moisten a cloth with clear, odorless mineral spirits and

rub with circular movements over the whole area (the mineral spirits should only be used in a well-ventilated space).

If a consumer is having LVT installed in a room with furniture, protective pads or cups should be applied to the legs/feet

of the pieces. This will help prevent any denting, scratches and/or discoloration. Heavy furniture or appliances that will stay in place for long periods of time should be equipped with flat, non-staining composition furniture casters or cups of appropriate size. Swiveling casters should be applied to any mobile appliances and furniture, and should be at least 2 inches in diameter with non-staining hard rubber treads at least 3/4-inch wide.

### Other suggestions

- Make sure curtains, blinds and drapes are closed during periods of strong sunlight. Too much exposure to the sun can cause fading or discoloration.
- Avoid wearing high heels—they can cause scratching, scuffing and dents.
- Be careful when using matches, lighters, etc., as high heat and flame will cause damage.

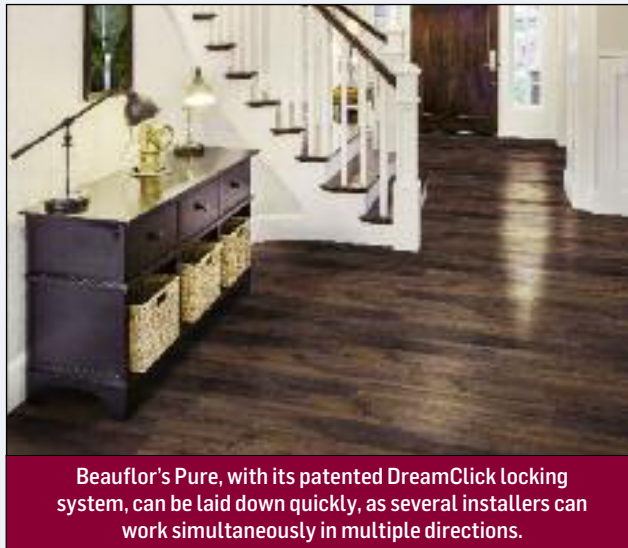
## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: BEAUFLOR

# Rigid board composition sets Pure planks apart

Beauflor is a premium brand known for its high-quality products. With state-of-the-art technology for the production of luxury vinyl planks, the company is focused on developing products that benefit consumers through smart innovations and beautiful style. The Beauflor Pure luxury vinyl planks are stunning visually and provide sound absorption and faster installation.

Because of the patented DreamClick locking system, the product can be installed quickly due to the fact several installers can work simultaneously in multiple directions. Beauflor offers vinyl planks with a rigid board (RCB) composition, meaning Pure planks can be installed directly on existing tile.

For builders, architects and flooring subcontractors, Beauflor Pure planks are efficient and profitable with many consumer benefits. Pure



Beauflor's Pure, with its patented DreamClick locking system, can be laid down quickly, as several installers can work simultaneously in multiple directions.

luxury vinyl planks are durable and sound absorbing, providing a perfect solution for both commercial and residential applications. In areas

of high foot traffic, Beauflor Pure vinyl planks wear beautifully—continuing to look new long after installation. Beauflor Pure planks also fit perfectly with today's open concept floor plans. Since the planks are waterproof, they can be used seamlessly from living rooms to kitchens and bedrooms to bathrooms. The industry-leading sound absorption rating means the planks are ideal for busy households and multi-family buildings.

For the consumer, Beauflor is the perfect solution for any room. Beauflor planks are cost effective, durable and quiet, making it a smart choice for any home. The planks provide the same beauty as a hardwood or stone floor for a fraction of the cost. The planks come in a wide range of styles and colors to customize a home to any taste or ambiance. Since the planks are 100% recyclable, homeowners will have peace of mind knowing the product is environmentally friendly.



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## sustainability

# Leveraging LVT's eco-friendly attributes

By Ken Ryan

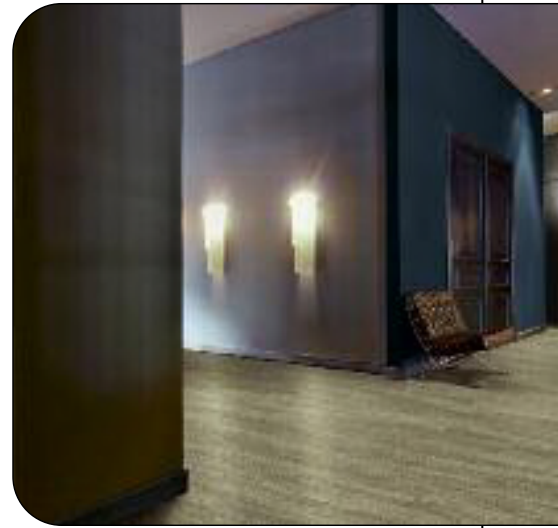
**W**hile promoting the many facets of LVT to consumers, color and design are two of the major selling points of LVT, retail sales associates say. But experts say the category's sustainability story is equally important as consumers continue to place a greater emphasis on products that are environmentally responsible.

### Green design

Many LVT suppliers, mindful of the design trend, are developing products with environ-

LVT manufacturers are making it a point to openly list the ingredients that go into their products. Shown is Mannington's Commercial Walkway in northern sky.

mentally conscious consumers in mind. "We provide clean, safe and conducive work environments in the communities we manufacture," said noted Robert Langstaff, director of design, Metroflor. "We are transparent about our products and what they contain. We continually strive to improve all facets of providing the product—from manufacturing, design and



service to materials, delivery and reclamation."

Many vendors are making a concerted effort to develop products that include more recycled content to help eliminate waste and pollution while creating eco-friendly production processes. For example, Mohawk offers options with renewable, bio-based and recycled content, made in America to help achieve LEED points. Karndean floors are recyclable, phthalate free, emit low VOCs and qualify for LEED points.

Tarkett reports it is focused on developing Cradle 2 Cradle certified products, and its ReStart program takes back product at end of life.

Novalis reports its AVA collection features LVT products that meet rigorous standards. "Our LVT is made with virgin vinyl, so there are no questions regarding the ingredients in our product," said Mark Hansen, vice president, North America. "Plus, we provide complete transparency with EPD, HPD and Declare labeling. In addition, our AVA flooring is made with bio-plasticizers and is therefore 100% phthalate-free."

### A higher standard

When promoting LVT's green attributes to the homeowner, experts say RSAs should openly leverage the product's reputation in the A&D community. While the contract flooring specification process is much more stringent than, say, selecting a product for the average consumer's kitchen, it certainly can't hurt to allude to the product's success in the commercial/Main Street arena.

LVT's green attributes, suppliers say, help allay any concerns specifiers or end users might have when meeting LEED building requirements, for example. "It's important that

## lvt 101: sustainability

# Modern linoleum: a 'natural' wonder

BY LORI LAGANO  
Marketing manager, Forbo

**T**he trend toward wood-look vinyl flooring has resulted in a sea of neutral, earth-tone products that offer similar performance capabilities as their competitors. Consumers looking for healthy flooring options that look as good as they perform may be surprised to learn their ideal solution has actually been around for over a century. While people may still refer to dated vinyl as "linoleum," it's a misnomer worth setting straight. True linoleum is beautiful, durable and uniquely sustainable. First introduced over 150 years ago, linoleum has well-known health benefits. Made from linseed oil, pine rosin, wood floor and jute, the natural ingredients of linoleum are essentially the same. However, state-of-the-art manufacturing techniques have improved production, performance and design capabilities for modern linoleum. Today, linoleum is available in a vast array of colors and patterns in sheet, modular tile and "click" floating floor formats, allowing customers to easily create beautiful, custom looks for their home. While vinyl products tend to focus on neutral colors and wood looks, linoleum brings vibrant colors, fresh visuals and numerous design possibilities to



Linoleum offers numerous design possibilities. Pictured is Forbo's Marmoleum Click CinchLOC.

the mix.

Linoleum's natural ingredients provide anti-static properties to repel dust and dirt, making the floor easy to clean while reducing exposure to allergens and contributing to better indoor air quality. Linseed oil provides linoleum with naturally occurring antimicrobial properties that halt the breeding of harmful microorganisms without chemical additives, giving customers peace of mind and protection. Linseed oil also continues to harden over time, improving the products durability over the course of its life. Cork backing adds comfort and warmth underfoot.



the designer really understands the product they are specifying for those end-use applications,” said Al Boulogne, vice president, commercial residential business, Mannington Commercial.

LVT is becoming completely transparent with the advent of HPDs (Health Product Declarations) and EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations), making it 100% recyclable and sustainable, said Keith Bensch, vice president of sales, Shannon Specialty Floors. “Newer LVT in PVC-free formulations are inherently sustainable and are seeing increased usage.”

Mannington and Shannon Specialty Floors are not alone. Shaw Contract’s LVT lines are rigorously tested to ensure they suit the needs of commercial environments, said Robert Stuckey, director for hospitality and retail, Shaw Contract. “Because sustainability is typically a requirement, the A&D community is more knowledgeable, expecting transparency around the products they specify.”

### Floorscore certified

RSAs can also rest assured knowing that many of the LVT flooring products available today are Floorscore certified for indoor air quality, which essentially means that a flooring product is independently certified by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) to comply with the volatile organic compound emission criteria of the California Section 01350 Program. In short, Floorscore certification means healthier, cleaner air for both installers, homeowners and commercial end users alike.

### Sustainable over the long term

Not only are many LVT products manufactured according to stringent environmentally friendly standards, they are also less taxing on the environment in terms of upkeep and maintenance. Unlike some resilient floors, LVT does not require a surface polish, which would have to be stripped and reapplied at least annually. “The products used to strip the polish off of the floors are toxic and can adversely affect ground water,” Dale Carson, vice president of international sales and national accounts, Shannon Specialty Floors. “Our LVTs are LEED certified and can be recycled.”

In fact, most LVT floors can be easily and quickly cleaned with a damp mop and a mild cleanser if needed. As Rochelle Routman, Metroflor’s chief sustainability officer, explains: “LVT in bathrooms, for example, is a wonderful alternative to tile because there are no grout lines to clean — again avoiding harsh chemicals like bleach — and there is more uniformity in appearance.”

Even when LVT reach the end of their lifespan, they often can be reclaimed and repurposed into new flooring, thereby further perpetuating LVT’s green story. For instance, Armstrong’s On&On Recycling Program helps clients save money while also keeping flooring materials out of landfills. “A national program, On&On Recycling is a closed-loop process, meaning reclaimed materials are recycled into new Armstrong flooring,” said Howard Montgomery, director of design. “The On&On Recycling Program is flexible — reclaiming our own LVT and VCT flooring, as well as other qualified products, including competitors.”

## Lvt 101: selling

# Creating an LVT loyalist

BY LARRY BROWDER  
CEO, Karndean Designflooring

Vinyl has certainly come a long way in the past few decades. So much, in fact, luxury vinyl tile is now a category all its own. However, some consumers struggle to get past the “V” word, and are filled with thoughts of peel-and-stick vinyl sheets from the 1970s. As a retailer, how can you get past these misconceptions about today’s LVT and even convert a shopper looking for another type of hard surface floor into an LVT loyalist?

First, gauge the customer’s knowledge. Does she know the difference between old vinyl and LVT? Find out what she might not like about vinyl. Walk her over to your top-selling LVT display and let her see and feel the difference for herself. If you hadn’t told her it was a vinyl floor, would she have known?

Once you have an idea of a customer’s mindset, educate her on the benefits of LVT. How much time would she like to spend cleaning her floors? Does she have pets or children at home? Natural materials require constant upkeep, easily scratch and are susceptible to water damage. Nowadays, most fami-

lies are constantly on the go and will welcome the idea of a low maintenance option if it looks and feels authentic.

Help your consumer visualize LVT’s potential. If the con-



For the consumer seeking a high-end look without a high-end budget, LVT is the perfect solution. Pictured in Karndean’s Korlok.

sumer is seeking a high-end look without a high-end budget, LVT is the perfect solution. Plus, LVT is available in colors that nature just doesn’t produce. Turn to a company’s digital tools or past installation photos to drive the point home, and work with the customer to create her dream floor and secure the sale.

Evaluate, educate and create—three steps to creating an LVT loyalist.

Often imitated, never surpassed.

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