

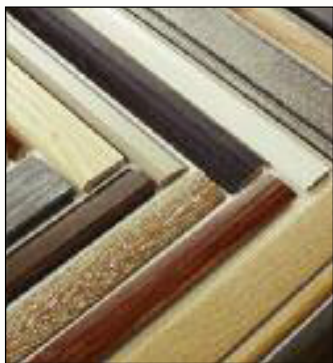
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## SPOTLIGHT



### Moldings made to match

New transitions, trims designed to coordinate with the variety flooring products and visuals available today.

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Scan this QR code with your smartphone to link to our featured site.

## POWER OF BRANDS



## QUALITY PRODUCTS, SERVICE STAND OUT IN A CROWD

By Lindsay Baillie

A well-known brand has great influence in the mind of the consumer; it can affect her positively or negatively, research shows. According to Latham & Co., a brand consultancy, a strong brand contains incredible power—not just how it is perceived in the world, but also how it redefines the competitive landscape, connects with prospects and influencers, creates memorable experiences, builds lasting relationships and helps

Continued on page 12

## Armstrong plans to consolidate wood flooring plants

By Reginald Tucker

Armstrong Flooring has announced plans to consolidate its wood manufacturing operations, paring production down to six plants in the U.S. The move will result in the closure of two manufacturing facilities—Jackson, Tenn., and Vicksburg, Miss.—in the fourth quarter of this year. The closings will result in the elimination of more than 300 jobs—215 in Jackson; 93 in Vicksburg.

According to Don Maier, president and CEO, the initiative is designed to better align Armstrong's wood flooring manufacturing capacity with its current customer demand and to leverage productivity benefits realized across its wood flooring operations. "Although this change is necessary due to the natural evolution of the market, closing a plant is always a difficult decision because we recognize

the impact it will have on valued members of our team. Our co-workers in Jackson and Vicksburg have produced quality flooring used by customers across the country and have supported the



Don Maier, Armstrong Flooring CEO, expects the consolidation of plants will improve productivity.

development and success of Armstrong Flooring. For that, we thank them and will offer them our support as they prepare for their next opportunities."

Continued on page 29

## CCA convention provides forum to share practices

### FLOORING AMERICA DEALERS CHALLENGED TO CHANGE THE PARADIGM

By Reginald Tucker

SALT LAKE CITY—"Focus on selling the project, not just the product." That was the advice Keith Spano, president of Flooring America, offered retailer members during

his opening day remarks on day one of the convention. It was a theme that would permeate throughout the duration of the three-day event.

"There are many opportunities to add incremental sales while also protecting your core business," Spano said, citing paint, paint, kitchen and bath, window treatments, chair rails, decorative wall base, etc., as potential new businesses. "These all have the potential to make you stand out

Continued on page 28



Keith Spano

### CARPET ONE STRATEGY HINGES ON 'OWNING THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE'

By Reginald Tucker

SALT LAKE CITY—Competition for the consumer's disposable dollars has never been more fierce, especially when it comes to renovation/remodeling projects. To gain an advantage, experts say, it's critical that retailers take complete ownership of the entire sales process—from the research phase all the way through installation—if they are to close more deals and generate repeat business.

That was the underlying message Carpet One management conveyed to its members in attendance here at the group's summer convention. During his



Eric Demaree

opening welcome speech, Eric Demaree, president, Carpet One Floor & Home, challenged retailers to "own the customer service experience," beginning

Continued on page 26



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## my take

# Ten ways to maximize your store as your brand

**A**s you thumb through this edition, our annual Power of Brands, issue, you will find verbiage submitted by some of the industry's leading manufacturers on what they believe separates their brand from the pack. That is expressly directed at you, the retailer. But I will pose this question: How do you differentiate your brand to consumers? After all, your store is your brand. If you can't tell me how your store is different than the one down the block, then you probably aren't. (Don't tell me you have better salespeople. They didn't graduate from MIT and you didn't hire Ford models.)

Remember, your store is your brand. Most consumers have awareness of only a handful of flooring brands, if that many. So much of their decision as to where to shop and hopefully purchase has to do with your store and brand. With that said, I recently came across an article that delved into the rules retailers should follow for creating a strong brand in their marketplace.

**1. Your brand must communicate your store's image.** Retail brands should serve as reinstatement of your store's identification. It's important to note that true brands build customer loyalty, even through economic downturns and recoveries. The quality of the merchandise should be communicated effectively. For instance, you can instantly tell the difference between Target and Saks Fifth Avenue every step of the way, from the exterior to

the signage and throughout the interior.

**2. Top management must be committed to supporting the brand's strategy.** Private-label branding should not be a function of individual buyers within a category that are autonomous from each other. Top management needs to synergistically work with a skilled marketing team. Your store brand must be broader than any individual item in the store or single category. XYZ Flooring must encompass carpet, wood, tile, LVT, etc., and be overarching.

**3. Create your store brand cohesively.** It's not usually a good practice to imitate other brands, at least not if your purpose is to build store brand or company name equity. You don't want consumers to think of you as "like Target" or "like Nordstrom" or like anything else for that matter.

**4. Define your store's point of differentiation.** Retailers need to know and understand their target consumer, and the store brand should reflect the store-branding philosophy and image of the store.

**5. Be unique to generate curiosity.** Invest in innovation to maintain the leading edge and reinforce brand equity. Refrain from "look-alike" marketing. Doing so will only breed confusion. You must build consumer confidence that your store is better.

**6. Design and implement attractive store merchandising.** Always be aware of the quality perception compared to your

competition. Analyze how best to present the products to the consumer and avoid the rubber-stamp approach. You will also want an overall, consistent look that consolidates store brand imaging. (The buying groups do this effectively.) The consumer visualizes a product through merchandising. Then she forms an opinion about value and performance.

**7. Position your store brand effectively in each product category.** Retain your stylistic relationship to the overall private brand program.

**8. Your brand must reflect the price, quality and value strategy of your store.** In other words, market from the position you're in. There is such a thing as "over doing" it, and it will hurt your credibility with the consumer.

**9. Renew excitement with each new product you carry.** New products deserve attention and fanfare. Retailers own their showroom and the ability to create and stimulate interest. Use advertising, promotions and point-of-purchase displays to create the right attention.

**10. Monitor your brands constantly.** Make sure each brand you carry reflects your own brand identity. Analyze consumer shopping habits and performance. Never become complacent. Make modifications if necessary.

Steven Feldman

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### postmaster

Send address changes to FLOOR COVERING NEWS, subscription Dept., 151 Fairchild Avenue., Ste. 2, Plainview, NY 11803 Floor Covering News (ISSN-10794174) is published biweekly by Roel Productions Inc., 550 W. Old Country Road, Ste. 204, Hicksville, NY 11801. Periodicals postage paid at Hicksville, NY, and additional mailing offices.

## Getting social with fcnews

## IN THE NEWS

## Armstrong Flooring names new senior VP, CFO

LANCASTER, PA.—Ronald Ford has been tapped to the position of senior vice president and chief financial officer, Armstrong Flooring, effective Sept. 1. In this role, he will have oversight of global finance and accounting functions. Ford reports to Don Maier, president and CEO.



Ronald Ford

"I look forward to having Ron join our team," Maier said. "He brings a wealth of experience in finance and general management leadership roles, and his focus on strategic thinking and driving results will be an asset for Armstrong Flooring."

Before joining Armstrong Flooring, Ford served as senior vice president and chief financial officer at Silgan Containers. Prior to that, he held various leadership positions at St. Clair Vision and Wells Real Estate Funds.

Ford earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Tennessee, a master's degree at Vanderbilt University and an executive doctorate at Case Western Reserve University.

## CCA Global Partners acquires Romano Consulting Group

MANCHESTER, N.H.—CCA Global Partners has



purchased the intellectual property assets of Romano Consulting Group. The goal is to combine the expertise gained from Romano Consulting Group with CCA's proven track record of helping independent businesses in the floor covering and home improvement space.

"This acquisition helps us accelerate the growth of our consulting services," said Howard Brodsky, chairman and co-CEO of CCA Global Partners. "We are now able to offer a more complete, comprehensive consulting service to our members."

David Romano, the founder of Romano Consulting Group, has begun the process of integrating his programs and tools into CCA's Consulting department's programs and educational initiatives.

## NeoCon East opens registration, previews keynote lineup

PHILADELPHIA, PA.—Registration is now open for NeoCon East, set to take place Nov. 15-16 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. NeoCon East will feature nearly 200 companies with products across vertical markets such as workplace, healthcare, education, public space, hospitality, retail and government. Programming will include more than 25 CEU-accredited seminars.

The keynotes slated for this year include: Alex Gilliam, founder and director, Public Workshop; David Insinga, AIA, chief architect, U.S. General Services Administration's Public Buildings Service; Suzette Subance Ferrier, IIDA, studio design director at TPG Architecture; and Zena Howard, managing director at Perkins & Will, AIA, LEED AP.

Online registration is free and available at [neoconeast.com](http://neoconeast.com). CEU seminar registration will be available online Sept. 6.



Before and after: One lucky homeowner's old flooring was replaced with Shaw Floor's EPIC Plus wood in Yukon maple.



## Shaw, Houzz team up for makeover

DALTON—Shaw Floors recently marked its 100<sup>th</sup> flooring query on Houzz with a surprise for one lucky homeowner who had posted a query on remodeling her kitchen. The company, which launched its presence on the popular home design site back in 2013, answered a query from Houzz user Theresa Wells by offering to provide 1,000 square feet of flooring at no cost.

"Houzz is a priority for our digital marketing team as we continue to see the platform grow with users who are actively researching, dreaming and executing home remodels," said Todd Callaway, director of digital content, Shaw Floors.

"We wanted to celebrate our continued presence on the home design platform in a fun, unexpected way."

Shaw Floors worked with Wells to choose a style within the EPIC Plus Collection of engineered hardwood to finish off her kitchen remodel. The final selected style was Yukon maple in Timberwolf, which comes in a 6 3/8 inch profile.

"We love our floors," Wells said. "We can't believe how much it transforms the space and makes it so much warmer. We are so grateful to Shaw Floors for such an amazing gift."

According to Houzz, the home design

platform has 40 million unique monthly users. Shaw Floors regularly engages with Houzz community members seeking advice on home improvement projects, materials and remodels. As a total flooring solutions provider, Shaw Floors provides information to users looking to learn more about the differences in flooring before making a final purchase.

"We know the universe of inspiration is deep and diverse," Callaway said. "With flooring being a major investment, we aim to provide consumers who are in the thick of research with helpful information so they can feel confident in their selection."

## William Bird named among 'Best Places to Work'

CHARLESTON, S.C.—Southern Diversified Distributors, the parent company of top 20 distributor William M. Bird and TransSouth Logistics, ranked No. 7 out of 28 in the "large company" category for the Best Places to Work in South Carolina. The annual program was created by SC Biz News in partnership with the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and Best Companies Group. This is the third consecutive year Southern Diversified Distributors has been recognized on the list, but its first year in the large company category.

"We are excited and humbled to be recognized as one of the best places to work in South Carolina," said Maybank Hagood, CEO of Southern Diversified Distributors. "We believe highly effective corporate cultures are a strategic advantage and a leadership imperative in today's workplace. Our highest priority

value is 'We Care About Each Other.' The Best Places to Work designation helps us to validate our intentional efforts to provide our associates with an exceptional workplace."

The survey and awards program was designed to identify and honor the best employers in the state of South Carolina. The ranking process included evaluating each nominated company's workplace policies, practices, philosophy, systems and demographics. The qualification process also entailed a survey to measure employees' experience



From left: Southern Diversified Distributors' Gene Corvino, CFO; Maybank Hagood, CEO; and Robby Marion, vice president of human resources, accept the 'Best Workplace' award.

with leadership and management, corporate culture, communication, growth opportunities and overall satisfaction with their job and company.

## SNAPSHOT

## Independent Carpet One hosts Detroit Tigers members

WESTLAND, MICH.—Detroit Tigers baseball fans were among those who visited Independent Carpet One Floor & Home here on July 15 as pitcher Alex Wilson and Tigers mascot, Paws, made guest appearances. During the event, Wilson signed autographs and visitors entered to win prizes, including tickets to a Tigers game, gift cards and a team jersey. All proceeds benefited Building For America's Bravest, a program of the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation, which builds smart homes for the most catastrophically injured service members.

Pictured is Paws, center, alongside Cathy Buchanan, owner. Wilson is standing directly behind Paws.



## educating the industry

# Turning good leaders into great ones



BY LISBETH CALANDRINO

**D**oes your retail flooring store have an effective sales manager? The most important ‘product’ a company owns is its employees. Unfortunately, many store owners spend more time worrying about the merchandise they’re buying than their employees. With TISE on the horizon, this is the perfect time to engage your sales managers into learning new skills and get them motivated and evolve from “good” to “great.”

Coaching is taking on a new face as our team members get younger. The millennials are constantly engaged

in learning through YouTube and other online outlets, and many have entrepreneurial goals. They are used to learning on their own and finding information. Without a good manager/coaching program, they are likely to get bored and seek other employers.

Under the old model, the sales manager was tasked with making the numbers and improving the bottom line. As I remember, employees either got better or were shipped out. The process of “firing and rehiring” is expensive and time-consuming, but a manager with good coaching skills can make the team much smarter so they can take on higher-level tasks. Remember, this is a generation that has been taught to be investigative and has a wealth of online skills.

A great sales manager is one who can move the sales needle, but in order to do this; they have to be more than a sales manager. They need to have coaching skills. Instead of just reaching store numbers, coach develops a strategic plan and goals with the salesperson, so they can reach their goals as well as improving the overall profitability. The key is to motivate your employees to want to learn and get smarter.

Through the years, coaching has been reserved for executives as a way for them to be more effective and connected to their employees. This same process

can have amazing results for sales managers. Sales managers are a great resource but are often outstanding salespeople who have been promoted to a managerial position. Unfortunately, the skills don’t necessarily transfer. Great salespeople have a personal need to achieve and make money; this skill rarely translates into improving the team. In fact, they usually still have a need to compete, which can demoralize and defeat the rest of the team.

There are some stores that have embraced coaching. As Brian Witkin, executive vice president of sales of New Jersey-

based Avalon Flooring, puts it: “We are committed to ongoing training and coaching of our sales team from our new hire training program, advanced sales and product training to various additional programs throughout the year. Our store managers follow up and coach their team at the store both in a group and individually, which reinforces the behavior we are driving. I see the results in both the confidence of our sales associates and ultimately their sales performance.”

Managers get results and are always attached to the numbers. A coach gets results and helps the person develop tools to grow. Over the long term, this growth will build stronger, engaged salespeople and make them better team members. To make this happen, your managers must have coaching skills. Coaching includes managing but managing doesn’t always include coaching. Coaching is not only a way to get results but also a means to groom people to develop clear job goals and give them tools to reach their goals. This takes time but in the long run it helps retain great salespeople and turn them into high-volume producers.

Learn more about this topic during my talk, “The Coaching Edge: Building a Successful Team,” slated for Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2018, at 8 a.m. WE 04, Islander G., at Surfaces.



Lisbeth Calandrino has been promoting retail strategies for the last 20 years. To have her speak at your business or to schedule a consultation, contact her at lcalandrino@nycap.rr.com.

## RETAILERS REACT

# How do you see e-commerce impacting the flooring industry



Flooring retailers say there is nothing that can replace actually touching and seeing flooring products like carpet first hand.

“I personally believe the amount of flooring sales via e-commerce will continue to grow. However, I still feel there remains many challenges for the consumer when ordering flooring online—receiving, quality control, installation, etc. The brick-and-mortar stores will need to have a strong online presence along with offerings and service that can’t be matched compared to e-commerce dealers.”

—Eric Langan, Carpetland USA, Davenport, Iowa

“We are already using the Internet for sales—such as sending product links showing images, specifications, room scenes, etc. If a consumer is just purchasing the product, sometimes that is all that is required. Then we place the order, arrange shipping and handle the invoice and payment process. Most consumers still want full service, and I believe there will always be a need for that.”

—Mel Gauthier, Nufloors  
Fort McMurray  
Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada

“In my opinion, big online players such as Amazon will be able to take a portion of sales from local retailers as more consumers become comfortable with purchasing online. I see other flooring retailers trying to sell online, but they do not have the trust that some of the bigger players do, and the bigger players’ pricing/service is comparable to the local retail store.”

—Carlton Billingsley, Floors and More  
Benton, Ark.

“As retailers we must simplify the buying decisions for customers. They want great photography, online reviews, specifications, warranties, satisfaction guarantees and one click to purchase or receive sales help. We have to be the best in our communities and be active in them as well. We need to be caring, competent, competitive and cutting edge.”

—Sam Presnell, The Rug Gallery, Cincinnati

“I would hope e-commerce wouldn’t interfere with flooring because it is a very tactile product. You need to touch it, feel it and see the authenticity of colors in your own light. E-commerce is a very impersonal way of shopping. There is nothing better than the experience of shopping in a brick-and-mortar store.”

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

## CALENDAR

**Aug. 22**  
**Play Ball with Gilford-Johnson**  
Cobb Energy Center, Atlanta.  
Sale: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Contact: 877.722.5545;  
marketing@gilfordjohnson.com

**Aug. 31**  
**CFI Carpet Seaming Workshop**  
The Mill Carpet and Flooring Outlet  
Carson, Calif.  
Contact: 816.232.4646;  
jsheets@cfiinstallers.org

**Sept. 12-14**  
**NWFA Intermediate Installation + NWFACP**  
Installation Testing  
Hosted by Derr Flooring  
13850 Park Center Road,  
Herndon, Va.  
Contact: Tricia Swindoll;  
Tricia.swindoll@nwfa.org;  
800.422.4556

**Sept. 14-16**  
**CFI Carpet & Installation**  
Training & Certification  
Hosted by Pelletier Rug and  
Floor Company  
17 Water Street, Danvers, Mass.  
Contact: 816.232.4646;  
jsheets@cfiinstallers.org

**Sept. 19-21**  
**NWFA Intermediate Sand & Finish + NWFACP**  
CP Sand and Finish Testing  
Chattahoochee Technical College  
Marietta, Ga.  
Contact: Tricia Swindoll;  
Tricia.swindoll@nwfa.org;  
800.422.4556

**Sept. 19**  
**15<sup>th</sup> annual Alan Greenberg**  
**Charity Golf Tournament**  
Barnsley Gardens, Adairsville, Ga.  
Contact: Paula Holt,  
800.466.6984 ext. 1101;  
pholt@caglobal.com

**Sept. 26**  
**NRF Distributors’**  
**Fall Flooring Market**  
Foxwoods Resort Casino  
Mashantucket, Conn.  
Contact: NRF Distributors;  
207.430.2839

## REMEMBER WHEN...



In the fall of 2008, Scott Roy, left, then a senior vice president with J.J. Haines, was named the winner of the NAFCD’s first Leadership in Action award in recognition of his efforts in advancing Haines’ Loyalty Club program. Pictured with Roy is Fred Reitz, then vice president of operations and marketing for Haines. Today, Roy is president and CEO of Johnson-Gilford Flooring. Reitz is vice president, supplies business and development, for Haines, based in Glen Burnie, Md.

# Revised INSTALL standard raises bar for VA facilities

GLASSBORO, N.J.—The International Standards and Training Alliance (INSTALL) has strengthened its partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The goal is to ensure floor covering is specified and installed in a way that minimizes product failures in VA facilities across the U.S.

The VA actively strives for the highest level of construction and installation standards across its thousands of facilities. “The VA was often stuck working with a contractor that satisfied the product and materials specification standards but wasn’t able to do the job right,” said Andy Silins, co-chairman of INSTALL, and a U.S. Marine. “One way the VA has changed this is through a strategic partnership with INSTALL. This beneficial partnership has changed the way floor covering products are specified and installed at many facilities around the country.”

INSTALL’s curriculum consists of a comprehensive training and certification program for floor covering installers. It also provides the only additional, extended, free, non-proprietary and third-party installation warranty on labor in the industry, according to the organization. The quality of INSTALL’s programming and warranty are such that the Department of Veteran Affairs adopted INSTALL certification standards into its Section 09 68 00 Carpeting, Section 09 65 19 Resilient Tile Flooring and Section 09 68 21 Athletic Carpeting. This effectively directs that every VA carpet, resilient tile and athletic carpeting job specified must be completed by a flooring installer that meets or exceeds INSTALL specifications.

“We might be a non-proprietary organization that doesn’t endorse specific products or manufacturers, but what we do support is specification and performance,” said Orest Burdiak, principal interior designer at the VA. “From our first meeting with INSTALL at NeoCon to now, we have been extremely impressed with the guarantee, training and requirements that members of INSTALL have to meet. This directly impacted our certification standards and specification language.”

Historically, there have been documented flooring failures in institutional facilities—something the updated standard aims to address. “From poor floor prep to improper testing for moisture to inadequate moisture mitigation, there has been a laundry list of issues across hundreds of facil-

ities,” Burdiak said. While some of these issues were a result of faulty products, the vast majority of failures were due to improper or substandard installation. Some of this is also a direct result of cost-saving measures, experts say.

The adoption of the new INSTALL standard is designed to dramatically minimize such failures. The revised VA master specifications states that only a flooring contractor who employs an INSTALL-certified workforce (or holds a certification from a comparable certification program) is qualified enough to perform

work for the VA. In addition, the adopted language for carpet, resilient tile and athletic carpeting requires floor covering contractors to specialize in installation and have a minimum of three years experience.

“At the end of the day, we want to get what we pay for,” Burdiak said. “I haven’t heard of any flooring failures on large projects since our relationship started, and while it’s tough to oversee and monitor small projects across thousands of facilities, the benefit to our employees, patients and

bottom line has been immediate and profound.”

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs operates the nation’s largest integrated health care system. The sprawling organization includes 1,700 hospitals, clinics, community living centers, domiciliaries, readjustment counseling centers and other facilities throughout the U.S.



**New language in the revised INSTALL VA master specification states that only a flooring contractor who employs an INSTALL-certified workforce is qualified enough to perform work for the VA.**

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This special FCNews Retail Education series, sponsored by 3M, is designed to help specialty retailers build their business through proven merchandising and marketing strategies as well as general best practices.

A flooring retailer stood up at a trade conference and bemoaned the amount of training he was providing his staff. “What if I spend the next year training them and then they leave—maybe even go to the competition?”

Sitting nearby, a second retailer stood up and said: “That may be true but what if you don’t provide any training, and they decide to stay with you?”

Professional training—whether it’s for sales associates or installers—may be a necessary evil in the flooring trade but it is necessary nonetheless.

“Training your employees will give you a return on your investment that is practically immediate—and it never ends,” said Donato Pompo, president, Ceramic Tile and Stone Consultants.

Tom Jennings, vice president of professional development for the World Floor Covering Association (WFCA), said training is more important than ever. “The bottom half of most any market is gone whether you are selling flooring or T-bone steaks. For the independent retailer I think their real fertile fields are middle and up, and the customer is going to want more from an associate than what she can find with a national chain. Those who are succeeding are doing so selling better goods,

and the better goods need to be sold with the right sales help.”

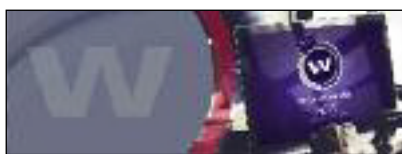
To that end, the WFCA continues to refresh its training curriculum, which is divided into management and sales modules. The association is working on a certification for its online university so it can “hold people accountable,” Jennings said. “The average retailer does about \$2.4 million and not all of those people have had business management classes. You’d be amazed how many people don’t know ‘mark up’ from ‘margin.’”

Following is an update on the various training programs available from several major flooring industry associations.

#### WFCA

WFCA University has expanded training programs by nearly 20%, with 46 training modules available online through its subscription program and 11 new destination camps planned in seven locations across the U.S.

The extensive training program offers educational courses for professionals in a wide variety of functions such as sales, merchandising and human resources. The coursework is broken down based on the career path and professional stage. “Upon initial launch of the WFCA University program we saw many middle-, senior- and owner-level executives tap-



## RETAIL EDUCATION

# Training remains priority No. 1

ping into the training program,” said Freida Staten, vice president of marketing and communications. “Since that time, the adoption rate of our program has broadened to include many professionals in the early and middle stages of their careers.”

#### CFI

The CFI Institute offers accelerated training and professional certification to individuals seeking to learn how to install

ble of completing a highly professional job in a standard three-bedroom home. In addition to the accelerated carpet class, the school offers long- and short-term training programs in every flooring product category for students at all levels.

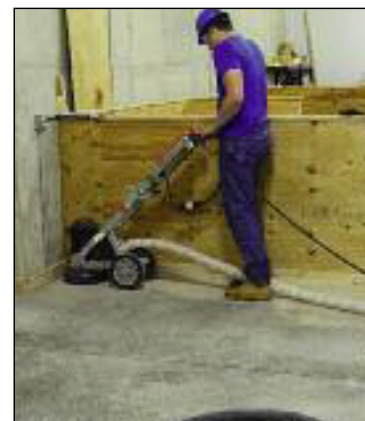
#### INSTALL

With polished concrete flooring growing in popularity as an attractive option for large commercial and retail spaces across

America, INSTALL—the International Standards and Training Alliance—is working quickly to produce dedicated training for the installation and finishing process. “There is a surprising amount of care that goes into concrete floor polishing,” said Mark Olson, INSTALL flooring instructor at the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters. “Untrained installers can miss critical steps, including scratch-testing to ensure the concrete

has reached an adequate level of hardness.”

Large installations can have hundreds of pours, meaning multiple rounds of scratch and moisture testing are necessary. Much like hardwood flooring, it is critical that installers use special vacuums to remove all dust and debris between polishings, experts say. If anything is left over, it can easily scratch the floor and the team will have to start over. As an INSTALL subject matter expert, Olson flies to the Carpenter’s International Training Center once a month to develop curriculum that will help prevent these failures from occurring in



An INSTALL mechanic works on concrete polishing during a training session.

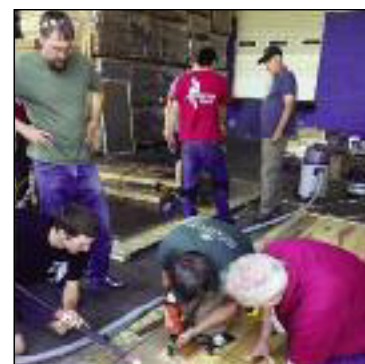
the first place.

“We are hard at work developing classroom and hands-on training specifically geared toward polished concrete flooring,” he said. “From dyeing concrete to creating insets with logos, INSTALL will be the only organization with a formal training manual for concrete polishing and resinous flooring. It’s cutting edge.”

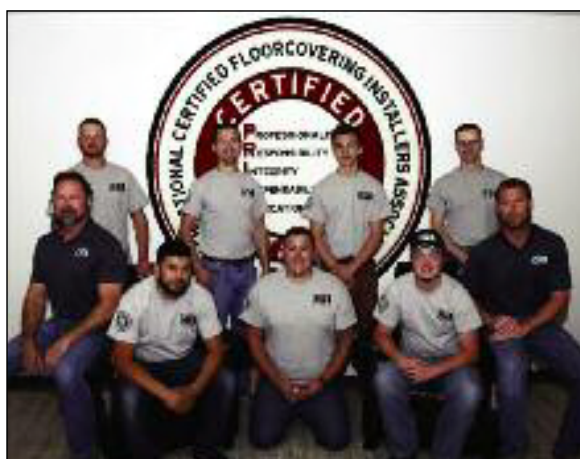
#### NWFA

The National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) offers training for wood flooring sales both in person and online through NWFA University. Since being launched a year

Continued on page 29



The National Wood Flooring Association conducts training at its headquarters as well as locations around the world.



The graduating class from CFI's five-week residential carpet installation course. Robert Varden, CFI vice president, is seated at the far left.

all types of flooring. “We created our school and launched the first accelerated carpet installation training course as part of our commitment to tackle the installation problem that touches everyone in our industry,” said Robert Varden, vice president. “Together with WFCA and our many supportive partners, we are working continuously to put an end to a problem that affects everyone.”

Through the proprietary class, CFI can take individuals with no prior experience or knowledge in flooring and—after an intensive, five-week course—turn out certified residential carpet installers capa-



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added realism and definition.



[usfloorsllc.com](http://usfloorsllc.com)



## Out in a crowd

Continued from page 1

leaders better manage people, resources and profits.

For many flooring dealers, brands matter, especially when products and services are backed by the companies they represent.

“A strong brand brings awareness of mind,” said Kevin Rose, president and owner, Carpetland Color Tile, Rockford, Ill. “This is good for all flooring retailers as we battle for the consumer’s disposable income.”

A strong brand can also draw attention to a particular flooring

store. As Mary Ann Gore, office manager, Bridgeport Carpets, Alpharetta, Ga., explains: “For example, if a customer is new to an area and does an Internet search on local retailers, she is typically going to look for a product that is familiar to her.”

While name recognition

holds a certain importance for flooring brands, dealers can also benefit from established name recognition. Case in point is Ted’s Abbey Carpet & Floor, with multiple locations in Alabama. “We have really tried to market our store’s names to the consumers in our market area,” said Ted

Gregerson, president and owner, “We feel like we have done a really good job of it, because consumers in our market refer to us as simply ‘Abbey.’ We feel if our consumers trust us and our own Abbey brand, then they will have confidence in all the products we sell.”



## THE STRENGTH INSIDE THE ORIGINAL COREtec FLOORS

USFloors is regarded as the originator of the WPC category—true disruptors and innovators in the industry. It is committed to providing beautiful and durable floors at an excellent value while minimizing the impact on the environment whenever possible. The COREtec brand is focused on providing an exceptional customer experience throughout the new flooring purchase.

USFloors knows today’s consumers value authenticity over perfection—from brands, experiences and daily life. They seek to engage with brands that mirror that authenticity—brands that stand up for what they believe and deliver upon it. Expectations of a brand’s intuitive nature drive their interest. When it comes to purchasing a new floor, they want to make a smart, practical choice—one that reflects their originality and can be enjoyed for years to come. USFloors addresses these consumer needs in a way that satisfies and delights them from initial inspiration to final installation. COREtec is perfect for expressing the originality and creativity that lives within them. USFloors provides an ever-evolving portfolio of waterproof floors that embody style and strength that can withstand whatever real life has in store for the consumer.

In addition to authenticity, consumers share a common driving need for simplicity in this era of ever-expanding choices. The number of flooring options has expanded dramatically, leaving today’s consumers feeling overwhelmed and under extreme pressure to make the right purchase decisions. With the average floor shopping process lasting more than five months, consumers will reward easy, simple and trustworthy brands. They seek out brands that receive high accolades on style and performance and are recommended by peers with real world experiences.

The entrepreneurial passion that lives within the core of USFloors drives the company to redefine the way consumers discover COREtec floors. Consumers are drawn to attributes that inspire them and shopping experiences that match the high standards they set for the products themselves. Today’s consumer can identify an original, and USFloors believes they applaud an approachable brand that is smart, modern and bold. They can feel the commitment of style and performance and appreciate the result of the American dream. They recognize products that are unique and sustainable and want to be loyal to the brands that deliver on a promise. As the original COREtec floors, USFloors is rewarded by their sense of style and practical purchases.

USFloors is thrilled to be at the helm of this young industry brand. The company sets no boundaries and has an endless future of solutions ahead. COREtec will erupt into 2018 with vigor to share its successful innovations and leadership with consumers nationwide. Throughout it all, USFloors will continue to create value and a healthy platform for growth for its retail partners.

USFloors and COREtec—authentic to the core.



## THE POWER IN THE FAMILY OF BRANDS

Mohawk enjoys global brand recognition as the world’s largest flooring manufacturer. With facilities and manufacturing operations across the nation, Mohawk is committed to American-made manufacturing and the communities and families it impacts on a daily basis. From product conception to the manufacturing process to the transportation of products, Mohawk employees are providing the foundations for homes and businesses around the world.

The power of brand and its attributes is vastly important for infrequent purchase categories such as flooring. Strong branding gives consumers peace of mind, allowing them to feel confident about their investment. Retailers—both large and small—leverage the power of the Mohawk brand around the world each and every day.

Mohawk and its family of brands are among the most well known in the flooring industry. These include: Aladdin, American Olean, American Rug Craftsmen, Century, Columbia, Daltile, Durkan, IVC, Karastan, Marazzi, Moduleo, Mohawk Group, Mohawk Home, Pergo, Q-Wood, Quick-Step, Ragno and SolidTech. The company’s vertically integrated manufacturing and distribution processes provide competitive advantages in the production of carpet, carpet tile, rugs, ceramic tile, laminate, hardwood, stone and luxury vinyl flooring. The enterprise-wide innovations yield products and technologies that are differentiated in the marketplace.

The organization invests heavily in the Mohawk brand by way of lead generation, advertising, digital marketing, public relations, merchandising, point-of-sale, innovative products and national promotions, just to name a few. These efforts result in high consumer recognition and increased profit margins for Mohawk’s retailers.

The primary reason Mohawk invests in its family of brands is to deliver qualified consumer leads to its valued retail partners. The current pace of change in the flooring industry requires new programs that give its retailers the inside track to stay ahead of the competition.



## A BRAND BUILT ON SERVICE, INNOVATION AND PROGRESS

Honesty, integrity and passion set the stage 50 years ago and have served as the foundation from which Shaw Floors was established. Since that time, the company’s values remain true while Shaw Floors has transformed from a single category producer to a leading, total flooring brand with a forward-focused dedication to servicing our customers and the end-user consumer. Shaw is proud of its heritage and grateful for the confidence retailers have demonstrated over the years.

The celebration of Shaw’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year is marked by its corporate vision of creating a better future: for its customers, its people and the communities it serves. As Shaw reflects on the important milestones of its past, it is reminded that progress isn’t achieved by resting on previous successes, but by looking to the future and empowering its associates to lead the company into a new era of innovation.

One thing that remains constant is the Shaw Floors brand is synonymous with flooring expertise. The company prides itself on being pioneers of design and innovation and won’t settle for anything less than exceptional service. All of these elements are trademarks of the Shaw brand, reinforced each year through the many surveys and rankings voted on by its valued retail partners. Shaw Floors feels honored that the breadth of its product portfolio earns the company the unique ability to provide consumers with flooring that makes sense for their space. Through our products and services, the consumer’s design vision comes to life.

Shaw Floors has demonstrated continuous leadership not only through its company values but also through cutting-edge innovations such as: its patent-pending Floorté PRO collection, offering the industry’s first direct-glue rigid core products; its completely redesigned EPIC Plus engineered hardwood line featuring the Extreme Nature collection, which boasts the longest, widest hardwood planks made in the USA; its revolutionary LifeGuard waterproof carpet backing technology protecting against life’s mishaps to give consumers the cleanest carpet for healthy living; and its exclusive sound-abatement research and proprietary intelligence depicting a comprehensive landscape of today’s consumer. These products and services, plus many others, provide retailers with solutions that ultimately give consumers confidence in their investment. Shaw Floors will continue heavily investing in its shared industry in an effort to drive market understanding, demand and brand preference, and it appreciates the partnership with retailers.

Continued on page 14

BEAUTY. INNOVATION. STYLE.

THE WINNER OF 2017 BEST IN  
STYLE & DESIGN AWARD

Provenza<sup>®</sup>  
FLOORS

Provenza Floors is passionate about designing products that exceed architectural and interior design demands. We are excited to showcase our new **Colour Nation Painted Plank Beacon Pointe** and **Lighthouse Cove** Collections, **MaxCore Waterproof LVP Uptown Chic** Collection alongside the addition of **Affinity**, **Dutch Masters**, **East Coast Originals**, **Herringbone Reserve**, **Iconic Edge**, **Olde Crown** and **Palais Royale** Collections to our popular Premier Hardwood product line.



**dear david****First impressions of your showroom count***Dear David:*

I have tried just about everything to get my sales associates to better organize the floor but nothing seems to work. I know we need to look better, but there is only so much I can do myself and I cannot afford to hire a cleaning company to come each night to clean and organize the showroom. Any thoughts?



**DAVID ROMANO**

Dear Fed Up Owner,

I am sorry to hear that your sales staff is giving you such fits when it comes to cleaning and organizing the showroom floor. The first thing I suggest you do is make them aware that keeping the showroom in good working order is their job. Many times they push back and say they are paid to sell and not clean; I push back and say if they are not clean they wouldn't sell anything. Here are common situations to avoid when organizing your showrooms.

- **Dirty bathrooms.** Restrooms should always be sparkling clean, whether they are open for public use or not. Make sure to stock

**CONSUMERS LIKE A WIDE SELECTION, BUT NOT IF IT MEANS SACRIFICING COMFORT WHILE SHOPPING.**

the bathrooms with plenty of paper products, soap, trash receptacles and clean it daily

- **Bad quality of the floors.** If you sell flooring and your floors are dirty, worn, scratched, missing transitions or outdated, how in the world do you expect people to want to buy from you?

- **Loud music.** Playing music in a retail store can help create a certain atmosphere for your shoppers. However, music that is too loud, inappropriate or of poor quality can ruin a positive shopping experience

- **Handwritten signs.** In this era of technology, there is no excuse for displaying handwritten signage and price tags. Printed versions simply look more professional, and hard-to-read handwriting can be a customer turn-off.

- **Stained ceiling tiles.** Ugly ceiling tiles can turn off many shoppers. Who wants to buy products for their home from a

company that cannot even clean their ceiling?

- **Poor lighting.** Replace any burned out light bulbs as soon as possible. Make sure all customer areas of the store have ample lighting and take into consideration shoppers with aging or less than perfect eyesight.

- **Offensive odors.** Shoppers don't want to smell an employee's lunch drifting across the store or musty carpet that should have been replaced 10 years ago. Use neutralizers to combat any offensive odors or remove the source of the aroma altogether.

- **Crowded aisles.** Consumers like a wide selection, but not if it means sacrificing comfort while shopping. Be sure your store is designed to allow adequate space between aisles and keep walkways free of merchandise.

- **Poorly maintained parking lot or exterior.** Overgrown bushes and grass, old signage, litter or a poorly maintained façade is sure to send folks back to their cars before entering the store. Send out the warehouse guy every morning to take care of the exterior and hire professionals to maintain the building appearance.

To avoid the above scenarios, I recommend you create a "zoned" maintenance plan where you split the showroom up into regions and assign certain duties to your sales and reception staff. Each morning assign a zone to at least one member of the team outlining the areas to be maintained and provide a checklist to ensure everything is in good condition and well organized. More importantly, be sure to be consistent in the execution. At first it might seem like a lot of work but over time it will be very easy for employees to maintain. Remember, you pay them to clean up after themselves.

David Romano is the founder of Romano Consulting Group and Benchmarkinc, a group that provides consulting, benchmarking, recruiting and software solutions to the flooring, home improvement and restoration industries.

**Brands**

Continued from page 15



**A NAME SYNONYMOUS WITH UNIQUE STYLE, FASHION AND DESIGN**

Dealers and distributors who carry the Provenza brand attest to its association with high style and design. After all, according to Ron Sadri, president, it was Provenza who helped usher in the handscraped trend about 20 years ago. The company said it was also responsible for innovations such as custom-infused colors, oil finishes and other creative surface treatments such as reactive staining—a technique that's common across the industry today.

"Our focus on setting the trend for fashion and design in hardwood flooring makes us truly unique," Sadri said. "Our distributors and retail partners see us as the leader in our market while others are followers."

That industry recognition was demonstrated at Surfaces 2017 earlier this year, when Provenza walked away with a Best of Show award in the category of style and design for its Colour Nation Lighthouse Cove collection, a line of wide-plank flooring featuring multiple stains, colors and surface treatments. "It was a confirmation from the judges and the dealers that our products stand out from everyone else," Sadri said. "People really understand Provenza and they appreciate the creativity we put behind every line we produce."

But for Provenza, high style and design doesn't necessarily have to translate into products that exceed the reach of mainstream consumers. "We always try to make products that are affordable to the consumer," Sadri said. "That makes it easier for dealers to go to our products and pick everything from good quality and moderate pricing all the way up to a designer look."

**BBOSS****A LEADER IN PRIVATE LABELING**

BBOSS is a true industry leader when it comes to the specialty of private labeling. Established in 2008, this fast-growing company is intent on raising the bar for private label and providing its clients with new ways to sustain long-term growth in today's highly competitive wood flooring market.

The BBOSS approach begins with a factory direct relationship and eliminating unnecessary costs. Dealing direct with the manufacturer and U.S. supporting offices gives clients peace of mind that they have both local and international support.

BBOSS attributes its tremendous success to providing clients with a unique partnership, which helps them drive business while reducing their costs. Additionally, BBOSS offers a full breadth of products, from entry level to multiple upgraded visuals, all from one mill, with the flexibility to mix on any order as needed.

With one of the most knowledgeable and experienced teams in the industry, BBOSS stays on top of ever-changing market trends related to engineered and solid hardwood

flooring. The team partners with each private label client, guiding them through the process of developing and growing their own brand and designs products that meet consumer trends and are tailored to their specific market. BBOSS provides a high level of customer service, thanks in part to the company's award-winning education and training programs.

But perhaps the best advantage of all is BBOSS offers differentiation in all facets of private label, which is a unique way for a retailer's brand to stand out in an otherwise crowded market.

To learn more about private labeling, contact BBOSS at [bbossinc.com](http://bbossinc.com) or call 855-442-2677.

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**BETTER TOGETHER**

For more than 130 years, Tarkett has been at the foundation of creating more beautiful spaces and unlocking the infinite possibilities that happen when people come together.

Tarkett is creating together, honoring its values of collaboration to create something worth more than the sum of its parts.

The company is building brands together by uniting its family of brands—Tandus Centiva, Johnsonite and Desso—to ensure they are designed to work together.

Tarkett is designing together, working with designers inside and outside the industry to challenge the way floor coverings can be used.

It is also working together to deliver products and ideas that anticipate where the workplace is headed.

Tarkett is inspiring together, pushing the boundaries of design and using its flooring in bold new ways.

More importantly, Tarkett is doing good together, leading sustainable business practices and prioritizing the health of people and the planet.

At Tarkett, together is simply better.



**PROVIDING QUALITY, SERVICE AND COORDINATING PRODUCTS FOR EVERY HARDWOOD FLOOR**

Pennwood continuously pursues high standards in manufacturing and marketing of flooring transitions, stair products and vents. The Pennwood staff studies and researches trends in design, color and finish.

The company currently matches 6,000 different hardwood floors, ranging in color, style and textures with standard boards all held in the Pennwood Color Library. Pennwood employees take pride in their craftsmanship and as long as the company has the color standard, it can custom produce a retailer's stair treads or flooring transition with a normal turnaround time of two to three weeks.

Pennwood believes in partnering and can customize a program for a retailer's specific needs. The company can produce various fixed lengths in moldings and stair treads. It also offers random length flooring transitions up to 12 feet, which is increasingly popular in the builder and multi-family market segments.

Today the Pennwood brand means uncompromising value, known for innovation and a driving force within the industry. Pennwood is synonymous with a "we can do" attitude.



**A BRAND IS BEST BUILT IN PERSON**

A brand is a company's biggest asset, according to Thomas Trissl, principal, HPS Schönox. Furthermore, cultivating relationships is a crucial part of building a company's brand.

"All the advertising and marketing we do is important, but nothing replaces the value of face-to-face conversations like those we have on a daily basis on the jobsite with installers, in an office with architects/designers or in the warehouse with our distributors," Trissl explained. "A brand mirrors the expectation of prospective customers and the experience of existing customers."

Schönox, HPS North America has developed a promotional strategy of combining multimedia, product education and exceptional customer support while maintaining communication to strengthen existing relationships and establish new ones.

With these relationships, the Schönox brand can grow and build a legacy that presents key qualities in the market.

Continued on page 18

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**You select the styles.  
You put your brand on it.  
And you take all the credit.**

**So why build someone else's brand when you can build your own?**

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Great brands are built by surpassing expectations.

Shaw Floors is indisputably synonymous with providing exceptional service to our valued retail partners. We're designing and producing stunning floors that consumers want, with reliable delivery that you can depend on.







50 years of leading the industry in design, quality and service.

PURE ENVY | COLOR 100 SNOWFALL

## Brands

Continued from page 15



## EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY, SERVICE AND KNOWLEDGE

The two factors that consistently and unequivocally set a brand apart from others in its category are quality and service, and Bamboo Hardwoods does just that.

From the company's humble beginnings growing bamboo and innovating products from its own groves to becoming an industry powerhouse, Bamboo Hardwoods' foundation of bamboo knowledge has always given it a competitive edge. Every product made is done so with meticulous quality and care using premium adhesives, finishes and modern technologies, while taking time to produce the perfect product. In addition, Bamboo Hardwoods has revolutionized bamboo flooring by focusing on what consumers demand most: trendsetting style and design. The emphasis on aesthetics elevated bamboo flooring from a niche product to being regarded as another attractive choice in the hardwood flooring category.

When it comes to customer service, Bamboo Hardwoods transcends the business-client relationship by focusing on establishing rapport and sincere connections with its customers. With multiple warehouse locations across the United States and fully stocked East and West coast warehouses, customers can rest assured knowing they will promptly receive the product desired.

Bamboo Hardwoods is dedicated to continuing its reigning status as a pioneer of the specialty flooring industry.

## TIPS ON BUILDING BRAND LOYALTY

Digital marketing experts believe a strong brand is built over time by generating consumer trust and loyalty. Brand loyalty is independent from price and actually relies on a shopper's perception, which is cultivated through marketing, advertising, reputation and previous experience. While developing consumer loyalty and trust may seem like a daunting task, Lauren Maillian Bias, entrepreneur and founder and CEO of Luxury Market Branding, has seven tips to help the process:

- **Maintain high quality.** Stay consistent with the quality of goods and/or services. There is a certain expectation of quality, and consumers will go back to the brands they know won't let them down.
- **Engage customers.** Staying in touch with the target market consistently will keep a brand top of mind. Update them on the latest developments and keep communication fresh. This will help loyal shoppers feel they are involved in the company.
- **Solicit feedback.** Maintaining contact with customers means asking for their opinions and allowing them to rate

services to express whether expectations were met. Demonstrate the fact your business cares and be sure to meet demands. Customers must get what they want in order to return.

- **Give customers a reason to come back.** Offering incentives to repeat customers encourages them to come to a specific store over competitors. Loyalty reward programs are helpful.

- **Stay relevant.** Be sure to stay on top of the latest trades and always know you're your competitors are doing. Update marketing strategies so they remain relevant to the market.

- **Provide value.** Repeat business means customer loyalty. Work on creating a plan to give a percentage of loyal customers' expenditures back to the consumer somehow. Consider perks with a purchase or a bonus service—added value for a brand is key.

- **Show appreciation.** Don't forget to send "thank-you" notes and holiday cards to customers. They want to know their favorite brand cares about them and not just how much they spend.



## A BRAND WITH A VISION

The Novalis Innovative Flooring brand was started in 1984 and began actual production of product in 1986—the first luxury vinyl flooring facility built by anyone in China. Since that time, Novalis has accomplished a record of other "firsts": Novalis was the first Chinese LVT manufacturer to achieve ISO 9001 certification. Novalis was the first with an ISO 14001 environmental certificate. And Novalis is the first and only Chinese LVT brand certified with OHSAS 18001. Novalis was very happy to be the first Chinese LVT manufacturer with a fully localized Environmental Product Declaration, Health Product Declaration and Declare labeling, all being introduced in 2015.

On this foundation of sustainable, quality design and engineering accomplishments, Novalis launched its NovaFloor brand in North America over five years ago. NovaFloor is made primarily for the American floor covering retail channel, and is sold through distributors and their dealers for the residential and Main Street commercial markets.

At NeoCon East 2015, Novalis officially unveiled its new commercial LVT brand for North America called "AVA." AVA stands for Advanced Vinyl Artistry and is made for the commercial specified market. Capri Cork manages the AVA brand in the U.S. and Canada through its extensive list of dedicated commercial agents.

Always guiding the brand's development is its "vision" that encompasses three key principles: art, quality and nature.

When it comes to LVT, Novalis views "art" as the authentic reproductions of natural elements to create imaginative, inspiring spaces.

Novalis "quality" means an investment in the research and performance to make the best LVT possible.

And the Novalis vision for "nature" is all about producing its product responsibly while conserving energy and resources.

Learn more at [NovalisInnovativeFlooring.com](http://NovalisInnovativeFlooring.com).

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HPS NORTH AMERICA

Product Calculator

Select Category

Select Product

Area(ft) Area(m) Units(ft) Units(m)

Area to be covered (ft<sup>2</sup>)

Thickness Units

Calculation of coverage is approximate. Actual coverage will vary depending on job site conditions.

**START SMART  
WORK SMART**

**THE MOBILE APP FROM SCHÖNOX WILL HELP YOU DO JUST THAT.**

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Continued on page 20



# The building memories carpet.

Being the most recognized brand for carpet protection means instant credibility. Close the deal with Scotchgard™ Protection. The brand consumers know they can trust.

## Brands

Continued from page 18



### INNOVATIVE BRAND SPREAD ITS WINGS

Engineered Floors, the third-largest carpet company in the world, has continued its singular mission to be the flooring brand of choice. This year Engineered Floors revamped its digital presence with a new website to align its family of brands under a common theme: “We have one mission. Make the best carpet in the world.” The new site ([engineeredfloors.com](http://engineeredfloors.com)) showcases Engineered Floors’ complete family of brands and its drive to “intersect” with customers’ desires for style, durability, comfort, quality and tradition. It combines new room scene photography, links to the company’s varied social media platforms and advanced functionality to make it easier and more engaging to use.

The company’s new website, along with the new signature for its advertising, reinforces the strength of Engineered Floors in its collection of brands, each aimed at a specific flooring segment. The Engineered Floors family of brands consists of: Dream Weaver for residential replacement; Pentz Commercial Flooring Solutions for Main Street; DWellings for new home construction; and Engineered Floors Multifamily.

The company is also bringing to market new innovations including a commercial polyester fiber, advanced polyester extrusion (Apex SDP) under the Pentz Commercial Solutions brand. The offering includes the styles Revival and Revolution, which join the widely successful original Apex SDP styles Quicksilver and Fast Break.

In addition, Engineered Floors is rapidly completing a new, state-of-the-art carpet tile manufacturing facility in Dalton. The move is in response to the growing demand for modular carpet tile for Main Street applications.

The initial phase of the plant, expected to open in January 2018, will total 520,000 square feet. This will be the fourth new facility the company has built in northwest Georgia since 2009.



### THE POWER OF A STRONG BRAND PARTNERSHIP

With more than 65 years of proven innovation, market leadership and dedication to quality, Scotchgard has the protective products and brand strength to help make our partners successful. A brand partnership with Scotchgard Protector strengthens the value of the host brand and creates opportunities that can:

- Increase edge over competition
- Build brand equity in new markets
- Increase sales
- Grow market penetration
- Expand credibility to both brands

The Scotchgard brand name has been synonymous with protection for multiple generations. Invented in the 1950s and protecting floors from their owners since the 1970s, Scotchgard Protector has become one of the leading brands of stain, spill and soil protection in markets around the world.

When companies have a history of selling products that are dependable, reliable and in line with consumer needs, consumers begin to develop trust in the product and loyalty to the brand. The real power in the Scotchgard Brand is that it represents that one last thing consumers want when they purchase a product—peace of mind. It can close the sale.

## DESIGN + INSTALL AMAZING FLOORS



### Transcend™ with SureSet™ Technology

*Fast, Simple and Re-positionable LVT Flooring*



Easy to Install



Waterproof\*



Flexible Designs



With a pressure sensitive adhesive and acoustic/moisture channels, Transcend SureSet flooring is easy to install for the Pro or the DIY'er.

To learn more, contact your local Tarkett representative, Tarkett distributor or visit [www.tarkettna.com](http://www.tarkettna.com)

\*See warranty for details.



THE ULTIMATE  
FLOORING EXPERIENCE



WHERE INNOVATION IS A WAY OF LIFE

Phenix Flooring is more than just another manufacturer—it's a flooring experience. From designing and developing premium products to its commitment to advancing research, development and production through the latest state-of-the-art technologies, Phenix makes innovation a way of life. Through this commitment, Phenix continues to grow and serve its customers with passion, values and an unwavering dedication to the production of quality products.

With the launch of the Cleaner Home collection, Phenix delivers on this mantra by offering a line rich in color and design with proactive technologies such as Microban, Opulance HD and Surefresh that provide optimal antimicrobial protection, stain resistance and prolonged beauty at an affordable price.

Above all, Phenix strives to deliver the highest standard of service to its clients. As a Pharr Family company, Phenix is backed by generations of manufacturing genius, flanked by supportive brands.



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Offering superior quality products has always been Mirage's No. 1 priority. Maintaining this quality consistency is the daily challenge and a goal that each employee strives to attain. This commitment to excellence speaks to the dedication, devotion and knowledge of Mirage's people—from the worker in the plant to the sales representatives in the field.

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# Mohawk covers all bases with broad cushion portfolio

By Lindsay Baillie

Over the years, Mohawk has diversified its flooring offerings to cover the gamut of both soft and hard goods. At the same time, the company is also garnering attention by helping floor covering retailers sell the total installation project via a broad selection of cushion products.

"We are the only U.S. carpet manufacturer that has its own carpet cushion production," said Al Buniak, director of pad and cushion business operations, Mohawk Industries. "We currently make everything from a basic product to a premium memory foam cushion, including synthetic fiber pads for the growing area rug market."

Mohawk, which entered the cushion manufacturing business after it acquired Alliance Pad in 2002, manufactures every type of carpet fiber from wool to synthetic in all different constructions. This allows the manufacturer to pair each type of carpet with a specific pad to offer the overall best performance. In addition, Mohawk operates an efficient distribution network that allows for a single delivery of both cushion and carpet, which cuts down wait time for various products.

"People spend a lot of time selling carpet, but the cushion is really an extremely important component of the sale," Buniak explained. "It's the piece that helps the carpet maintain its texture and appearance, so we provide all of those different types of cushions to leverage our carpet products' features."

Following a good/better/best model for its cushions, Mohawk offers retailers its most premium product, SmartCushion, with the added bonus of giving back to a key foundation—Susan G. Komen. With each purchase of its SmartCushion preferred product, Mohawk makes a donation to Susan G. Komen. What's more, SmartCushion is pink in color and its packaging contains the Susan G. Komen logo—all of which drives further awareness of the cause.

"Mohawk partners with many non-profit organizations throughout our various communities, and Susan G. Komen was one we started with approximately six or seven years ago," Buniak explained. "It is a wonderful organization and we are excited

to be a part of helping the organization achieve its goals of bringing an end to breast cancer. It's one of the top recipients of Mohawk's support."

SmartCushion is a win-win in other aspects. For many retailers, it helps increase margins. Just ask Joe Zago, president of The Carpet Guys in Troy, Mich. The dealer has been selling the product for about three years with excellent



Mohawk donates rolls of SmartCushion to the Susan G. Komen 3-day event for participants to sleep on.

results. "It's a great thing for any retailer to carry. Not only are you doing a great thing, but people like doing business with people who like to do good things. When people in the community see us taking part in a lot of these events, it really helps the business."

Jeff Balsom, owner of Kenny Enterprises in Buffalo, N.Y., has also noticed a positive response to Mohawk's SmartCushion. "Our sales are good and the performance of the pad is very good. The Susan G. Komen story has been very good [for business]."

Our customers seem very happy with what Mohawk is doing and what we're doing to support the entire organization."

As a premium product, SmartCushion provides retailers with the opportunity to upsell, creating higher margins. In addition to the product's story, its overall quality and characteristics make SmartCushion an easy sell.

"Of all our cushion it is our top-selling product," said Fred Gaines, owner of Bells Carpets, Raleigh, N.C. "We train our salespeople to take consumers to the best option first. We always stress to our customers that the cushion is the foundation of their carpet purchase. If you don't start with a good foundation you're not going to get the performance of the carpet you want over the years."

For many retailers, having an entire package helps generate higher margins. For example, Tommy Hughes, general manager, Kelly's Carpet, Omaha, Neb., sees value in giving his customers Mohawk-branded carpet and cushion along with Mohawk-certified installation. "SmartCushion is packaged with some of our higher-end carpet collections. It's a premium pad that's going to perform well under the carpet."

Hughes also sees value in offering a product that ultimately gives back to the community. "It's important to support the Susan G. Komen Foundation, and [SmartCushion] is one way, as a store, that we can support them and that our customers can support as well."

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## installments



# Uses and applications of profiled wall base

The flooring industry over the last few years has seen a large demand for a wider variety of wall base options in certain marketplaces. With the growing selection of resilient, carpet, wood and tile offerings, architects and designers are requiring a more appealing finish to a completed flooring installation. The institutionalized look of the standard 4-inch rubber or vinyl base was just not cutting it. So what did the flooring industry do? We acknowledged and embraced the challenge with the introduction of profiled bases.

Now this is not a new product category by any means as it has been available for some years now. However, the popularity of wall base is increasing exponentially, especially in healthcare, hospitality, senior living and corporate buildings. The wide variety of profiles adds a special



MIKE  
PIGEON

ple profile at 3 inches, whereas the more elaborate designs can be as high as 8 inches. I've seen even higher profiles at hotels in Las Vegas that look like they were closer to the 10-inch mark with a very attractive profiled face.

Some options will even come with a matching color chair rail and corner guards for protection from the service carts. Again, most of these products are co-extruded.

Some of the other benefits of purchasing profiled bases through flooring manufactures are the color options. The wide variety of color palettes is a huge benefit

when looking for accent colors to match the flooring product. The options normally include the ability for a custom color to match other interior finishes if needed.

Send in a paint chip or a piece of fabric and suppliers can often make it work. The options truly are endless.

Coming from an installation background, I want to address a few items on this topic that are very important, especially after the material has been specified and is ready to install.

Installation is not for the average base installer. The mindset of the technician needs to be more of a finish carpenter's frame of mind. Production is going to be slower than with regular base, although it does pick up as the installation proceeds. In addition, tools and equipment are going to be completely different. All of this needs to be discussed before the installers are sent to the job-site. A conversation with the general contractor ahead of time to set expectations for wall conditions usually saves hassles in the long run. The more proactive the installer and flooring contractor are on the front side, the better the installation ends up on the back side. Punch lists and call-backs always affect the bottom line along with reputations.

touch and finish to complete and even accent the floors.

Advancement in manufacturing technology opened the door for the production of some really unique interior finishes, including unique options to transition from the floors to the walls.

One of the best places to see this trend is in the hotel industry, where taller bases with creative profiles options are being paired to match popular wood looks. With wood being susceptible to denting and scratching, the need for repainting has really changed the mindset of the A&D community when it comes to a more resilient option. Most of these products are made in the U.S.A. and meet FloorScore, NSF 332 Gold and CHPS criteria. Some manufacturers have options for PVC-free, Phthalate-free and even Red list chemical-free products to increase the appeal to the design community.

The options for profiles are numerous. Some just need a sim-

Mike Pigeon, CIM, is a technical installation specialist with Roppe Holding Co. He has extensive background in flooring installation and currently serves on the Certified Installation Manager Task Force.

# Made-to-match moldings meet design demands

By Lindsay Baillie

It is no secret moldings, transitions and other accessories provide great add-on opportunities for specialty retailers. As flooring manufacturers continue to innovate the designs and visuals across all flooring categories, molding suppliers are responding with a host of made-to-match product offerings.

Following is a sampling of the latest product offerings and programs designed to coordinate with new and existing flooring patterns and visuals.

## Pedross



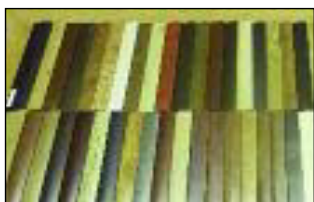
The digital print department at Pedross, which was founded in 2010, aims to bring top quality printing to the market-

place. The company's self-designed, state-of-the-art printing system offers printing on both real wood veneers and paper foil, and produces approximately 90,000 linear feet per day.

"The floor style—regardless if it is wood, stone, vinyl, fumed, oiled, smoked, reactive or individual styles—is digitally scanned and transferred at a ratio of 1:1 onto the veneer creating a three-dimensional look that merges with the floor," said Joe Albany, national sales manager. "The picture can also be manipulated in order to guarantee the best result possible."

While Pedross is currently producing digital printing on real wood veneers, it is in the process of developing a new form of printing technology. "The next phase we're working on—and will introduce in spring 2018—is actually digitally printing on the molding profiles itself, so you can actually feel texture," Albany explained.

## Pennwood



Pennwood currently matches over 6,000 different hardwood floors, ranging in styles, textures and colors with standard boards—all held in the company's library. If Pennwood does not have a color a customer needs, it will match its products to the standards the customer supplies.

"We offer hardwood prefinished moldings, architectural prefinished moldings, floor and wall vents, and retro treads and risers as well as solid treads and risers—all with the ability to match the 6,000 colors we have in the color library or by having the customers send a sample of what they want matched," said Craig Coxon, executive vice president.

Pennwood carries the basics of species and colors in stock for a quick-ship program. In addition, the manufacturer can create custom colors with a typical turnaround of two to three weeks.

## Versatrim



Versatrim offers a variety of programs to flooring dealers including its Distributor Inventory program, Match All Floors (MAF) partnership program and a combination of MAF and a direct ship/stocking program. All of these programs include custom matches for flooring.

"We offer most profiles with no minimums under our standard stock inventory, which has approximately 54 color options," said Tina Keeton Emery, office and sales manager.

The company also offers custom matching for all industry-standard flooring trims and new-to-market LVT/WPC trims. Some of these profiles include: SlimTrim, a three-in-one molding with PVC core; VersaEdge Xtra Tall, a stair nose with aluminum core; a moisture-proof trim line offered in T-molding, end cap, reducer and quarter round; and SlimCap, a new end cap/baby threshold with PVC core.

Versatrim is looking forward to the release of SlimCap to its LVT/WPC line. "This product will give the customers a straight edge option to neatly finish off carpets or sliding glass doors," Emery explained.

## Artistic Finishes

Artistic Finishes has the capability to create custom blended products that reference manufacturer flooring samples. With 150-plus profiles, 90-plus wood species and 15,000-plus floors in its system, Artistic Finishes offers a selection of products to assist retailers in completing nearly any flooring project.

"Providing moldings and other flooring acces-

sories to blend to the markets flooring lines is exactly what we do," said Angie Feldhege, sales and marketing coordinator. "Everything we offer is a coordinated or custom blended product to complete our customers' floors."

Artistic Finishes has also launched Enduracor, a new line that addresses growing demand for waterproof floors. Featuring a wood veneer wrapped around a waterproof core, it can be stained and blended to match any visual.

## Seneca Millwork



Seneca offers a ColorMaster system that gives customers the opportunity to review and approve the accessory's potential appearance with their floors.

After the customer approves the ColorMaster, Seneca begins the matching process. To date, the company has over 11,000 appearance combinations on file for most popular hardwood flooring brands.

"Today's floors have become very unique and artistic—from hand-scraped designs, to distressed,

antiqued or wire brushed," said Cindy Huff, marketing special projects coordinator. "Very light and very dark stains are trending, as are the gray floor tones. Matte and satin finishes have also gained in popularity.

Although matching transitions to these specialty floors can be a challenge, Seneca has embraced this trend and offers custom matching as needed. For example, we offer 10 different versions of hand scraping alone. If we don't already have the perfect finish in our color lab—we will create it."

## Zamma

Zamma aims to differentiate its made-to-match moldings from others in the market by using a unique manufacturing process, according to the company. When these products are constructed the company uses the actual PVC or laminate from the floor product itself. Through this process

Zamma is able to make the transition profiles match the exact flooring design.

Peter Spielman, president, said the company uses this process instead of "digital UV ink systems that do not have the same light refraction as the designs on the floor." By using the actual PVC or laminate Zamma is able to achieve the same designs being manufactured into the flooring.

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## lisbiz strategies

# Your brand reflects you and your values

**B**rands have been around forever, but the theory of branding has changed.

It used to be that bigger was better and the louder you shouted the more attention you got. Remember when Coca Cola owned the soft drink market? Sure, they still have a huge market share but have big and new competitors. They've been sharing the market for a while with Pepsi and the Dr. Pepper/Snapple Group. One of the newest entrants, Red Bull, created a whole new product category called energy drinks.

As the product markets continue to crowd, so does the difficulty in getting brand recognition. "In the old days," you were in command of your message, and since there was much less competition, the consumer listened. Another big change is the way information is now disseminated. The Internet has changed everything and leveled the play-



LISBETH  
CALANDRINO

pointed out by Samuel Sinck in his book, "Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action," motivates consumers to bond to the company because of what they stand for.

There are other examples. Consider Wegman's Food Market and their value statements. "Caring, High Standards Make a Difference, Respect and Empowerment." Panera Bread continues to shout about its 100% clean message after eliminating artificial items from their food. "To Panera, a salad is more than a salad."

One of my personal favorites is the Farmers Insurance commercial, "We've seen a thing or two." Their commercials depict ridiculous things that have happened to their customers. Instead of talking about prices they dialogue about their core values. "Farmers not only prides itself on helping you plan wisely for the unexpected, but also on helping restore order when it occurs so you can keep moving along the road of your life's plans."

So what are your values? Do your employees talk about what you stand for and what matters to your company? What do you do that inspires your customers to want to be on "your team?"

To find the answers, ask yourself the following questions:

What do your customers think about you and how much do they share online? What are your customers saying about you? (Be sure to respond quickly to negative reviews.)

How are you educating your customers? Do your blogs explain to customers how to buy your products or what makes a good salesperson? Do you quote your customers in your blogs?

Remember, to your customers, you are just as important as the products you sell.

ing field. The consumer has become the product marketer and gained control of your brand. If you're not using the tools available, you will get lost to the sea of sameness.

Businesses are used to starting with their product and telling consumers why theirs is the important in the marketplace. Today's products are everywhere and by the time your consumer gets to your business, they already know everything about your products.

What they might not know is who you are and what you stand for. Today's consumers are more interested in your core beliefs and why you do what you do. This can differentiate your product and business from others in the overcrowded marketplace.

Instead of starting with the product it's more important to begin with core beliefs of the business and why you do what you do. The new branding, as

*Lisbeth Calandrino has been promoting retail strategies for the last 20 years. To have her speak at your business or to schedule a consultation, contact her at [lcalandrino@nycap.rr.com](mailto:lcalandrino@nycap.rr.com).*

# Retailers position product

By Lindsay Baillie

**C**ork continues to present itself as an environmentally friendly product with a multitude of benefits and performance characteristics. In addition to being a "green" product, cork provides warmth and comfort underfoot, sound and noise reduction as well as long-term performance. The product's green story is especially important for retailers looking to position cork as an alternative to other types of flooring.

Where retailers position cork in the showroom varies depending on certain factors including the store's location and consumer demand. Overall retailers suggest there is no one place for cork; however, they agree selling the product requires it to have significant presence in the showroom.

Linoleum city in



Green Home Solutions in Seattle has cork installed at the showroom's entrance to show how durable it can be for commercial traffic.

Hollywood, Calif., displays cork in multiple places around its showroom. "We have our cork displays set up next to the hardwood, bamboo and linoleum," said Patricia Walters, sales and office manager. "We figured the best way to feature it is as a natural, sustainable product. We also stock some cork in our

store and we have laid cork floors next to the cork displays. We also have an office in our store with cork flooring to show how well it wears in a light commercial application."

Green Home Solutions in Seattle showcases cork in two separate spaces. "When you walk into our showroom the first floor you walk on is cork," said Cameron Reith, a partner. "We actually use that as an example to show how durable it can be for commercial traffic. We [also] have a whole section for cork and its about 15-20 feet long."

MicMar Wood Flooring & Design in Phoenix also displays cork at the main entrance of its showroom. The idea, according to Lenny Blier, sales representative, is to bring "it to our customers' attention who might not know about cork flooring and its multitude of great qualities." In addition, the dealer showcases cork on a large wall in the showroom behind some of its cork displays.

For many dealers cork is positioned near other hard surface offerings. Case in point is America's Carpet Outlet in State College, Pa. "Cork is positioned in its own area in our showroom—near to the sheet vinyl, laminate and the wood displays," said George McMurtry, owner. "We feel it is a unique and separate product line and should not be integrated into another flooring type or display."

For Long Leaf Lumber of Cambridge, Mass., cork pairs well with the company's already established wood business. "It sort of complemented what we did—everything we make is solid wood flooring," said Alice DeGennaro, owner. "We thought it could be an option for someone looking for a prefinished product."

Cork's renewable qualities and easy installation make it an



Linoleum city in Hollywood, Calif., displays cork in multiple areas on the show floor.

## Turn 'good' RSAs into 'great' sales pros

### Proven sales strategies from Lisbeth Calandrino

How good are your salespeople? These days good isn't enough; salespeople have to be better. The customer has changed the way she buys; has your salesforce changed accordingly? Customers are spending more time online, making them harder to find. When you find them do your salespeople know what to say?

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### Product knowledge alone isn't enough.

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# as environmental option

easy product to sell, DeGennaro added.

## Emphasizing the attributes

A flooring store's success with cork is dependent not only on its presence in the showroom, but also how retailers position the product to customers. For many dealers the consumer does not always come in the store looking for cork, which makes its product story and characteristics even more important.

"We feature cork as natural and sustainable flooring," Walters explained. "The fact that it is sound absorbing and insulating also helps when selling to a customer in a high-rise condo. The green factor is the main selling point. Depending on the brand and construction of the cork, we offer it as a residential to light commercial product."

The Vertical Connection Carpet One in Columbia, Md., also utilizes cork's green story. "As many do, we position it as an environmentally friendly product that has lots of great attributes including softness under foot, warmth and acoustical benefits," said Adam Joss, co-owner. Joss' flooring store positions cork at the front of its showroom to help spark conversations about the product's unique characteristics.

In certain areas consumers are seeking out cork. Retailers say that those looking for the product have usually already done their research online and are interested in its sustainable properties.

"Typically it's a very small segment of the population that is going to be interested in cork

and it's typically someone who has done research on environmentally friendly products," said Scott Gauden, general manager, Designer Showroom of Texas, Austin. "When they come in asking those [types of] questions we take them over to the cork display."

McMurtry explained customers will occasionally ask for cork if they have looked at sites such as HGTV, Houzz, *Better Home and Gardens*, etc. The product is often viewed as a trendier flooring option. "We generally will offer cork to the

**The Vertical Connection Carpet One in Columbia, Md., leverages cork's green angle when talking to customers.**

customer as an alternative to other hard-surface products," he added.

Most, if not all, specialty retailers agree that their main concern is educating the consumer about flooring regardless of whether or not she comes into a store looking for cork.

And while it doesn't happen all of the time, cork—in certain situations—still presents itself as the most viable option.

"Ultimately, all we're trying to do is help [the consumer]

navigate toward what is going to be the best floor," Reith explained. "We are here to educate the consumer. A lot of the time [with cork] it can be a cost-saving choice."



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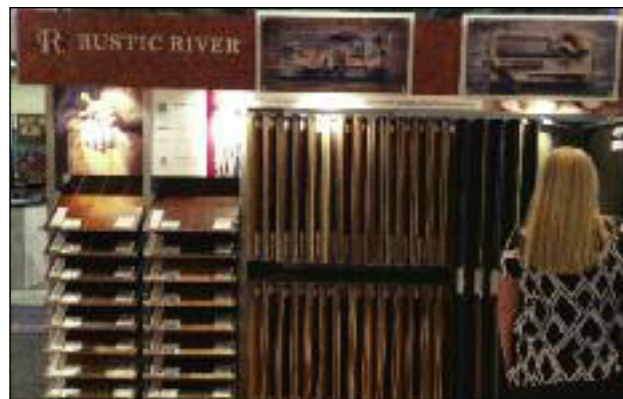
**For Long Leaf Lumber of Cambridge, Mass., cork pairs well with the company's already established wood business.**



Steve Kuhel, left, Tarkett's product manager, LVT, and Randall Sheehe, director of strategic accounts, show off the ProGen rigid core line.



Keynote speaker Scott McKain, left, shared ideas with Al Gaston, Columbus Flooring & More, Georgia; Stevie Leasure, Carpetbagger Carpet One, Charleston, S.C.; and Kevin Snyder, Direct Carpet One, Scottsdale, Ariz.



One of the highlighted products on the exhibition floor was Rustic River, a line of wide-plank flooring from Hemisphere Imports.

## Carpet One

Continued from page 1

with online, where the consumer typically begins her research; to the store when she's ready to pay the retailer a visit; all the way to her home, where the installation and post-sale care take place.

In driving home the importance of providing complete and professional customer service throughout the process, Demaree cited published research and reports on the issue. "The *Harvard Business Review* describes it as the customer's "end-to-end" journey. A major international consulting

firm describes it as the product of the interaction between an organization and a customer over the duration of their relationship. That all sounds so academic for me; I see it this way: 'A great customer experience is any value add that any person or company delivers to me that makes me feel good and want to tell other people about the company.'"

Regardless of the difference sources, there's a common theme that emerges. "There's a wealth of evidence out there that shows those who own the customer service experience generally outperform the competition in every single area,"

Demaree stated. "These retailers tend to make more money,

### NEW BLOOD

Carpet One welcomed several new members at its summer convention:

- R.A.P Floor Covering, Plain City, Ohio
- Brothers Carpet & Flooring, Hackensack, N.J.
- Thompson Floor Covering, Portersville, Calif.
- Carpet One Floor & Home, Sebring, Fla.

they have less employee turnover and they get more positive reviews. More importantly, 50% of consumers—including all of us in attendance here—will spend more money with companies that provide us with a superior customer experience, according to American Express."

To that end, Demaree told attendees this year's convention is all about discovering and sharing ways members can make their customers feel good, with the hope they will tell others about their positive experiences. To drive the point home to members, Carpet One showed a documentary-style video/testimonial that showed one woman's journey through the entire purchasing cycle—from the research phase all the way through to final installation. The video—which was broadcast in segments or "episodes" over the course of the convention—followed the journey of "Karen," a 45-year-old working, married woman with two kids—and pets.

"For the next two days," Demaree told attendees, "we are going to go on a journey through the eyes of Karen as she shares her story about finding the perfect floor, from the time she goes online to start her search to the in-store shopping visit, to what she experiences when the measurer and installer go through her home as well as the services she receives after the job is complete."

The exercise was designed to inspire ideas that retailers could not only share with other members but also bring back to their businesses after the show. Gayle Selden, president of Ed Selden Carpet One Floor & Home, Lakewood, Wash., believes retailers can improve the way they interact with customers by remembering their own customer service experiences. "A lot of it is just returning to the things we know but have forgotten to do over time," she explained.

Others agree, adding that

focusing on the little things—such as how employees greet customers—can go a long way in making customers feel appreciated. "Everyone who answers the phone is part of the process—even if they are not in sales," said Juan Cisneros, sales associate with Upland Carpet One Floor & Home, Ontario, Calif.

Other fundamental ideas include improving the look and feel of your showroom, beginning with the entrance. Jim Aaron, vice president of merchandising, CCA Global Partners, believes the in-store experience starts in the parking lot and the window. "You're trying to create a feeling of, 'Wow, I feel really comfortable here.'"

Theresa Fisher, senior vice president of visual merchandising and brand development, concurs. Comfort is key, she said, given the fact most flooring purchases are not something people are accustomed to making. It helps to make sure traffic lanes within the store are wide open and that the space is decluttered. "People in general don't feel comfortable when they're confined, and women in particular don't want to feel crowded."

But let's not forget about drawing customers into your store in the first place. For Stevie Leasure, owner of Carpetbagger Carpet One, Charleston, S.C., the key was transferring advertising and marketing funds from traditional means (print and billboards) to online initiatives. "We have really embraced the digital space; 75% of our advertising is through electronic marketing today."

All in all, management likes what it is seeing at the membership level. "We have the best dealer base, and we are exceeding the industry growth rate," Howard Brodsky, co-founder, chairman and co-CEO, CCA Global Partners told FCNews. It's an exciting time for the industry."

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# Double-stick applications prove their staying power

By Ken Ryan

There's an old proverb that states: A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The same holds true for flooring installation. For a job

to stand the test of time there cannot be any weak areas. One way to ensure a lasting installation, experts say, is through the proper adhesive—better yet, a double-stick application.

“Utilizing premium-grade

adhesives and underlayments will help ensure no callbacks and ensure a durable multi-layer foundation designed for optimal performance with longevity,” said David Jackson, field technical services manag-

er for DriTac Flooring Products. Double-stick adhesives are commonly used in hardwood and LVT/LVP flooring installations in many large-scale, high-rise and multi-family projects and have been the time-tested

method of choice in the installation community when superior sound control results are required.

Following are some of the newest double-stick application products impacting the market.

## Ardex

According to Ardex executives, double-stick application adhesives are critical for the installation of tile and stone as tiles are increasing in size, weight and density. Choosing the proper adhesive for securing tile or stones to a substrate can result in a successful or failed installation. (The cost of failures, experts say, might far outweigh the price of a proper adhesive.) To that end, Ardex's tile and stone installation systems are designed to offer a total system solution for installing super-format tiles, backed by a comprehensive single source warranty that is uncommon within the tile and stone industry. Ardex describes its S 28 as an innovative “high-performance, rapid drying and rapid hardening, microfiber-reinforced, polymer-modified tile and stone mortar for interior installations.” S 28 is highly flexible with virtually no shrinkage and an extended open time, making it ideal for large and super format tile and stone installations.



## Schönox

Schönox Emiclassic, a universal, pressure-sensitive acrylic adhesive, is suitable for bonding all type of vinyl, carpet, linoleum and synthetic rubber coverings as well as impact sound insulation underlayments on porous and non-porous substrates. Emiclassic has very low emissions is free of solvents and emits very little odor. It conforms to MED 96/98/EC, contributes to LEED certification projects and includes Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) certification.

Schönox TS is an underlay made from cork granules and urethane, which improves both sound and heat insulation while creating more comfortable living spaces.

“It can be installed under resilient floor coverings such as vinyl, cushioned vinyl, carpet or wood flooring as well as installed on wood substrates such as plywood and bonded floor coverings such as vinyl, wood flooring or ceramic tile,” said Michael Mayer, business development, for Schönox. TS also contributes to LEED certification, he added.



## DriTac

DriTac has unveiled two new underlayment systems—DriTac 8302 Double Impact for wood and laminate floor installations, and DriTac 8301 Impact for resilient floor installations. Both low-VOC products provide enhanced acoustical abatement properties and provide a total sound-reduction system with dual force, silent fuse technology when used with approved DriTac flooring adhesives. Available for the first time in the market, DriTac's SRS also offers moisture control properties, less risk and a lifetime warranty, the company stated.

Other products include DriTac 5900 MegaBond and 7900 Super Grab. MegaBond is a premium-grade resilient flooring adhesive specially formulated to help minimize vinyl plank shrinkage. It is a high moisture-resistant adhesive that provides maximum bond strength for a wide array of flooring types. Super Grab is a premium grade, moisture-cured urethane adhesive developed for installing long-length/wide-width plank hardwood flooring.



## W.F. Taylor

Agile (2100) is a fast-tacking, solvent-free, premium adhesive for the interior installation of both direct glue-down and double-stick carpet installations. This adhesive has been specially designed to provide quick grab with fast wet suction and holding power for bonding the most challenging carpet backing installs. Additional features include greater flexibility for large installations, high strength/water resistant bond and an environmentally conscious formula.

A second product in the 2100 series is Delta Force, a fast-grab premium carpet adhesive for the interior installation of both direct glue-down and double-stick carpet installations. Delta Force comes with a 10-year performance warranty.



## Flooring America

Continued from page 1

from the competition, allowing you to demand a higher price and better margin. When you have the opportunity to deliver a complete project to your customer, you will have a tremendous advantage over the competition.”

The overarching theme behind the event, “Building Buzz,” was designed to engage all ranges of attendees and help them perform at their peak. Conference organizers also put a new spin on the show by adding a sub theme (“Pathfinding”), which was designed to provide specific tracks, or pathways, tailored toward specific job functions.

The goal, according to Spano, was to get members to bring as many of their salespeople as possible. “We want to help the front line—the conduit to our customer—to make sure they have all the information they need. If they are successful, then our members will be more successful. It trickles down.”

In speaking with members at the convention, Spano likes what he’s hearing. “Business is good right now, so it’s much easier for store owners and managers to send more people to convention and invest in their staff. Some of our dealers brought several people to convention—as much as six people in some cases.” (On average, Flooring America tends to draw about 85% of members at convention, with attendance a tad higher at the winter events.)

Members such as Danielle Eckenrode, sales associate with Pro Floors & Cabinets, Naples, Fla., came to convention in search of information and tips to share with her co-workers back home. This is particularly true when it comes to social media initiatives. “There is so much more we could be doing,” she said. “Social media is really driving business.”

That’s why management is putting so much effort into social media. This includes everything from providing members with tips on how to market more effectively online to turning leads into sales opportunities. To their credit, according to Spano, members are embracing the change.

“If you go back six years ago, we gave iPads to all of our members to have access to proprietary digital apps. Some members didn’t even know how to turn them on. Fast forward to today, our members expect us to be innovating and building on to our digital elements. They are incredibly digitally savvy.”

Spano said members have

made strides in this regard in just a few short years. Five years ago, Flooring America rolled out its “FAST” program, the first social media syndication platform of its kind for flooring, he said. At the time, many members were not convinced there could be an adequate ROI on social media investment, but that has changed. “Fast forward to today, they embrace it 100%.”



Piet Dossche, CEO of USFloors, explains the features and benefits of WPC to attendees on the show floor.

### Good vibes

On the whole, sales trends are favorable for many Flooring America dealers. In his address to retail members, Spano cited encouraging consumer purchasing trends and changing demographics. He said April 2017 was the biggest month for the group since 2012.

“Things are pretty positive—the stock market is up, consumer confidence is on the rise, the job numbers are good and our members tell us their stores have been busy,” Spano said. “Overall, people are generally investing in their homes again. Millennials, especially, are buying homes and contributing to the home improvement market. If any of our members are not crushing it

out there right now, then we have to talk.”

Spano is so optimistic about the potential for members to grow sales in the current economy that he’s raising the bar. “We’re creating this new benchmark of \$1 million in sales—that’s where we want everyone to be.”

Dealers like Kevin Wahl, sales manager with R&R Creative Interiors in Lac La Biche, Alberta, Canada, is encouraged by what he’s seeing among the key millennial demographic. “It reaffirms some of what we have known about some of these specific groups of buyers.”

### Product, program highlights

While education is always a key draw, members also come to see new products, line extensions and new marketing programs. There was plenty of this to go around as Flooring America unveiled new private-label programs in hot, trendy categories such as LVT, WPC, hardwood and even soft carpet. Highlights included: the new Purstone line from Armstrong; Floorcraft wood from Shaw; exotic-looking offerings from Hemisphere Imports; a new partnership with Stainmaster Pet Protect; and a soon-to-be released WPC program dubbed Galvanite.

In walking the show floor, Joe Perdue, sales manager, Dobson’s Flooring America, Garland, Texas, liked what he saw in Shaw’s Floorte Pro line. “We were really blown away by it. Usually you can pick a good-looking laminate or LVT. But as we cruised through the space we legitimately thought we had a real wood floor here. It’s the best real wood visual we’ve ever seen; it’s going to be a game changer in the product category. Shaw has a real home run here.”

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## marketing mastery

# Cutting the ropes that are tying you down

(Second of three parts)

**P**icture a hot air balloon lifting off the ground, but it can’t go higher than 60 feet because of the rope holding it down. The balloon is your business, and the rope is how many hours you can physically work each week. Your business wants to soar, but eventually you reach the end of your rope. It might be 50, 70 or 90 hours, but eventually you’ll run out of the time you can put into your business. Let’s look at five keys to cutting the rope.

### Key #1: Goals/objectives.

Imagine a ship setting sail from New York; without a goal where is it going to go? In circles, most likely. Which is where a lot of dealers find themselves going. Goals enable you to set a course and move forward toward a specific destination.

Goals must be specific, written and have a deadline to be useful. Saying “I want to make

## THE MORE FREQUENTLY YOU REVIEW YOUR GOALS, THE MORE EFFICIENTLY YOU’LL GET THERE.

more money,” is not a goal. But writing “I will increase my average monthly revenue from \$20,000 to \$25,000 by July 1, 2018,” is a goal. Saying “I want to work less” is not a goal. But writing “I will take Fridays and weekends off by November 1, 2017,” is a goal.

It’s important to review your goals regularly. Let’s go back to that ship setting sail from New York. The captain has a goal to reach London. During the voyage, waves and wind will knock the ship off course, so the crew must monitor where they are at and make continuous course corrections. The ship will get to London not in a straight line but in a series of zig-zags. It’s the same with your business. The more frequently you review your goals, the tighter the zigs and zags and you’ll get there more efficiently.

**Key #2: Develop core values.** These are the timeless values that are unique to your business and separate you from the com-



JIM AUGUSTUS ARMSTRONG

petition. Some real-world examples include: customer service, always do the right thing, continually strive for perfection, exhibit creativity, be growth oriented, we have fun in business, etc.

Your core values already exist in your organization, you’ve just lost sight of them in all the chaos. An effective way to uncover them is to do the following four steps, which I learned from the book “Traction” by Gino Wickman.

**Step 1:** Have your leadership team make a list of the two or three people in your organization who—if you could clone them—would enable you to dominate your market.

**Step 2:** Make a list of all the positive traits those individuals exhibit in their roles.

**Step 3:** Your businesses core values are contained within this list. Your leadership team should identify every core value or principle that applies to your company.

**Step 4:** Whittle the list down to the five to seven that are truly your company’s core values.

Being clear on your core values enables you to attract and keep the right people. It empowers your team to make decisions or handle tricky situations when you’re not there. Once you identify your core values, hire, fire and train based on these values. This will enable you to build a strong company culture that can survive ups and downs in the market and enable you to achieve your ideal business and ideal lifestyle.

In the next installment I’ll cover the remaining three keys to cutting the rope so your business can soar. If you have questions or comments I’d love to hear them. Please e-mail me at [support@flooringsuccesssystems.com](mailto:support@flooringsuccesssystems.com).

Jim Augustus Armstrong specializes in providing turnkey marketing strategies for flooring dealers. For a complimentary copy of Jim’s book, “How Floor Dealers Can Beat the Boxes and Escape the Cheap-Price Rat-Race of Doom Forever,” visit [beattheboxestoday.com](http://beattheboxestoday.com).

## Retail education

Continued from page 8

ago, more than 15,000 online courses have been completed. Online training, in particular, is extremely convenient because large sales crews can be trained simultaneously. At the same time, individual members can complete the training at their own pace. "It also allows us to provide timely, accurate education in a way that is extremely affordable," said Stephanie Owen, NWEFA director of education and member engagement. NWEFA's training costs \$100 per company per year, and any number of company employees can participate in the training even if they are in multiple locations.

Another advantage of NWEFA University, according to Owen, is the digital "badging" component. Digital badges are graphic images that represent a learned skill; in NWEFA's case



they also contain metadata verifying the recipient's proficiency with that skill. This metadata includes the date the badge was earned, information about NWEFA as the issuer of the badge and the specific skill that was learned and confirmed through testing. These digital badges can be shared publically on social media platforms, websites and e-mails to market the sales associate's expertise. They also can become part of the sales associate's life-long digital resume.

### NTCA

The National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) has com-



pleted the first year of related content for its Apprenticeship Program. Year one of the two-year online training program consists of 64 courses that serve as an introduction to the tile industry beginning with the basics of cutting, mixing and grouting before moving on to surface preparation, underlayment application and other installation processes.

With 500 enrollments for the first year of curriculum, these courses are intended to support contractors in training by serving as a training resource for employees who are new to the industry or for those who may be affiliated with the contractor's Department of Labor-approved apprenticeship program.

In addition to proper training for new hires, these courses may also serve as continued education for tile professionals who would like to refresh their

memory on basic industry knowledge. "When we started developing these courses, I knew very little of the actual tile installation process including materials, tools and all of the steps required before installing tile," said Becky Serbin, NTCA training and education coordinator. "We worked with experienced contractors and manufacturers to simplify the courses so someone such as myself, who is new to the installation process, would be able to understand industry terminology and apply course information on the job."

### Ceramic Tile and Stone

At Ceramic Tile and Stone Consultants, Pompo developed a university (UofCTS.org) tool featuring online training courses for tile and stone salespeople and installers. The courses are developed with the latest technology to maximize learning

and retention. The courses take five to eight hours to complete, and the student can take the course in one night or over a two-week period with 24/7 access. Upon completion, students receive a personalized certificate and a student reference guide that can be downloaded and kept for reference.

The "Understanding the Basics of Tile" and "Basics of Stone" courses are designed to give students the requisite background and technical information while teaching them how to professionally sell using consultative approach. "Students who complete these courses become immediately more effective in their jobs," Pompo explained. "It gives them knowledge, confidence and credibility in the eyes of the customer. The student becomes confident and feels good about their knowledge, which motivates them and improves their performance."

UofCTS includes the "Tile Installer Thin-set Standards" (ITS) verification course, which teaches installers the industry installation standards, practices and methods so they can avoid costly failures. The course is available in English or Spanish.

## Armstrong

Continued from page 1

Maier emphasized the plant closures will not impact product availability, service or cost to customers. For instance, production from the Jackson plant, which manufactures 2- and 3-inch-wide solid products exclusively, will be transferred to Armstrong's other domestic wood flooring plants, reflecting a shift in demand. In recent years, consumption of engineered wood flooring has outpaced that of solid wood flooring.

With respect to the Vicksburg plant, which produces core veneers and plywood used in production of engineered wood floors at Armstrong Flooring's Somerset, Ky., facility Armstrong Flooring will continue engineered wood flooring

production here. There will be no change in surface veneer suppliers, which means product visuals will not be affected.

"Across the industry, we've seen increasing demand for wider-width wood planks and textured surfaces, and our six other wood plants in the U.S. have the capability and capacity to manufacture a full range of products to meet customer demand," Maier explained.

The latest consolidation announcement marks the second reduction in staffing in response to strategic initiatives. Earlier this year, Armstrong realigned its residential and commercial divisions and combined resilient and wood manufacturing operations, resulting in the loss of 40 positions (FCNews, March 13/20, 2017).

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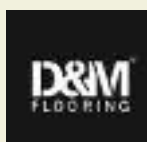
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