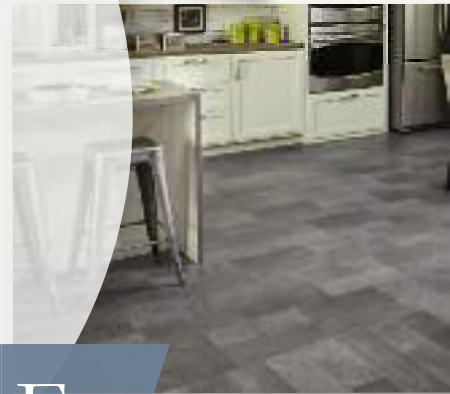
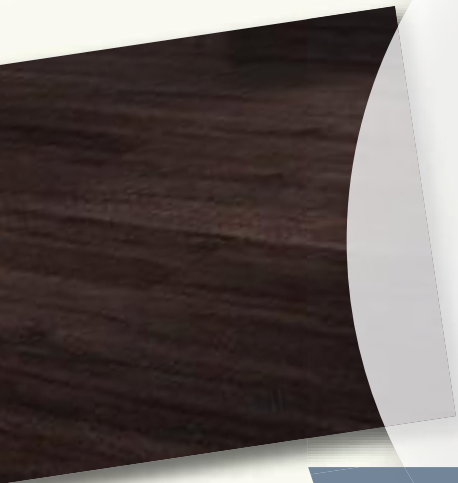
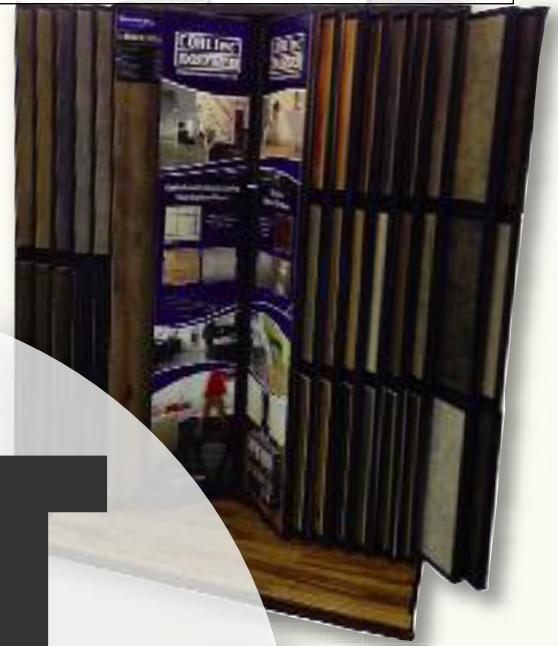
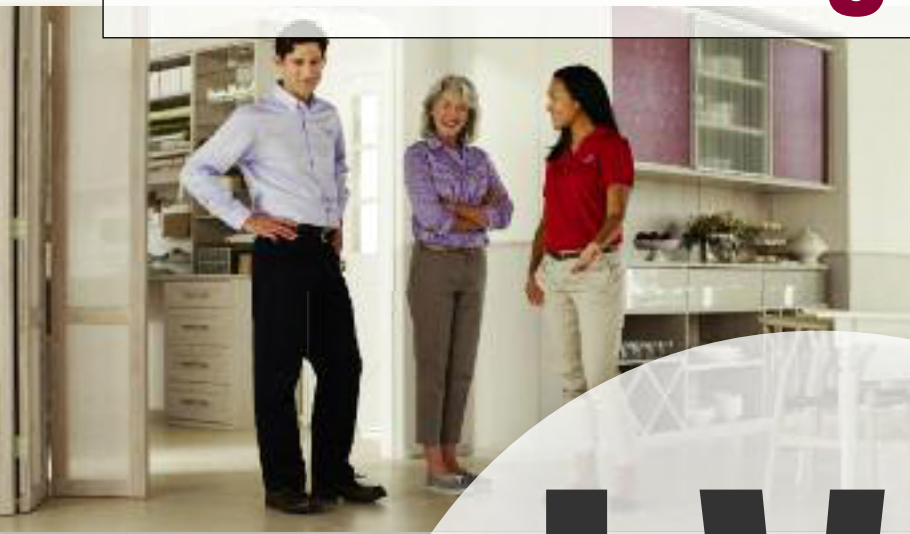


NEWSPAPER

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LVT

SELLING GUIDE



3rd edition

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LVT is still the star of the resilient show

Continuing on a growth trajectory of 8.5% in 2013 and 8.4% in 2014, the resilient category showed no signs of slowing in 2015 and is continuing to maintain its high standing in the marketplace in 2016.

LVT continues to drive the category, accounting for 27% of resilient's volume in 2014 and increasing 20.3% in sales from the previous year. As has been the case for the last few years, executives pegged LVT growth in 2015 at a higher rate than the resilient category as a whole. "We are still seeing double-digit growth in LVT," said John Wu, president and CEO of Novalis Innovative Flooring. "More and more consumers are realizing what a great product LVT is; it is versatile and can be installed anywhere with various methods, and it's easy to maintain."

Russ Rogg, president and CEO, Metroflor, said LVT is "unquestionably the hottest category in the industry," which he projected to grow in 2015 at a 17% to 18% clip. "LVT is a residential product, a commercial product, a

DIY and professional installed product—all features that help give it a broader market appeal than other hard surface flooring options."



Novalis products meet current market demands with longer planks and varied gray tones.

Dan Natkin, senior director, residential products, Mannington, agreed with Rogg, although his growth projections were more conservative. "Overall, I would say [resilient was] up in the low-single digits in 2015 with the

LVT market probably approaching 10%. LVT is continuing to grow at a phenomenal pace, taking share from carpet as well as some other hard surface categories. We see a lot of activity [for resilient overall] in multi-family new home construction, where both sheet vinyl and LVT play very strongly."

Jonathan Train, president and CEO of EarthWerks, noted the appeal of LVT throughout various channels. "Across all sectors, many designers, consumers and various other end users would never have considered LVT as an option. But with so many major flooring companies now offering [the product], it has elevated its exposure, and people have a better understanding of its value and benefits."

With this widespread use, LVT is continuing to take share from both soft and other hard surface products. "For reasons... such as value, aesthetics, durability and easy care and maintenance, it is naturally favored over carpet and many hard surface alternatives, mean-

Continued on page 42

lvt 101: overview

How vinyl has evolved to become a go-to product category

BY JEFFREY **FELLER**

National accounts manager, Citiflor

We all know that vinyl has been around forever. Over the years it has been branded with many different names that basically just categorize the general product category. Vinyl is exceptionally durable and easy to clean so it has historically been a staple for kitchens, laundry rooms and other wet areas. However, the main drawback to sheet vinyl, critics say, is its limited design options. Plus, with seams that opened up the product would gouge, dent and even tear in some cases. The only way to fix sheet is to call an installer to patch it or move an appliance over it.

In time, manufacturers began to experiment with luxury vinyl planks that were, for the most part, 2mm thick, square-edge options that could be glued down by consumers or installed by professionals. This was considered a commodity product and really didn't catch on residentially as, once again, the designs just weren't there.



Luxury vinyl offers ease of maintenance, comfort underfoot, water resistance and high design, making it the choice for many environments.

Add a locking mechanism to the square-edge plank, beef up the body, top it with a durable wear layer and introduce endless design possibilities and now we're onto something. Take that same original ease of maintenance, the underfoot comfort, water resistance, effortless installation and repairs and you have the hottest flooring innovation since laminate.

It isn't uncommon for a luxury vinyl tile or plank to have a 20-, 30- or 50-year residential warranty. When it comes to commercial applications, the product is durable enough to come with warranties moving into the 10-year range.

Similar to other flooring types, there are rules to luxury vinyl installation that need to be adhered to, so it is best to consult each manufacturer's installation requirements. All in all, the category has evolved significantly and is capable of performing in just about any application. Luxury vinyl's versa-

tility has carved out a permanent home in the industry and is sure to continue evolving for a long time.

the basics

Components of LVT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Construction: LVT construction usually consists of four layers fused together. From the top down:

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

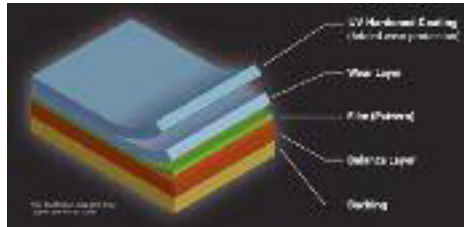
2. Clear film: This layer protects against rips and tears.

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

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

Other benefits of LVT include:

- Ease of maintenance: Damp mopping is the recommended cleaning procedure for LVT.
- Water resistance: LVT is pretty much impervious to wet spills.
- Scratch, stain and dent resistance.
- Durability: It’s not unusual to see 20- to 25-year warranties on LVT.



OVERVIEW

All you need to know about selling LVT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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the basics

Next-gen fiberglass reinforces LVT's stability

By Jenna Lippin

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: NOVALIS

The place for LVT in 2016

In 1984, Novalis became the first manufacturer of luxury vinyl flooring (LVF) in China. Since then, the company hasn't stopped leading the industry. Since those early days, Novalis has become a leading worldwide brand of flooring that is distributed and sold in more than 50 countries on six continents. Today, Novalis is ranked among the top five producers of LVF.

A pioneer. Long ago Novalis figured out the many qualities and expectations of LVF that we now take for granted. The company was one of the first to introduce LVF to American consumers in the 1990s. For many years Novalis worked behind the scenes to supply some very big flooring brands with exceptional realism in its wood and stone designs. As the market grew for LVF, so did Novalis. In the last decade, the company made the move to front and center by marketing its own brands: NovaFloor to the American retailer and consumer, and AVA to the contract market.

An innovator. The mission of the company is to live up to the high bar it has set with its name, Novalis Innovative Flooring. It does this by leading the category with superior design nurtured from its global vantage point. Novalis is also the first Asian

brand to become an environmentally responsible manufacturer with voluntary transparency through Declare labeling, environmental product declarations and health product declarations.



Novalis Innovative Flooring markets its NovaFloor brand to retailers.

A partner. Novalis knows it can only be successful if it continues to serve its customers well. That's why its policy is to maintain a local service and inventory presence, enabling the company to quickly respond to and supports its distributors when and where they need it most. Its NovaFloor merchandising system has been touted as being among the best in the category and gives the retailer the flexibility to display any or all of the residential, Main Street and light commercial tiles and planks.

#ThePlaceForLVT No other manufacturer has a more complete product line than Novalis. No matter what installation method, planks or tiles, traditional LVF or engineered vinyl, residential or commercial, Novalis has what today's flooring customer is looking for. More information is available at novafloor.us or on Facebook, Pinterest or LinkedIn under Novalis Innovative Flooring. To speak directly with a Novalis representative, call 704.799.1111.

THE PLACE FOR LVT IN 2016

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selling

Creative ways to upgrade customers to LVT

Luxury vinyl tile and plank (LVT/LVP) became a big hit in the flooring world at the right time—just after the great recession, at a time when dealers really needed something to excite their customers.

LVT offers that kind of promise. Retailers can also have some fun with the product and try to upsell their customers. Steve Weisberg of Crest Flooring in Allentown, Pa., sets up a display in his showroom depicting a



To upsell customers, retailers need to have displays that accentuate hot products.

lvt 101: selling

Asking shoppers the right questions

BY DAVID SMALL

Director, residential marketing, Mannington

LVT continues its streak as the hottest category in flooring today, generating excitement among consumers in the market for designer products that lend themselves to customization. Specialty retailers are in a unique position to capitalize on the category's rising popularity but only if they focus on asking the customer the right questions at the point of sale.

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

Next step: Ask the customer about her color preference. For instance, does she tend toward light, medium or dark shades? Also, find out if the new floor is going to be a backdrop for existing furnishings or if it will set the stage for a full-scale remodeling project?

Now move on to size and shape. LVT, with its myriad of patterns

and colors, offers options that let a customer design a layout that's all her own. Find a manufacturer that offers a wide range of sizes and shapes. For example, planks are usually available in 4-, 5, 6- and 8-inch widths with lengths ranging anywhere from 3 to 4 feet. Some manufacturers even offer short planks in a 6 x 18 format to help with modular styles. Tiles typically measure 16 x 16 with rectangular formats available in a 12 x 24 size. Bottom line: the layout possibilities by mixing and matching planks and tiles are a huge selling point for LVT, allowing the homeowner to create a truly custom look.

hardwood product, laminate and luxury vinyl—all the same visual. "It's pretty cool when consumers tell us they don't want something that looks like fake wood and then we ask them to tell us which of the three is real," Weisberg said. "Displays on the floor as well as visual displays are the best way to show it and to emphasize the durability and practical nature of the product."

With so much attention being paid to LVT today, it is crucial that RSAs have a firm grasp of the category and are able to convey the many benefits of LVT to upsell consumers.

FCNews asked retailers for their tips in this regard.

It takes salesmanship

Olga Robertson, president of the FCA Network, Shorewood, Ill., used to upsell her customers from LVT to hardwood or tile but as pricing has eroded the old strategy no longer works as effectively. "Now we have to trade them up from low-end products from lumber yards and home centers that sell for \$1.19 to better goods that sell for \$2.69 to \$2.99 or more per square foot—that's quite a leap and it requires salesmanship."



Determining the homeowner's personal design taste is critical when recommending an LVT product.

and colors, offers options that let a customer design a layout that's all her own. Find a manufacturer that offers a wide range of sizes and shapes. For example, planks are usually available in 4-, 5, 6- and 8-inch widths with lengths ranging anywhere from 3 to 4 feet.

Some manufacturers even offer short planks in a 6 x 18 format to help with modular styles. Tiles typically measure 16 x 16 with rectangular formats available in a 12 x 24 size. Bottom line: the layout possibilities by mixing and matching planks and tiles are a huge selling point for LVT, allowing the homeowner to create a truly custom look.

Don't forget to talk to the customer about grout options for her tile. The look of grouted and ungrouted tile—and even the color of coordinating vs. contrasting grout—is more dramatic than she might realize. Grouted tiles have more of a real tile feel, while ungrouted installations tend to provide a cleaner overall look.

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

Luxury, not vinyl

David Arita, who owns The Carpet Shoppe in Honolulu, carries mostly higher-end LVT goods and leverages that in his sales message. “When we explain it to the customers we always emphasize ‘luxury’ and not the word ‘vinyl,’” he said. “When you focus on luxury and also on the value of saving on installation as well as maintenance, the realistic colors and visuals sell themselves. We do have lower end but we keep those on the side or in the back and show them to the customers looking for the least expensive material.”

It solves problems

It doesn't take much to upsell a customer on LVT because the product fits so many lifestyles and has so many benefits that consumers are naturally drawn to it. “People are much more educated about the category now than ever before,” said A.J. Boyajian, co-owner of A.J. Rose Carpets & Flooring, with three Massachusetts locations. “A lot of times people come in asking for LVT so there isn't much need for upselling.”

Feel me

People need to see, touch and walk on LVT to understand how good it is. Adam Joss, co-owner of The Vertical Connection Carpet One in Columbia, Md., believes nothing works better than installing LVT on the showroom floor and telling its story.

“Once you tell the story, consumers are more likely to be upsold,” Joss said. “People need to see it to believe it. Often when you explain the ‘V’ stands for ‘vinyl’ we receive a negative reaction assuming the customer had wood or ceramic in mind. Considering the benefits of LVT, their attitudes do a 180-degree turn when they see samples installed on the showroom floor. Oftentimes there's no going back to the category they think they wanted.”

Positioning

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

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

Sample it well

LVT is a beautiful product, so make it stand out. Take advantage of the product's random widths, large sample sizes and realistic visuals.

“The bigger the sample, the better you can show it visually,” said Bill Huss, owner of D&M Interiors Flooring America in Appleton, Wis., who has LVT displayed in a 40 x 20-foot space in his showroom. “Our LVT is installed on the floor in a variety of patterns, colors and styles.” Framed 3 x 4-foot panels of LVT on the walls allow customers to view it up close and feel the samples.”

Another key: Don't clutter the showroom with too many SKUs and displays. Retailers suggest a happy medium of lines, “enough to cover the bases such as price point, looks and installation types,” Huss said.

lvt 101: selling

Don't forget: Every room in the home needs love

BY TAMMY PEREZ

Director of brand marketing, Mohawk Hard Surface

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

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

There's no need for that basement to remain unfinished and completely underutilized, only serving for unsightly storage when it could be easily be outfitted into a favorite functional space. And that laundry room that is beginning to resemble an indoor version of a cluttered garage? It can be transformed and uplifted into something versatile, eye-catching and enjoyable.

Are your customers aware of how dazzling the latest LVT

looks are? In addition to being engineered for high performance, resiliency and durability, LVT boasts some of the most realistic, wire-brushed hardwood looks and textured, natural stone visuals ever produced. It offers high-end appeal without maxing out a consumer's budget yet remains moisture resistant, maintains a constant temperature, is easy to install and instantly ready for traffic. This is the per-



Customers should consider all areas of the home when contemplating a flooring purchase.

fect flooring for rooms that have been neglected for far too long.

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

selling

Domestic vs. import: Perceived advantages

Domestic companies and importers face some of the same challenges when it comes to LVT manufacturing, including speed to market, cost containment and maintaining sufficient inventory. For those interested only in serving the U.S. market, domestic production has obvious advantages; however, for

By Ken Ryan

those with a global reach, such as USFloors, having a presence overseas, particularly Asia, is a key to success.

“We are continuously investing heavily in our Chinese and U.S. operations to guarantee

the best quality, leading-edge styling and first-class service to support the fast growth of our COREtec brand, which is now represented in 25 countries,” said Piet Dossche, president and CEO of USFloors.

Following is a look at the domestic and import advantages of LVT.

Domestic

1. Faster turnaround

In 2016, Raskin Gorilla Floors did something CEO Michael Raskin said he always wanted to do—make LVT in the U.S. Through an OEM deal with Nox, the company introduced its first domestically made LVT brand, FloorNation. “Having product made in the USA offers some significant selling points—we now have the ability to deliver hundreds of thousands of square feet in less than three weeks without the need to stock in a distributor’s warehouse.

“While others are building factories and attempting to manufacture product stateside, the fact is that they are new to LVT production and are bound to experience some hiccups. The factory with which we will be working has valuable, longtime experience in LVT production.”

It may take 16 weeks for LVT to be shipped from China to a distribution center in the U.S. With domestic manufacturing, it could take a week to go from a warehouse to a retail store. For a consumer that could make the difference in choosing a domestic LVT product for a home project.



Nox's new \$21 million LVT plant in Fostoria, Ohio, where LVT products for Raskin under the FloorNation brand are made.

2. Made in the USA

Onshoring is not just a trend, it is mainstream. It also makes sense. When it purchased Amtico, Mannington’s LVT was sourced 100% from China; however, the company found the supply chain difficult to manage. By onshoring, Mannington is able to significantly reduce its lead times while promoting the Made in the USA message.

There is a growing sense that U.S.-made products are of higher quality than imports and consumers are increasingly looking for Made in the USA items to buy. Floor covering retailers say that while most consumers don’t ask about

country of origin when it comes to LVT, letting them know a producer is from America gives it a leg up on imports.

3. Working capital

One of the greatest benefits of domestic manufacturing—for manufacturers as well as retailers—is that domestically produced products do not tie up working capital the way imports generally do.

4. Control your own destiny

By manufacturing products in the U.S., companies are better equipped to control most, if not all, aspects of the customer experience from production to customer service. This commitment to domestic manufacturing, combined with major improvements to efficiency and investments in technology, allow companies to develop product with less labor per square foot, thus producing LVT in the U.S. without a significant price increase. That can translate to better value for consumers.

5. Environmental protection

Consumers clearly care about where their products are made and what was used to make

Continued on page 12

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: WICANDERS

HydroCork puts new spin on traditional WPC cores

Wicanders has recently taken a major step forward as the world leader in cork flooring solution with its development of the first waterproof cork core product, HydroCork. It quickly became the fastest growing product launch in the long and successful history of the premium brand.

With its Corktech technology, HydroCork takes the top benefits of both LVT and WPC—standing up to wear, water resistance and realistic wood visuals—and brings them to the next level.

What Corktech added to the equation is a set of scientifically proven properties with unbeatable performance: acoustics that facilitate up to 53% noise reduction; thermal qualities that assure optimal temperature at any time of



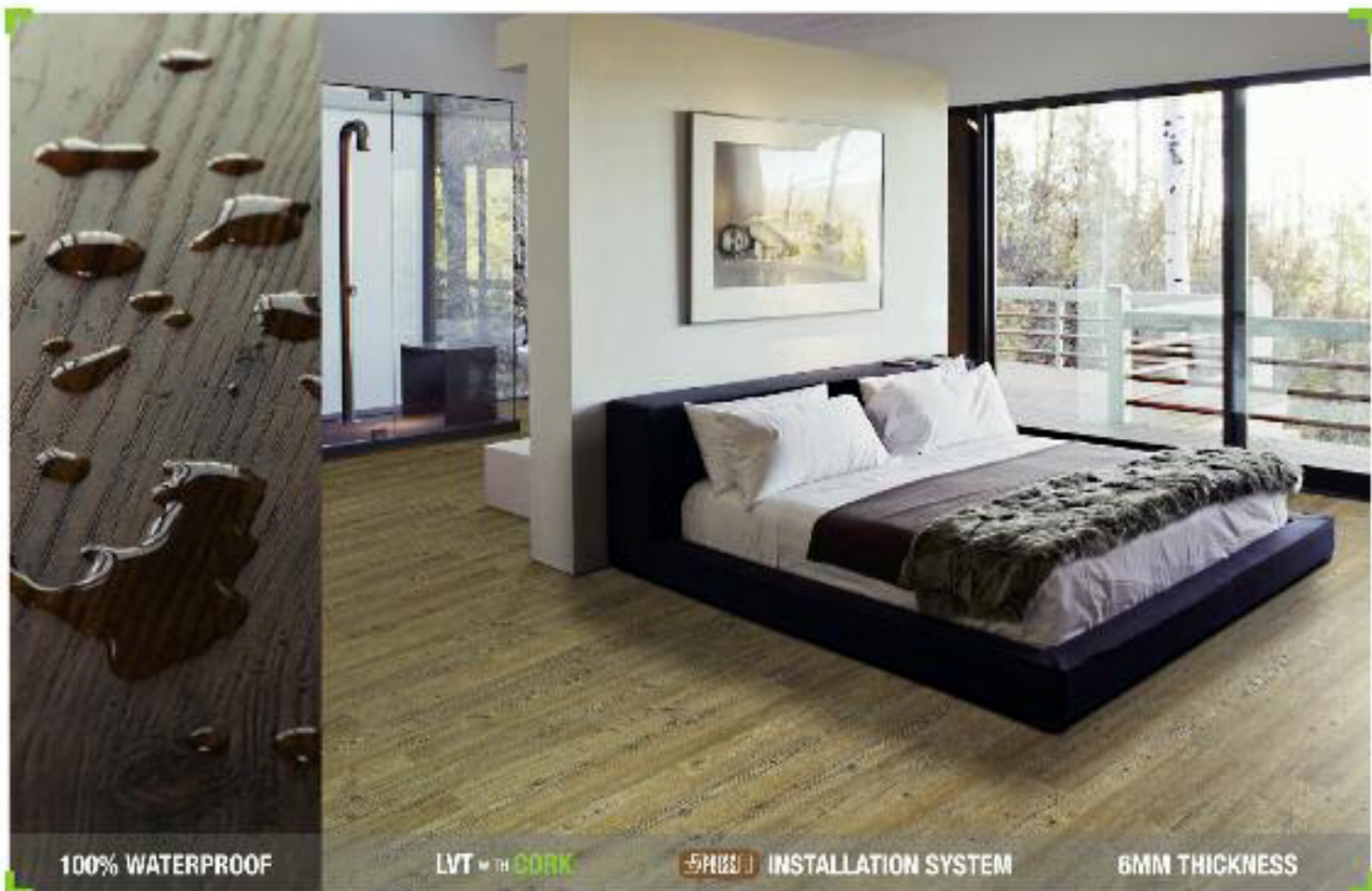
HydroCork brings WPC to a new level with its Corktech core and PressFit compression system.

the year; and greater comfort underfoot thanks to superior shock absorption which relieves body strain and prevents injuries while reducing fatigue.

In addition to these added values and superior wear resistance, Wicanders’ HydroCork comes with a lifetime residential warranty.

HydroCork has also become a best seller in commercial applications. Hotels, restaurants and retail locations are choosing the product due to its outstanding performance in renovation projects. Its thickness makes it ideal for installation over existing hard surface floors (there is no need to remove existing floors); the process is completed with ease thanks to PressFit, the revolutionary compression system. With its vertical installation system (no angling required), HydroCork can be installed in two steps using a rubber mallet or a hand roller. A craft knife is the only tool needed to cut the planks, assuring a dust-free environment while installing the floor.

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hydracork

20 mil vinyl wear layer
 Waterproof cork core
 Vinyl backing



selling

Continued from page 10

them. Few countries have the compliance laws the U.S. has regarding the protection of people

Import

1. Production methods

Most LVT importers have established manufacturing processes in place. As such, these companies have identified the best ways to be more efficient, accurate and resourceful. "With manufacturing overseas, all of the materials needed to make LVT are close at hand," said Lindsey Nisbet, head of product development and marketing strategy for EarthWerks. "Also, in many or most cases all steps are under one roof—extrusion, printing—each step is taken through a smooth flow process to avoid complications and errors, creating a trusted performance product. By importing our products, we have access to the best production capabilities globally and continue to build on those relationships and experience to bring reliable, quality products to not only the U.S., but to various countries worldwide."

2. Diverse capability

Many LVT companies have set up manufacturing facilities throughout Asia; Metroflor, for example, has plants in Taiwan, South Korea and China. The ability to source from these facilities has been a major boon for LVT importers, which can provide retailers and consumers with innovative looks. Some of these facilities specialize in particular product types and possess unique technologies. "This diverse capability is a definite competitive advantage and one that could not be

and the planet, from the federal level to local municipalities. In addition, green building rating systems have put a greater emphasis on how far a product travels, rationalizing the closer it is to the jobsite, the less energy required to get it there. While some companies

may complain about the abundance of government regulations, the floor covering industry, in many ways, has deemed many of these rules to be advantageous to manufacturing products in the U.S., and that clearly resonates with consumers.



Novalis, with the first Chinese factory to export LVF into the global marketplace, is expanding its manufacturing facility outside Shanghai.

achieved through a single plant or factory—regardless of location," said Russ Rogg, president and CEO of Metroflor. In addition, some of the resources needed for the manufacturing process can only be found in certain parts of the world. This includes everything from raw materials to special technologies.

3. Cost advantage

Employing foreign workers and importing finished goods is often much less expensive than producing raw materials locally and employing domestic labor. Reducing payroll and materials costs by contracting with foreign suppliers and fabricators creates opportunities for increased profits and lower wholesale prices.

There remains a cost advantage to producing products in Asia vs. other parts of the world. There are shipping costs associated with this model, but many believe the combination of

Asian production costs coupled with the associated shipping expenses still provides a better value model than the cost of domestic production.

4. First mover advantage

Luxury vinyl flooring originated in China in the mid-1980s, so some importers have first mover advantage. One of those companies is Novalis Innovative Flooring, with the first Chinese factory to export LVF into the global marketplace. "We are entering our second generation of LVF specialists and constantly building on the pioneering work of those before us," said John Wu, president and CEO. "There is a heritage and pride of workmanship there like nowhere else."

5. Supply chain investments

One area in which domestic production would appear to provide an advantage is related to turn-around time from the order to the receipt of goods. "This is a valid assumption, but one that can be overcome through supply chain investments," Rogg said. His company established a distribution center in Shanghai three years ago in which Metroflor inventoried finished goods of its entire Engage portfolio. "Our distributors can build containers from this inventory and receive goods in as little as two weeks [on the West Coast], but in most cases four weeks from the PO date. This is a significant advantage versus a typical 12-week lead time."

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: DuCHÂTEAU

Setting the new standard in LVT styling and design

Known as a leader in innovation, DuChâteau set the rose gold standard for LVT designs, introducing its famed natural matte wood aesthetic in its product lines—DuChâteau Vinyl DeLuxe Classic and Vinyl DeLuxe Click. As a result, the respective dry back and click products have remained a favorite among designers and architects. Now, as its manufacturing technologies have evolved, DuChâteau is looking to once again turn heads and embrace the most advanced vinyl innovations. While the eight-year-old luxury lifestyle brand remains tight lipped about what's exactly coming down the pipeline, many are wondering what's next.

"We won't reveal what we have in store for customers just yet, but let's just say the future of DuChâteau luxury vinyl is incredibly promis-



DuChâteau Vinyl DeLuxe Classic Collection features 16 glue-down colors for both residential and commercial applications.

ing," said Michelle Lee, DuChâteau's director of resilient flooring. "The kinds of new and exciting products we are developing are going to go

far beyond current offerings and will ensure that DuChâteau pushes the LVT category to a whole new level."

As always, DuChâteau maintains a strong commitment to sustainability with assurances that each product to be offered in this next wave will be as beautiful and durable as it is environmentally friendly. Until then, the current DuChâteau Vinyl DeLuxe Classic Collection features 16 stunning glue-down colors for both residential and commercial applications in high-traffic environments. DuChâteau Vinyl DeLuxe Click Collection, on the other hand, offers 10 rich colors in an easy-to-install floating floor option best suited for residential and light commercial spaces. Needless to say, DuChâteau knows how to keep an industry on its toes.



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selling

Whether comparing it to other products or

By Ken Ryan

Flooring retailers continue to devote more showroom space to luxury vinyl tile (LVT) as the growth of the category overshadows all other hard surface categories. In fact, LVT has gotten so big in many retail locations it has warranted its own section. In some cases, customers come in asking for the product. But just as often they are open to suggestions, which gives RSAs an opportunity to offer the right solutions.

Following are some successful strategies retailers have employed in their LVT business.

Qualifying the customer

Before discussing the benefits of LVT vs. laminate or ceramic tile, Adam Joss, co-owner of The Vertical Connection in Columbia, Md., said it is important to get to know the cus-

tomers first. "Our first goal is to understand a customer's objectives," he said. "If they're concerned about moisture, we say, 'LVT.' If they don't like the sound of laminate, we say, 'LVT.' If they don't want to spend on porcelain, we say, 'LVT.' We're generally not switching someone from wood to LVT, though."

Allocate separate space

Some dealers include sheet vinyl and LVT within a resilient area of their showrooms. But the majority now give LVT its own space because the success of the category merits it. "LVT is huge and only continues to grow," said Eric Langan, president/owner of Carpetland USA, with nine locations in Iowa and Illinois. "LVT provides a lot of benefits

for the consumer such as durability, water and scratch resistance, warmth underfoot, ease of installation for DIYers. In most cases, you can



lvt 101: selling

Building customer confidence in luxury vinyl tile

BY STEVE ROAN

Sales and marketing director, hard flooring, Berry Floor USA

It is important for retailers to not only educate consumers on the many benefits of luxury vinyl tile (LVT) but also to address any worries they may have. All purchases are emotionally based, and LVT is no exception. With LVT being a newer option for consumers, they may not know how to feel about the products or the perceived value of the category. It will benefit retailers to reassure the consumer they are making a smart decision. By reiterating to the consumer that vinyl planks are a beautiful, smart choice the customer will gain confidence in the product category.

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

lowing them to undergo renovations more often, attracting potential tenants looking for finishes that are up-to-date and on trend.

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

LVT is water resistant and as a result serves as a smart solution for applications throughout the home, providing a seamless transition from kitchen to living room, bathroom to bedroom and all the areas in between. It is also easy to maintain with simple damp mopping. LVT is warmer and softer underfoot than its alternatives without requiring installation of a separate underlayment. And because of its inherent sound absorption qualities, it can be easily installed directly over an existing floor while still keeping household noise caused by pets and kids to a minimum. It even decreases transferred sound to floors below.

Boasting warranties from 20 years to lifetime depending on the application, vinyl plank floors are made to withstand traffic, wear and tear. With value-adds unrivaled by other flooring options, consumers should be assured their decision to purchase vinyl planks is a solid one.



LVT's well-documented performance attributes make the product suitable for almost any application.

on its own, LVT stands tall

get all these benefits without giving up the overall look of a beautiful tile or wood floor. This resonates with many consumers and that's why I believe this is such a popular flooring option right now."

The Flooring Gallery in Louisville, Ky., presents LVP/WPC as its own category separate from other vinyl products. "LVP/WPC is our fastest growing

category, and it has directly taken business from laminate on the retail

side of the business," said Nick Freadreacea, president. "We have several builder accounts that have replaced their entry-level wood products with LVP/WPC items to reduce damage

during construction and for the easier maintenance for their millennial customers."

Product comparison

Kevin Rose, president and owner of Carpetland Colortile in Rockford, Ill., positions LVT near laminate but not near hardwood. "Laminate is fading fast in our markets and LVT is taking the laminate market share," he said. "Positioning the two items next to each other allows us to easily show the pros and cons of the two flooring categories. We take the position that our hardwood client is looking for a natural product and we try to separate the natural products and give them their own section of the showroom."

Kevin Murray, owner of Murray Floor & Window Coverings in Billings, Mont., said he lets his customers walk on the products to discern the differences. "They can often feel the

difference, especially LVT vs. laminate."

Promote WPC

The WPC subcategory of LVT has the potential to be a big star in flooring. To that end, dealers need to embrace the emerging opportunities. One dealer who is approaching the category with open arms is R.C. Willey Home Furnishings, which operates 13 locations in four Western states. "We position the LVT/LVP/WPC products next to laminate and hardwood," said Eric Mondragon, hard surface buyer. "WPC is sold as an upgrade to laminate flooring for those customers who need the waterproof feature and do not like the hardness of laminate or hardwood. Speaking specifically of WPC, the waterproof story as well as the ease of maintenance and quietness of the product gives it a distinct advantage over some of the other hard surface products."

As the fastest growing floor covering product today, LVT is commanding its own area in many retail showrooms.

lvt 101: selling

Why luxury vinyl can be the best choice for your customer

BY EBETH PITMAN

Director of brand marketing, Armstrong Flooring

When selling LVT to consumers, there are a number of explanations retail salespeople should use to help guide shoppers through the buying process. As the popular sales adage goes, "An informed consumer is our best customer."

First, help shoppers understand how the benefits of LVT will enhance their homes and enhance their lifestyles. Explain the differences between LVT and other flooring options—not only other vinyl offerings but laminate and hardwood, too. One of the most important benefits of LVT is how well it will perform and how good it will look for years to come.

1. Romanticize LVT's design aesthetic and realism. Show customers they can get the designs they want at prices that they can afford—and live with comfortably every day. Clearly speak to the key benefits that drive value for customers, from the floor's striking, on-trend designs to its superior durability and performance. Don't go right to the lowest price option; price alone never sells a product—you do.

Many luxury vinyl products are moisture re-

sistant; a few are completely waterproof. This is another great selling feature, especially if a customer is looking for a slam-dunk in a basement, kitchen or bathroom application where moisture may be present.

2. Talk about LVT's ease of installation, even when subfloor irregularities are present. Whether the customer are DIYers or prefer to have the floor professionally installed, the fact they can live on their new floor almost immediately is a significant selling point. If a product is made in the USA, call it out. Many customers like to know that.

3. On the selling floor, take advantage of merchandising displays to navigate the consumer through the shopping process. A good display will bring the product story to life and help hone in on the preferences of individual customers. At the same time, a quality display will allow the customer to connect with the product by being able to see it up close, touch it and even lay it on the floor to visualize it in her own home.

4. Finally, don't forget the power of a great brand name. Leading brands can be tremendous assets to retailers—they help bring people into the store and instill a sense of trust and confidence.



The realism in LVT designs is a major selling point for RSAs to highlight.

merchandising

Give LVT the floor space it deserves

Many flooring dealers say the best way to promote LVT is to have it actually installed in the showroom so customers can feel for themselves what everyone has been saying about the cat-

egory—that it is soft underfoot, durable and able to be installed in most every room in the house.

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



LVT is installed on the floors of the Visual Reality Center at Crest Flooring.

“We integrate LVT into our overall campaign with ads served through e-blasts, Facebook, digital display, radio and TV commercials. Currently our ads promote vinyl that is installed in an average size room.”

—Darren Braunstein, Worldwide Wholesale Flooring, Edison, N.J.

“LVT and, more specifically, vinyl plank is shown dramatically and more prominently in the showrooms as the category takes a more meaningful percentage of market share.”

—Sam Roberts
Roberts Carpet & Fine Floors, Houston

“We made a big move to promote LVT about a year ago because our laminate sales were stagnant and LVT was growing quickly. There were a lot of exciting introductions that we wanted to make room for in our showroom. Our LVT sales have continued to grow, and we get lots of positive feedback from our customers regarding our selection.”

—Billy Mahone III, Atlas Floors Carpet One, San Antonio

“The best way to promote LVT is by offering the product as an option to solving the very problem the client is currently experiencing. As an example, we may suggest the client consider our Downs H2O collection when replacing laminate flooring due to water damage. In addition, less expensive LVT may be a better option for the client when comparing it to low-priced laminate flooring. LVT, with its lower installation cost, enables a client to improve her product options without increasing her total investment.”

—Bobby Merideth, Flooring America OKC, Oklahoma City

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: IVC

Moduleo responds to mixed media design trend

As the resilient industry leader in style and design, IVC US always has its finger on the pulse of today's hottest looks and a foot in the door of tomorrow's must-have trends. One of the hottest up and coming design movements—especially in luxury vinyl planks and tiles—is mixed media design. A great example of this is taking a wood look or pattern and manipulating its classic characteristics and color variations to turn it into a stone or tile look and textural feel.

“Designing with mixed media is all about reimagining the possibilities and creating a new look in the market that is both fresh and interesting, but also one that can still remain timeless,” said Di Anna Borders, design development manager, LVT, IVC US. “This is one of the many benefits of designing for LVT because you are not constrained by what natural products give you. Instead, you can be inspired by whatever moves you, natural or otherwise, to see what kind of interesting designs you can make a reality. Mixed



The newly launched Brookwood Moduleo LVT line from IVC US includes trendy designs.

media LVT allows the end user to be more inventive in a space, and its designs complement both residential and commercial settings.”

The all-new, U.S.-made Moduleo LVT collection that IVC US unveiled at Surfaces 2016 features some of these mixed media designs.

Two great examples of this trend include IVC US's Brookwood 60094 and Brookwood 60087 designs.

“In essence, both Brookwoods in their original formats are the exact same wood pattern by definition, but by drastically altering their color play and design variation we created two completely different looks: one resembling a stone and the other resembling a wood plank,” Borders said. “We also took the liberty of formatting Brookwood 60094 into a luxury vinyl tile while making Brookwood 60087 a luxury vinyl plank. By having the advanced capability to implement these types of creative modifications, it allows us to introduce more exciting options into the market.”

Moduleo features a well-rounded portfolio of colors and designs ranging from the rich, tried-and-true classics to the warm character of rustics and the industrial chicness of today's contemporary styles. In other words, this LVT collection has something to offer everyone.



INNOVATIVE DESIGN

They say imitation is the finest form of flattery. Moduleo® luxury vinyl tiles & planks by IVC US is setting a new standard in trend-setting, show-stopping visuals that are so realistic, mother nature will be jealous. Visit www.getivcdisplays.com to learn more about becoming an IVC Displaying dealer.



A DIVISION OF MOHAWK INDUSTRIES

issue

LVT may bend on price but it won't break

By Ken Ryan

Commoditization of products is a given, much like death and taxes. In the flooring industry, for example, laminate went from a fast growing product to a commodity in just a few years as companies flooded the market and watered down the price.

Some have predicted that luxury vinyl tile (LVT) will follow a similar fate. However, there are those who suggest that while pricing pressure is inevitable as more companies enter the LVT market, the leading manufacturers will continue to offer new styles and designs to separate themselves from the fray.

Experts such as Russ Rogg, president and CEO of Metroflor, said the only way to prevent commoditization is to continuously add value and innovate. “Better-made products that are beautiful, solve problems, are easier to install and have premium attributes such as pre-attached sound underlayment or antimicrobial treatments—this is the only way to stop price erosion. These efforts, I might add, will be benefitted by continued interest and growth

in the category.”

According to Rogg, the commoditization of laminates accelerated due to overcapacities coupled with a declining economy and certain inherent limitations of the product it-

is quieter when walked upon and is therefore expected to have continued growth for the foreseeable future,” he explained. “While there is no mistake that capacities are increasing, growth is also occurring. This was not the case with laminate.”

Lindsey Nisbet, head of product development and marketing strategy for EarthWerks, believes as technology advances for LVT and WPC so, too, will the category as a whole. “The improvements made over the years have enabled this flooring to offer the most versatility in design and styling while maintaining exceptional performance attributes—such as its easy installation, low maintenance features, waterproof capabilities and traffic durability. These enhanced features are tremendous complements to the incredibly realistic patterns available within LVT/WPCs. For such high style at affordable pricing, this class will continue to grow.”

Other industry experts are bullish about the category's prospects, particularly as it pertains to end-use markets that demand better-performing, higher-mar-

Continued on page 20



High-end LVT products such as Sherbrooke from EarthWerks can help ward off price degradation in the category.

self. “LVT has proven itself to be a great product for residential and commercial applications alike, is not affected by moisture,

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: METROFLOR

Aligned dealer program provides exclusive selling benefits

Metroflor's new aligned dealer program will establish a network of professional retail outlets showcasing a new branding and selection center with a one-of-a-kind vehicle uniquely specific to LVT.

The Metroflor Selection Center is a key element of the aligned dealer program, putting Metroflor at the forefront with consumers. For the first time, a comprehensive offering of Metroflor's full assortment of 90-plus products—Konecto (Grip Strip), Metroflor LVT (glue-down), Engage and Engage Genesis (click and structural/rigid core)—is presented in a single, compact unit. This enables retail sales associates to offer one-stop shopping for LVT and is a way to educate consumers about the features and benefits of the entire range of product platforms.



The Metroflor Selection Center is a key element of its aligned dealer program, putting the company top of mind with consumers.

While enhancing the consumer experience, the program is equally beneficial to the aligned

dealer. Beyond the Selection Center, retailer members are provided with free sales and installation training, display floors to more prominently feature Metroflor's latest introductions, preferential listing on the new-and-improved metroflorusa.com website to drive store traffic, POP sales collaterals to create in-store awareness and an exclusive satisfaction guarantee that only aligned dealers can offer their customers. These advantages empower the aligned dealer to be more knowledgeable and competitive.

Whether it's training, POP materials, products merchandised or clients referred through Metroflor's new website, each opportunity is from the company that created the hottest category in the flooring industry today. Metroflor, “the LVT specialists.”



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issue

Continued from page 18

gin products. “More and more distributors recognize that they need to be involved not only in residential but also commercial,” said John Wu, president of Novalis Innovative Flooring. “Our research shows LVT is becoming a bigger part of the overall pie, and [with all the new products coming into the market] distributors will have a much greater chance of grabbing a larger share.”

That sentiment extends to other end-use sectors, namely Main Street commercial applications. “The economy is better today, so more people are shopping retail more,” Wu stated. “We are very bullish about the Main Street side of the business.”

Confidence abounds

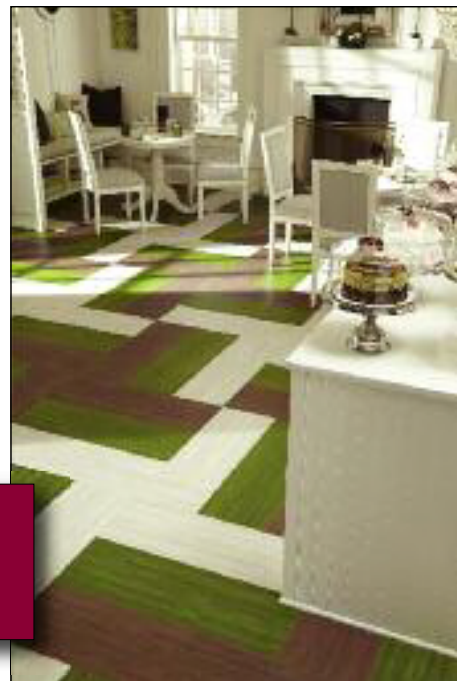
Retailers and distributors are also confident LVT is fundamentally different than laminate and can weather any pricing storm. A.J. Boyajian, co-owner of A.J. Rose Carpets & Flooring, with three Massachusetts locations, said if LVT can stay creative with looks and styles “it has a solid chance of holding its pricing—but I think it will be a challenge as the category matures.”

Scott Rozmus, president of FlorStar, a top 20 distributor, said today’s marketplace readily accepts LVT as a leading solution to many flooring challenges. “Historically, the market viewed LVT as a fantastic solution for a host of commercial and project-oriented applications. LVT’s versatility allowed the category to migrate into builder, multi-family and residential-remodeling applications. LVT’s greater ability to provide value-added differentiation within its own segment may shield this category from pure commoditization. The large space in which LVT operates has, in turn, afforded manufacturers the means of introducing differentiated product across a wider front, ebbing the march toward commoditization.”

Torrey Jaeckle, vice president at Jaeckle Distributors in Madison, Wis., said when laminate first came out it was an exciting and innovative product; however, it always had the “clicky” sound problem. “LVT doesn’t have that issue. You walk on LVT and often have to get down and inspect it to determine if it’s [natural material] or fake. In addition, LVT tiles are groutable and do a far better job of simulating actual stone or tile than lami-

nate. While pricing pressures are already evident and certain to continue materializing, the various LVT brands will more easily be able to defend their value proposition. In addition, laminate began to become known mostly as a DIY product with price being king. I don’t think that will be the fate of LVT because there is a large contingent of consumers looking for a professionally installed floor who are drawn to the value that LVT brings to the table.”

Commercial-grade products tend to command higher margins. Shown is the AVA collection from Novalis Innovative Flooring.



A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MARQUIS

Carpet mill expands offering to include luxury vinyl tile, WPC

Marquis Industries has not only expanded into a full-line carpet mill, it has also become a player in the fast growing hard surface category, specifically luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and WPC.

It’s no secret that hard surface products are gaining market share against carpet for several years now. When Marquis entered hard surface it started with laminates, followed by wood, luxury vinyl plank and tile and, now, WPC.

In 2014 Marquis introduced a luxury vinyl plank called County Home that is

a 4.2mm Unilin vinyl plank with a rustic design. The product took off as dealers remarked it was one of the best looking products in the market. This product exploded in the marketplace and continues to be a success. Then in 2015 Marquis introduced a commercially rated glue down product called Montana—a 3mm WPC with a 20 mil aluminum oxide finish. Its colors and aggressive pricing have helped Montana make its way into the showrooms of

many of the largest retailers in the U.S., the company said. The 7.25-inch x 4-foot planks can be installed with a pressure-sensitive adhesive.

WPC is Marquis’ newest category. Aspen boasts a 12 mil wear layer and a dense core that at 950 kg/m makes the product less susceptible to indentations. Until recently Marquis Industries sold its products off pallets; the company now offers dealers a hard surface display that takes up only 6 square feet

of retail space but highlights nine products from WPC and luxury vinyl tile/plank.

Marquis’ products are warehoused in Georgia and can be delivered to customers on a daily basis. Marquis will continue to expand its product line, focusing on top-quality products with the best designs and competitive pricing. All offerings are tested and retested to ensure superior performance as well as environmental compliance.



One of the biggest changes seen in both luxury vinyl and WPC is how realistic the patterns have become.

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trendspotting

Standing out in a sea of sameness

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

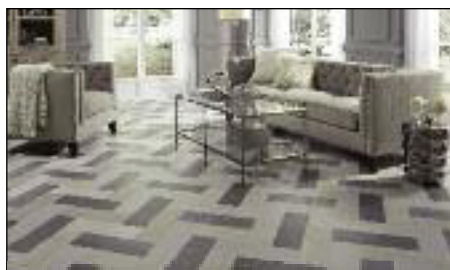
curve. Unprecedented designs and updated technology allow leading companies to offer something new seemingly every year. There is no room for boring in a flooded, competitive category.

Planks with non-wood visuals

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

One example of such innovation is Mannington's Meridian product from its Adura line. Meridian planks are smaller in comparison to the longer, wider trend of late coming in at a 6 x 48 format. In analyzing what's hot now, Mannington took the opportunity to create an evolving trend and translate it to LVT.

"When you think about plank for the most part they have been about wood visuals," said Joe Amato, vice president, residential styling. "As we looked at porcelain trends, which kind of drive a lot of the imitated products [like vinyl], we were seeing a movement toward



The Meridian pattern in Mannington's Adura product line features non-traditional visuals for plank formats.

non-wood visuals in a plank format. So we thought it would be a great idea for LVT to create that same kind of visual. The challenge was getting a [non-wood] visual that looked nice in a plank, but we were able to come up with this concrete stone look. And then we gave it a lot of character and color variation. When these

are down on the floor it looks like real marble or painted concrete."

Bold colors

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

EarthWerks' Cocktail collection features 7 x 48 glue-down planks that are offered in various hues of primary colors in addition to more traditional browns and grays. While there is the appearance of wood grain in these bold blanks, they do not exactly mimic a traditional hardwood floor. These options help the company "not only [hit] trends but also anything and everything in between," said Lindsey Nisbet,

lvt 101: selling

Probing beyond the obvious questions delivers results

BY ANGELINA **CEBRIÁN**

Marketing communications and events manager, IVC US

When a customer shops luxury vinyl planks or tiles (LVP/LVT), there are several obvious questions an RSA should ask such as: What area of the home are you installing? Or what is the square footage needed or color and style desired?

But are you and your RSAs taking it a step deeper?

Are you asking her about the amount of natural light in the space; what style or feeling is she trying to achieve; is it a small or large area? These types of deeper questions can help develop a better understanding and steer her into making a more confident decision.

Here are some design tips and advantages for helping the customer select the right LVP/LVT flooring for her space.

1. Lighter color LVP/LVT designs: Lighter colors naturally reflect more light and, therefore, can make a space feel larger, brighter and more airy. This is great for areas without a lot of natural light and/or smaller space.

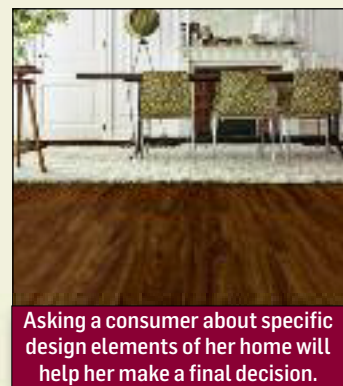
2. Mid-tone LVP/LVT designs: Mid-tone colors, especially designs with higher color variation, are great for high-traffic areas because they hide dirt, grime and any imperfections better than very light or very dark floors.

3. Dark color LVP/LVT designs: Dark floors are perfect for adding drama to any room, especially if the general style and feel of the décor and furniture in the space is light. It's good to provide balance and contrast.

4. Color and texture variation in LVP/LVT designs: We all know subfloors and foundations are not always perfectly flat. Designs that offer variation in color and texture are ideal to help hide these imperfections. They're also great for disguising dirt in high-traffic spaces.

5. XL format LVP/LVT designs: Extra large format luxury vinyl planks and tiles work great in big, spacious areas because they provide a better sense of scale, and their larger footprint allows a space to feel less busy by minimizing the amount of grout or joint lines.

6. Textile and linen look LVP/LVT designs: Textile and linen looks are perfect for customers who want the plush look of a soft surface but with the easy maintenance of resilient flooring.



Asking a consumer about specific design elements of her home will help her make a final decision.



The Cocktail collection from EarthWerks is offered in edgy colors to create unique, bold designs.

product development and design. These planks also allow for expanded design capabilities as end

users can play with color and design in an exciting new way.

Textile inspiration

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

A fresh offering from Mannington's Adura product line is Vibe, a linear textile look that is offered in muted gray/tan color blends. The 16 x 16 tiles can be combined for a clean look or

checkerboard layout. For further customization, Vibe has the option of grouting as well.

Detailed embossing

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

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



Updates to Karndean's Da Vinci collection includes soft tones that mimic colors found in natural fibers and textiles.

can actually feel.

"Our products feature lots of new enhanced embossing," said Amie Foster, national accounts manager. "This wood grain embossing follows the graining of the entire product. This is all done in an effort to continue to be innovative and create realistic products."

Tarkett's Transcend collection, which is its click program, was updated for the first time in two years with larger planks and heightened aesthetics that were enhanced by embossed-in-register technology. "The registered embossing takes the program to a new level," said Jeff Kresja, senior vice president, Tarkett North America. "Because of the manufacturing process there is a lot more variation and it feels far more natural and realistic."

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



IVC US' Embellish offers enhanced realism thanks to advanced embossing technology.

Lvt 101: trends

How to speak the language of design with consumers

BY SANDI **OWNBY**
Senior stylist, Shaw Floors

Do you ever have difficulty engaging with consumers on flooring design trends? Perhaps they come into your store spouting various design terms that sound like a foreign language to you? What exactly is the consumer looking for when she enters your store? If it's hard surface she's after, chances are it's a variation of the following:

1. Long and wide planks. Right now, so much of what the consumer wants in her flooring is inspired by European trends, one example being longer and wider planks. Consumer magazines are covered with photography highlighting aesthetically appealing planks that have unprecedented lengths and widths. The look is perfect for today's open floor plans. Do yourself a favor and make sure you have an impressive selection of this growing trend.

2. Gray is king. It has been interesting to watch how wood looks have migrated from shades of red and brown to being dominated by gray. This trend, too, started in Europe and then found acceptance domestically on the West Coast. It has since traveled east and isn't showing any signs of stopping. Chances are the female

shopper walking through your doors will want to focus on your gray-hued products. Be prepared with gray LVT.

3. Oil-rubbed looks. The consumer will not come in asking for oil-rubbed visuals by name. She'll use language like "low-gloss" or "matte" or get more specific requesting something that will look appropriate in her modern, farmhouse-styled home (another influential trend). Take her to the reclaimed-looking LVT styles for instant credibility.

4. Deep-beveled styles. More than likely the consumer will not know what a bevel is. She will, however, know the look of authenticity she's seeking. Help her achieve that visual by selecting a deep-beveled LVT that replicates the look of today's popular wood styles.

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

why not have those magazines in store for the consumer to browse through while shopping? It will ease fears, encourage dialogue and promote credibility. Another helpful hint: Pay special attention to the latest trends in furniture and cabinetry as both almost always predict what is coming down the pike for flooring.



Longer, wider planks such as those from Shaw's Alto collection are becoming more popular in the U.S.

the latest looks of LVT

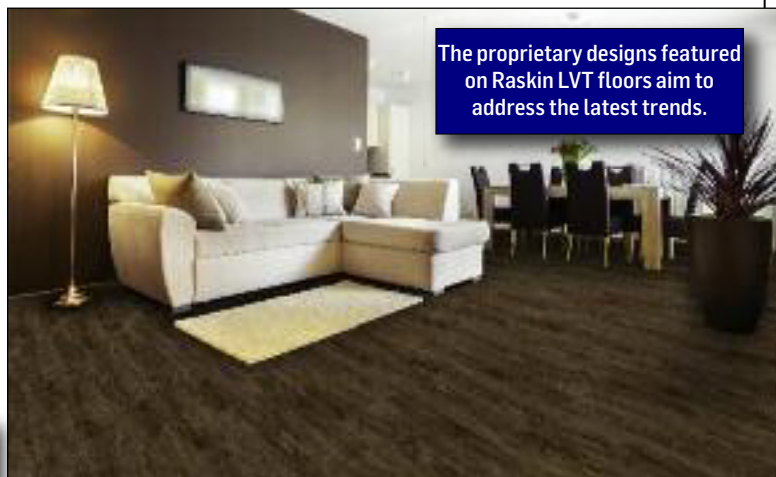
With more and more flooring companies entering the LVT game, manufacturers must separate themselves from the pack with the features that matter most to consumers: style and design. Whether it's highlighting natural features of real wood or stone, meeting color trends with varied gray/brown tones or providing options that allow for uniquely patterned installations, leaders in the category continue to create designs to maintain LVT's position as the hottest product in the flooring game.



Luxury vinyl flooring from Beaulieu employs cutting-edge digital and print technology to translate exceptionally realistic visuals in trendy designs.



Classico from Shaw's Floorté enhanced vinyl plank emulates real wood features in both traditional and more modern tones.



The proprietary designs featured on Raskin LVT floors aim to address the latest trends.

Continued on page 26

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: SHAW

Arming retailers with a vast array of resilient products

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

2016 brought meaningful product updates within every collection from Shaw in the resilient category including 5th and Main (suited for commercial applications), Quarry (tile and stone visuals) as well as impressive expansions in both the Array LVT and Floorté enhanced vinyl plank (EVP) collections.

Last year Shaw announced plans to build a 600,000-square-foot manufacturing facility slated to make key products in the Array collection. The new plant, located in Ringgold, Ga., allows Shaw to further elevate the line's product development, design capabilities, service and overall customer satisfaction. While Shaw will continue working with trusted and respected partners internationally, the incorporation of

U.S. manufacturing will positively affect flooring retailers through elevated product offerings that are more quickly delivered to market.

Floorté, Shaw's revolutionary collection of EVP, enjoyed a significant enhancement this year as well. Thanks to the tremendous consumer acceptance of the Premio and Classico lines, Shaw expanded the offerings to now include two new styles: Alto, featuring longer and wider planks to accommodate current consumer demand and market trends; and Valore, a value-priced product boasting exceptional visuals. With these new additions, Floorté gives flooring retailers even more product options to attract a larger assortment of consumers.

Because Floorté requires virtually zero acclimation and can be easily installed over imperfect



The Premio collection is a selection from Shaw Floors' popular Floorté enhanced vinyl plank product line.

subfloors without conforming, this revolutionary product saves retailers valuable time. Floorté also has an amazingly realistic visual and is completely waterproof, thus allowing the consumer to achieve the hardwood look she desires in areas historically off limits due to moisture concerns. With its durable and low-maintenance nature plus stunning visuals—and now with more offerings than ever—Floorté is a great example of Shaw's commitment to delivering solutions for the growing and changing needs of its customers.

Shaw's entire resilient ensemble is merchandized in the company's easy-to-shop Resilient Solutions Center, offering consumers more than 250 colors and styles from which to choose and arming retailers with everything needed to close more sales.

You know what's awesome? Waterproof wood looks.



AWESOME HAPPENS IN SHAW FLOORS



Carpet | Tile & Stone | Hardwood | Laminate | Resilient | shawfloors.com

Think those furry (and messy) friends mean customers can't have the look of hardwood? Think again. **Floorté is a fully waterproof resilient flooring—even at the seams.** And with a Fold-n-Tap locking system and almost no subfloor prep, it basically sells (and installs) itself. **Lucky dog.**

floortéTM
artfully crafted, wonderfully waterproof

the latest looks of LVT

Continued from page 24



Mohawk's LVT delivers visuals with high-end appeal and bold designs that aim to mimic natural characteristics.

Vivero is Armstrong's new enhanced flooring product that offers both classic designs and fashion-forward looks alike.



Inspired by salt-salvaged lumber from an old shipwreck, Seaport from Mannington's Adura line is an oak-look plank that appears naturally worn by the elements.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: RASKIN INDUSTRIES

When it comes to making LVT, experience matters most

Raskin Gorilla Floors started with a vision: to provide something that would change the consumer's perception of vinyl flooring. The company accomplishes this by creating products with a style that could not only be found in a hip, trendy store in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, but also an elegant restaurant in Chicago while being strong enough to perform in a demanding space like a healthcare facility.

High-performance floors can be cool, hip and durable. At the same time, Raskin Gorilla Floors seeks to be agile and very selective with its products to ensure it provides the best and latest designs and colors.

The lineage of the Raskin name in flooring is almost 100 years old, and as a third-generation owner, current president and CEO Michael Raskin takes great responsibility in preserving the reputation for quality, design and color. In fact, Raskin's customers will attest to the high quality and design.

Today it's more important than ever to align with partners that can be trusted to perform and execute. Raskin himself has spent his entire career innovating. "When I first started in the early 1980s the market was not even \$100

million and now it has surpassed \$1 billion. The Raskin family has been there every step of the way, and our company will help retailers navigate through the waters bringing profitability and reliability that only comes with experience. As a company we want to stand out and do things differently. We have the ability to deliver large volumes."

Diversification is important to the company as it manufactures product in China, Korea and the United States. For example, The Formations collection is made in China and is Floorscore certified and phthalate free, the company said. Meanwhile, Elevations is manufactured in Korea and can be loose laid or glued down. Finally, FloorNation is Raskin's brand new, 100% made in the USA



Raskin Gorilla Floors is very selective with its products to ensure it provides the best and latest designs and colors.

brand that promises to offer faster delivery times for large jobs. The goal is to position its brands and products to deliver reliability for the end user on a consistent basis.

"I am so confident and proud of our tradition that I am willing to put my name on every product we sell," Raskin said.

Accolade Oak is a selection from USFloors' COREtec Plus Design collection featuring enhanced embossing on planks offered in 5 x 36, 7x 72 and 9 x 72 formats.



Halden from EarthWerks is a 7.25 x 60 glue-down plank collection with a 20 mil wear layer offered in hues that can add warmth to any home.

Hartsfield Gunstock Oak from Novalis' NovaFloor product line is offered in 4 x 36 planks.



lvt 101: selling

Helping your customer choose the right flooring

BY CURT **ROBINSON**

President, SurfaceLinx

In order to help your customer choose the flooring most suitable for her needs, you must first focus on where the flooring will be installed and how it will be used. If you follow several simple selection steps, you are guaranteed user-friendly flooring tailored to your customer and her needs.

1. In what area will the flooring be installed?
2. Is it a heavy traffic commercial space or low-traffic room in her home?
3. What other factors will affect the installation? Is there impact noise from above?
4. What about sound transmission within the room? Is it a potentially wet area? Will the floor be exposed to direct sun?
5. How many people are there in the home or business? Are there pets? Children? Seniors? People with disabilities?
6. What color/design is best for the project to flow with the desired concept?
7. What is the customer's No. 1 concern? Is it performance, texture, color or design?



LVT should be exemplified by design and fashion, not just performance and maintenance.

Flooring has unlimited potential and its very own language. Introduce your customer to new ideas regardless if it is for the home, multi-family, retail stores, boutiques, corporate offices, public areas or hospitality settings. These new ideas could be design or specification driven.

LVT should also be exemplified by design and fashion, not just performance and maintenance. Give your customer choices that fit her visual needs. Is it a standard oak wood look or an exotic wood

captured with the reality of exact color and texture? Could it be stone, granite, slate or other designs from nature or fabric visuals applied to the floor?

LVT has come a long way within the past few years. It used to be available primarily in 4 x 36 dry back, then wider-width, larger-format sizes in both tile and plank options hit the market. That was followed by click LVT, loose lay LVT, WPC and, now, the next-generation of WPC products featuring a more rigid core.

Each customer has her own requirements, and we believe the most effective way to satisfy your customer is to work closely with her. Help your customer choose the right product and she will be a customer for life.



Rest easy,
It's a COREtec Floor.

As they grow, these two
will share countless adventures.

Some of them will be messy.
But don't worry, this patented floor is
engineered to live through it all.



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wpc

Getting to know the ins and outs of WPC

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

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

What is WPC exactly?

WPC is a composite material made of thermoplastics, calcium carbonate and wood flour. Extruded as a

core material, it is marketed as being waterproof, rigid and extremely dimensionally stable. In the case of COREtec Plus, a veneer of



Race Carpet & Vinyl prominently features this poster in its showroom to help educate shoppers.

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

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

“In addition, our locking system is the only one in the industry that we are aware of that is tested using the same standards as lam-

inate flooring,” said Carr Newton, vice president of residential resilient and laminate, Shaw Floors. “We pass the caster chair test with flying colors—in excess of 25,000 cycles. Other products in this category have shown to come apart at 3,900 cycles. Based on those differences we consider our product to be in a category by itself.”

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

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: USFLOORS

COREtec: The original WPC sets the benchmark

Many of today's flooring products overpromise and underdeliver, but USFloors' COREtec has the patent to validate its claims. Headquartered in Dalton, USFloors received its third COREtec patent on Jan. 12, 2016, covering all engineered flooring products with a plastic composite core and a veneer top layer bonded with a waterproof adhesive, with or without an attached cork backing. The innovative properties of COREtec and the approved patents have forever modified the landscape of the luxury vinyl category and beyond.

COREtec is exceedingly popular in today's floor covering market as it offers an alternative to glue down and floating luxury vinyl products. The fact that COREtec is waterproof, kid-proof and pet-proof; requires no acclimation and can be installed over existing hard surfaces with no risk of subfloor telegraphing makes it a logical choice for today's busy family in addition to commercial applications.

With success comes imitation. Recently the industry has seen a plethora of WPC prod-

ucts hit the market with many COREtec impersonators. But retail accounts are holding strong with their commitment to USFloors and the COREtec brand. USFloors will remain commit-



USFloors' COREtec Plus HD collection features a plastic composite core and veneer top layer bonded with a waterproof adhesive.

ted to providing its retail partners with innovative and cutting-edge products while leading with innovation and styling. Consumers are now asking for COREtec by name, further emphasizing the strength of the brand and the overwhelming popularity of the WPC category.

The COREtec portfolio of products will soon comprise upwards of 100 SKUs across the COREtec One, COREtec Plus, COREtec Plus XL, COREtec Plus HD and COREtec Plus Design Collections. Planks range from 36-inches to 72 inches long with widths from 5- to 9-inches wide. Tiles are offered in 12 x 24 and 18 x 24 formats. All COREtec Plus collections also feature an attached cork backing for sound abatement (and mold and mildew resistance).

USFloors takes pride in leading the WPC category in design, innovation and quality with COREtec. It is its mission to remain the leader while offering the retailer, consumer and commercial end user a superior flooring product that outperforms the competition in all facets.

Casey Dillabaugh, owner of Dillabaugh's Flooring America in Boise Idaho, takes other benefits of WPC into consideration when stacking the category against competing products. "The WPC category saved—at least in our market—the LVT category as a whole simply because entry-level LVT was not performing. Enter COREtec and Floorté—WPC has changed the game for our clients."

What are its advantages over laminate?

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

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

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

Shaw recommends Floorté EVP be marketed in the resilient section. Floorté is a key

Abbey Luxury Vinyl from USFloors is 100% waterproof, can be installed in wet areas and will not swell when exposed to water.

component of Shaw's Resilient Solution Center, which includes four merchandising units that showcase Floorté, Array click, VersaFit loose lay and 5th & Main commercial options.



lvt 101: wpc

Next evolution of WPC promotes the features, benefits of a cork core

BY ZACHARY ADAMS

Director of sales and marketing, Amorim Flooring North America

Next-generation WPC with a cork core is taking this new subcategory a step further with the incorporation of Corktech technology along with the exclusive and versatile properties of cork. In practical terms, when selling these products that use a multi-layered structure that combines cork with LVT, retailers can assure consumers of five significant benefits that are key selling points.

1. Sound abatement. Due to its honeycomb structure filled with air, cork is a natural sound absorber as its cells work as an acoustic insulator. Floors with Corktech reduce both the noise between rooms (impact sound)

and within a room (walking noise), creating a higher reduction when compared to other types of flooring such as laminate or wood.

2. Natural thermal insulation. The natural thermal insulation properties of cork floors made with Corktech provide a pleasant feel for end users, even when barefoot, along with an optimal floor temperature all year round which contributes to an overall comfort.

3. Walking comfort. Floors with Corktech are very comfortable to walk on due to cork's inherent flexibility that provides a unique comfort in movement.

4. Well being. An unbalanced floor can cause either tension on an end user's body from walking on hard floors or fatigue from

flooring that is too soft. Floors with Corktech are well balanced, allowing them to better absorb shock, relieve body strain and prevent injuries while reducing fatigue.

5. Impact resistance. Cork's elasticity allows it to recover to its original shape after being compressed, reducing the risk of having permanent dents and marks when objects fall on the floor.



Wicanders' HydroCork combines impressive wood visuals with a new Corktech core.

WPC with a cork core demonstrates an exceptional wear resistance, superior indoor air quality and a user-friendly installation system that does not leave dust or create noise. In addition, dimensional stability averts any damages on planks from temperature or humidity variations. The vast amount of performance attributes along with a wide range of visuals surpasses the expectations of even the most demanding customers.

wpc

Proper presentation makes all the difference

Flooring retailers love to tell stories as a way to sell new products. WPC, the vinyl-based waterproof category that has burst onto the scene with great fanfare, provides dealers with a chance to tell their own by positioning

it prominently in their showrooms.

FCNews asked dealers to provide their strategies on positioning WPC.

Many dealers recommend positioning WPC as close to the entrance as possible to draw attention.

“Our two Carpet One Invincible H20 products are directly next to each other along with COREtec in the front of our resilient gallery. The stories are similar but different, allowing the client to select the perfect presentation for her home. After all, it comes down to color and design of the consumer’s space. It is in the same section as LVT and we actually start [with WPC] when talking about LVT.”

—Catherine Buchanan, Independent Carpet One

“We place WPC within the first 20 feet of our showroom and position the product as its own category within LVT. We have been very successful with the [subcategory]. The idea of waterproof flooring really seals the deal.”

—Nick Cinquepalmi, Landmark Flooring

“We have our waterproof WPC in one area and LVP in another—both of these racks are in our front showroom centered along with our main carpet racks. Whether the customer wants both hard surface/soft surface products to coordinate with or if they want to choose which would be better for their home—we have it well coordinated. It’s working out well that way.”

—Raquel Sapp, Race Carpet

“We present [WPC] as LVP/LVT with the ability to be floated. This category gives us the option of floating installation since all of our LVT/LVP is glue down. Once you explain WPC’s core and the overall product benefits to customers, they love it. And the visuals are incredible. We simply work the product category into conversations when showing options to customers.”

—Robin Osterhaus, Floor Frenzy & More

Continued on page 34



A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: EARTHWERKS

‘We Are LVT’ is one company’s driving motto for success

Luxury vinyl tile/plank is a rapidly growing flooring category due to its aesthetic appeal, diverse functionality and affordability. With so many options, it is important to select a trusted brand that can provide you peace of mind. With its proven track record, EarthWerks truly stands the test of time.

EarthWerks believes that while other companies offer LVT, its slogan “We Are LVT” reflects its more than three decades of experience providing exceptional style, service and availability customers can trust. It brings out the best in LVT, leading the market in innovative design, manufacturing excellence and dependable service and availability.

The company’s factories use production methods and technology that continuously meet the highest global standards. This attention to quality comes from EarthWerks’ family’s involvement at the factory level that spans generations. It offers one of the industry’s largest collections of proprietary designs—everything from your tried-and-true products to unique and trendsetting designs.

EarthWerks also provides a full range of LVT installation methods and materials: traditional glue down, loose lay, click, grouted, custom transitions, specialty adhesives, cleaners and underlayment.

EarthWerks is also environmentally friendly. Its Green4Life (G4L) program embodies green efforts for future generations. When you buy EarthWerks products, you know you’re green-conscious because all of its luxury vinyl tiles and planks are recyclable and manufactured in energy-efficient facilities. EarthWerks products begin with better ingredients; G4L by EarthWerks is its assurance that its products meet or exceed ASTM standards, are Floorscore certified and have the ability to be re-

purposed and used again. EarthWerks created the G4L program to bring awareness to the Reclaim, Recycle and Reuse movement.

EarthWerks products are supported by one of the best and largest distributor/ dealer networks in the country. Its dependable service and availability are right here, right now at a location near you. Visit www.earthwerks.com for the complete collection.



Stonebridge is a new 5 x 48 luxury vinyl plank collection with a 30-year commercial wear limited warranty.

earthwerks[®]
FLOORING INSPIRED BY NATURE



PEACE OF MIND.

EARTHWERKS. THE TRUSTED NAME IN LVT.

Happiness. Confidence. Flexibility. Clear your mind from worry. Unique quality in design, manufacturing, availability and the best warranties in the business. Relax, we've got you. For over three decades the trusted name in LVT.

The experienced brand you buy with peace of mind. Ommmm.

EarthWerks[®] – We are LVT.[®]



SOME OFFER LVT – WE ARE LVT™

For information regarding our extensive line of sustainable vinyl flooring, please call 800-275-7943 or visit us online at www.earthwerks.com



wpc

Continued from page 32



WPC is often merchandised near the laminate section for side-by-side comparisons.

“We position WPC near laminate, not hardwood. Laminate is fading fast in our markets and LVT/WPC is taking the bulk of the laminate market share. Positioning the two items next to each other allows us to easily show the pros and cons of the two flooring categories.”

—Kevin Rose
Carpetland/Colortile

“The best place to position WPC is sandwiched between laminate and LVT/vinyl since it is the ultimate in a cross-over category.”

—Sean O'Rourke
Avalon Flooring

“We position WPC with LVT. We feel the two products are going to appeal to the same type of customer. To us WPC is high-end luxury vinyl and that is how we position it.”

—Elisabeth Stubbs
Enhance Floors and More

“We place all of the vinyl-based waterproof products together in the same section. The WPC products seem to do well in the customer's eyes because they are waterproof, just like standard LVT, but they seem to think thicker is better.”

—Greg Berlin, Quality Carpet One Floor & Home

“For us WPC is a tough product to [sell to] consumers. It's relatively new to the market so it [requires] educating the customer on the features and benefits before they even entertain it as an option. Generally we place WPC products next to laminates and LVT; it typically fits in the middle.”

—Justin Atcheson
Builders Floor Covering & Tile

“We position WPC next to the laminate in the showroom, but we offer WPC as the waterproof alternative to laminate—that's the key. Since the majority of our customers are middle-aged or older, they are concerned about water or spills from their, washing machines, dishwashers, etc. It's another factor in their floor buying decisions.”

—Marjorie Benson, Friendly Floors

“We position WPC as an end cap inside our main entrance with product selection samples in the resilient department. We also have one of our FCA Network 'suitcase' product presentation boards in our laminate department as well to bring awareness to the product, too. Having the product available when customers walk in almost always draws them to the product, and to expose them to a newer product they may not know about.”

—Carlton Billingsley, Floors & More

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MOHAWK

LVT engineered for satisfaction, confidence

True luxury isn't just an aesthetically appealing surface that draws “oohs” and “aahs” every time visitors walk into the room. Peace of mind for a homeowner is truly priceless, knowing that an attractive floor will stay that way while withstanding wear and tear and remaining easy to clean. A floor that doesn't perform well will sour the homeowner on a flooring style, brand and/or retail store. Thankfully, Mohawk luxury vinyl tile offers more than eye-catching visuals; it features technological innovations and styles that create new levels of homeowner satisfaction and confidence.

On the design front, Mohawk LVT brings tremendous high-end appeal while helping owners stay within budget parameters with ease—something that offers even greater peace of mind. LVT features bold visuals matching species of authentic wood and natural stone




Mohawk offers LVT with both top-notch performance and high-end, trending visuals.

that consumers love. The textured and wire-brushed effects are exceptionally realistic and perfectly capture that coveted upscale appearance. In order to provide the latest trends and hottest looks, Mohawk LVT also offers multiple wider widths that mirror the current trends of real hardwood planks. These varied options help savvy consumers create chic designs for maximum visual impact.

True confidence in the product comes into play with Mohawk's luxury vinyl technology that no other brand can match. Mohawk is the only brand that features ScotchGard Advanced Repel Technology, the most trusted name in stain resistance and cleanability. For supreme durability, Mohawk LVT is engineered with an aluminum-oxide, urethane wear layer. Another technological feature that only Mohawk can tout? The Uniclic glueless locking system, the industry's No. 1 floating locking system for easy installation that's instantly ready for traffic. No matter how attractive the styles may be, these innovations ensure homeowners remain satisfied when they purchase Mohawk LVT as it is high-performing, resilient, durable and easy to clean.

LVT is also soft underfoot, moisture resistant and maintains a comfortable, constant temperature. In addition, Mohawk LVT utilizes virgin vinyl material, is Floorscore certified and contributes toward LEED credits. Ultimately, Mohawk luxury vinyl creates affordable, well-rounded luxury that will work anywhere. And that is the what all homeowners deserve.



With durability and looks to match,
Mohawk LVF gives your customers
everything they want in a high performance floor.

Authentic looks and textures
100% virgin vinyl with no recycled content
100% waterproof
100% moisture resistant
Uniclic® Locking System for easy installation



Get it all by contacting your local Mohawk representative today.

wpc

Discerning between the many faces (and types)

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

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

Amorim: HydroCork

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

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

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



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

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

Armstrong: Vivero

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

lvt 101: wpc

What you should know about this new subcategory

BY JAMANN STEPP

Director of marketing and product management, USFloors

The WPC category has quickly generated an excitement level akin to the launch of laminate flooring in the early 1990s. The success of WPC has taken the industry by storm with numerous importers and distributors taking advantage of the features and benefits that the category has to offer.

There are several facts that all specialty dealers should know when it comes to WPC:

- WPC is an acronym that has been translated as “wood plastic composite” or “waterproof core” for some. Either way, most WPC is a composite extruded core produced from wood, bamboo, limestone, calcium carbonate and virgin PVC. The core ingredients provide a rigid platform that is also waterproof, making WPC flooring an innovative product.

- Buyer/importer beware: Not all WPC products provide the same level of quality or inert ingredients. As new and innovative offerings hit the market, demand on raw materials can become an

issue, thus requiring certain steps in the manufacturing process become value engineered. This leads to a lesser-quality core com-

position. Standards are driven down and quality of product suffers. WPC products manufactured to specific and precise standards intended to ensure quality performance and dimensional stability.

- WPC is pulling in prior laminate and/or traditional luxury vinyl buyers. Unlike laminate or LVT, WPC products require no acclimation and are 100% waterproof. Installation in wet areas such as bathrooms, laundry rooms and mudrooms are applicable.

- WPC has a higher perceived value over luxury vinyl in relation to installed cost, versatility of end use and ease of installation over existing hard surface subfloors with no telegraphing. Before WPC

there was no solution to subfloor imperfections with vinyl flooring.

As WPC products continue to make their way into the market, it is imperative that retailers educate themselves and ask the right questions when it comes to core density and composition in addition to dimensional stability. Price should not be the only factor when selecting a source of supply.



USFloors' COREtec Plus Design collection is manufactured to precise standards to ensure performance and dimensional stability.

of WPC

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

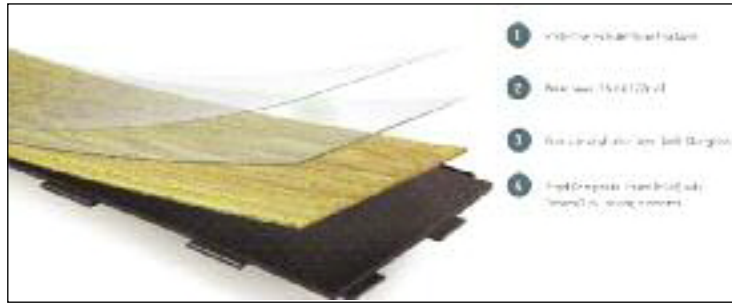
Beauflor: Pure

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

USFloors: COREtec Plus

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

Continued on page 38



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

lvt 101: wpc

Numerous attributes of WPC make it the hottest hard surface today

BY MIKE LINDBERG

Executive vice president, Marquis Industries

WPC has been the talk of 2016 at trade shows throughout the world as interest continues to grow. Manufacturers are adding equipment and assembly lines in response to this rapidly growing segment in the market.

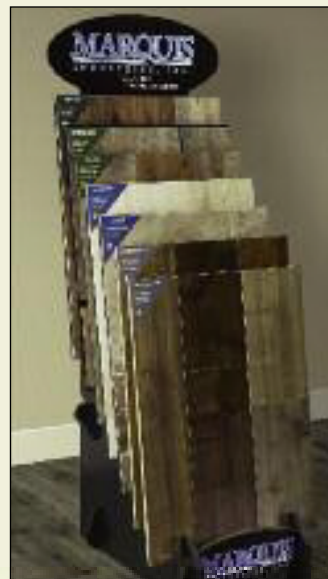
USFloors was recently awarded patents for the WPC product that consists of a core typically 4mm or 4.5mm in thickness along with a 1.5mm to 2mm vinyl top layer. WPC is thicker than luxury vinyl and has a lighter weight. The advantage of WPC's thicker core is giving the click installation system used more substantial integrity in the locking mechanism. Its thickness is getting closer to that of laminate flooring but WPC has the core to make the product waterproof. Therefore, the new subcategory does not have the drawbacks that some laminates have (i.e., peaking, chipping and blistering from the elements).

WPC cores are typically made up of PVC, limestone, wood, plastic and/or foaming agents. There are different density levels in the core boards; most vendors at Domotex were quoting upwards of 700

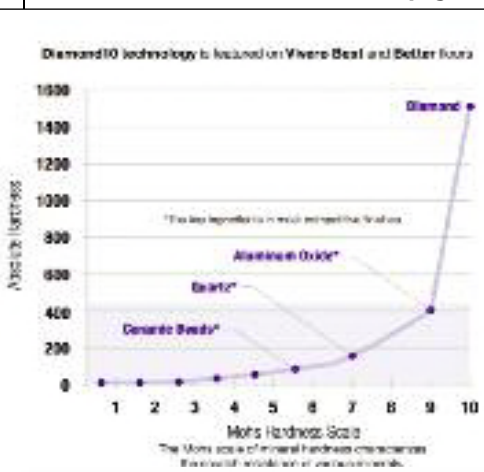
kg/m³ to 950 kg/m³ with the standard at approximately 850 kg/m³. This number is based on the amount of material in a cubic meter; the harder compounds and products with less foaming agents will have a stiffer, denser core base. A dense core will have less indentation issues than one that is soft.

WPC is available in various wood and ceramic looks on planks with various widths and lengths. The protective finish can vary from a 6 mil wear layer to a 20 mil wear layer. The product is also available with various backings that include cork and closed-cell underlayments. Some selections also come without padding, which the retailer can sell like laminates in the past.

One of the biggest changes of both luxury vinyl and WPC is how realistic the patterns have become. Some designs can even fool the best veterans in the field. With the realistic looks, high-integrity locking mechanisms and water-resistant capabilities, it looks like WPC is (and will continue to be) the hottest hard surface item on the market for 2016 and many years to come.



Marquis Industries provides dealers with a hard surface display that takes up only 6 square feet of retail space but shows nine LVT products.



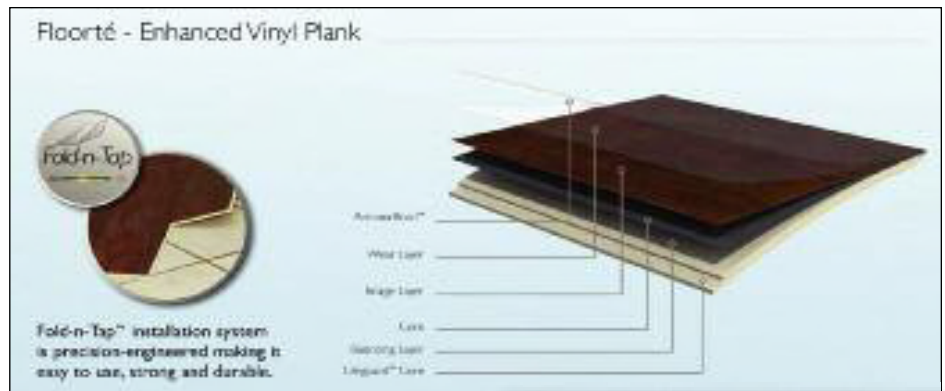
Armstrong's Vivero WPC features Diamond 10 technology for added scratch resistance.

wpc

Continued from page 37

research and development, and COREtec was born.

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



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

Shaw: Floorté

This enhanced vinyl plank with a Fold-n-Top locking system is constructed of PVC and

Shaw Floors sees EVP as a category unto itself.

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

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MANNINGTON**Adura offers specialty dealers the complete LVT package**

Specialty retailers searching for the very best in realistic LVT designs and superior performance innovations need to look no further than Mannington's Adura. With this advanced product, Mannington offers the most complete line of luxury vinyl planks and tiles in a variety of designs, sizes and installation options. Adura also features surface protection technology and design innovations exclusive to Mannington. No matter what the customer wants, your best bet at winning the sale is to show Mannington Adura.

Mannington has long been known as the style leader. Recent introductions include Margate and Seaport, 8-inch-wide plank products that play off the popular look of reclaimed wood. Meridian offers a concrete décor that works in both plank and tile formats. Adura Tile features realistic stones and slates, as well as marble looks such as Century. Each design is created in-house by Mannington's award-winning design team, which means customers won't see them in the big-box stores.

Adura offers a variety of sizes and shapes, giv-

ing customers greater flexibility and design options. Tiles come in a 16 x 16 format, with rectangles measuring 12 x 24 inches. Planks are available in several different versions, including 4 x 36, 5 x 48, 6 x 18, 6 x 36 and 6 x 48. This gives consumers the opportunity to mix squares and rectangles, or planks and tiles, for a truly one-of-a-kind floor.

Installation options for Adura make the job fast and easy with a choice (on most patterns) of traditional glue down or LockSolid, Mannington's patented and proprietary locking system that offers an exclusive no-gap guarantee.

Depending on the customer's preference, most tiles—and even some planks—can be in-

stalled either with or without grout. And only Adura® features ScratchResist, Mannington's patented surface coating with aluminum oxide that helps resist everyday household scratches



Meridian, from Mannington's Adura line, works in both plank and tile formats

to keep floors looking newer, longer. Adura is also waterproof, easy to clean and maintain and comes with a warranty that ensures the product will not fade, stain, wear or delaminate.

The Mannington brand can't be found at big box stores; it's exclusive to the specialty flooring retailer. The company also enforces a Minimum

Internet Pricing policy so pricing cannot

be undercut by Internet-only sellers. Mannington knows that consumers' needs are best served when they receive professional service before, during and after the sale.

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At Mannington, our designers are some of the most demanding people we know. That's because after they've explored every possibility and uncovered a vision, they won't let it go. Not until it meets a standard they'd be proud to see in your home.

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: CITIFLOR

Durable yet eye-catching options for consumers

Citiflor takes pride in offering fashion-forward style and design in an effort to separate itself from the pack. The company's focus is aimed at making premium products that are as aesthetically appealing as the spaces they fill in addition to offerings that surpass the expectations of consumers. Citiflor's collections of luxury vinyl planks and tiles showcase its passion to create inspiringly unique products that not only offer the performance required for today's busy households but also the capability of adding that unexpected design element to a personalized décor.

Citiflor's Ovation 5mm click planks and tiles feature contemporary decors with a twist, sure to lure the eye with finely detailed décor nuances. A durable 20 mil wear layer and commercial warranty offer the versatility to handle just about anything life can throw at it and then some. Equally as inspiring is the Encore collection of 3.2mm click planks and tiles with embossed textures that capture the timeless look of

natural stone as well as the appeal of genuine hardwood. The Encore collection offers a 12 mil wear layer and 15-year residential warranty, a capable performer with the built-in ease of installation and maintenance that make it a go-to choice for discerning consumers.

Citiflor click planks are offered in a 7 x 48 wide-plank format that further enhances the effect of its design-focused décors. Click tiles come in a 12 x 24 format created to capture the essence of the most impressive stone and ceramic flooring options available today.

These luxury vinyl products combine the style and design on which Citiflor prides itself with the inherent features of a growing category filled with all of the benefits consumers have grown to love. The versatility, durability, ease of installation and maintenance, underfoot comfort and water resistance remain constant throughout the life of these products. Citiflor has taken luxury vinyl's winning recipe and added its own flair. From style and design to construction types, the goal is to offer a complete package to the consumer.

Citiflor's LVP portfolio of contemporary styles includes Ovation click plank, shown here.



Lvt 101: construction

How LVT wear layers make the difference

BY LINDSEY NISBET

Head of product development and marketing strategy, EarthWerks

Luxury vinyl tile and plank products are made with a foundation of vinyl layers and finished with a final layer called a wear layer. To create the best LVT, the proper mix of ingredients and maintaining a precise thickness of each layer is essential for a balanced and stable product. The thickness of the wear layer along with the coating requires a proper match to the base layers. Having the right scale between these parts solidifies the structural integrity of the final product.

The foundation consists of vinyl base layers. These layers create the structural range of the tile or plank and differ based on overall thickness. Most LVT options are available in a 2mm to 5mm thickness. Fiberglass is sometimes added between these layers to promote dimensional stability. The design layer is the printed decorative film that adheres to the top of the foundation layer and allows a floor to come to life. This layer can replicate stone, hardwood or even an abstract pattern. The final layer is the wear layer and is what we see and touch once the product is installed. Superior wear layers are critical for performance; most range in thickness from about 0.15mm to 0.80mm. This



Devan, a 6 x 36 dry back product, is available in four hues, each adding character and excitement to any space.

layer is also referred to in "mils." (A 0.30mm wear layer is the same as a 12 mil wear layer.)

The durability of an LVT product is very much attributed to the thickness of the wear layer. For example, if you're wondering why you have two 3mm products and one has a better warranty, it is most likely because the wear layer is better on this product. This is also true in the difference between entry-level products and commercially rated items. Commercial LVT should have a 20 mil or higher wear layer; less than this is considered light traffic. Coatings are often added to the wear layer, enhancing the overall life of the top layer and increasing the product's ability to resist everyday scuffs and scratches. For the best results in selecting LVT, study the wear layer and coatings to ensure satisfaction of your new floor.

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state of the industry

Continued from page 3

ing LVT will continue to take share from wood, laminate and, in some instances, ceramic tile," Metroflor's Rogg said. In terms of application, property management is "clearly an area that is fueling growth," he added.

In recent years several major manufacturers announced the opening or construction of LVT/resilient plants in the U.S., which some expected to affect the market in the face of lower-priced Chinese imports. Experts agree the pressure still remains, but some feel that influence is only felt on certain products.

"It's more on the commodity-designed products," said Michael Raskin, president of Raskin Industries. "There is a place for lower-priced products if you can produce them correctly and understand how to market them."

Natkin added that the lower-priced Chinese imports are, in fact, affecting business, but "it depends which side of the market. The Chinese definitely continue to affect LVT. We continue to see new emergent price points that are starting to hit the floor of how low they can go."

According to Rogg, more impact from imported LVT was felt in 2014 than most of 2015. "As the category exploded from a growth perspective, it also grew relative to the overwhelming number of companies that began to offer LVT as part of their portfolios. When these LVT [options] were added, it was often at extremely low prices in an attempt to gain a foothold as they sought [to increase] market share. To a degree these attempts were successful in 2014, and the category became more diluted with more companies and brands claiming their slice of the pie."

This year has seen a little bit of turnaround, as those selling and using these lower-grade products have experienced their true quality. "What we found in 2015 is that many of those efforts were short lived," Rogg continued. "Yes, the products are still available, and they're still available at low prices. But in many cases contractors and retailers have not had good experiences. They are returning to trusted, reliable brands of LVT with a history of good performance and availability."

Composites: A game changer?

Also coming into play in the last year or so is

the rise of composite products, or WPC as some choose to call it. While this offshoot category is still in its early stages, it is certainly showing promise. A number of resilient players are getting involved, with most claiming to have created categories all their own.

Piet Dossche, president and CEO of US-Floors, who is said to have led the composite movement with the development of the COREtec product, said the appeal of the new category comes from its strength and rigidity. "This not only makes for a strong click locking



USFloors' COREtec was a game changer for the resilient category as the first major launch in composites.

profile, but it hides subfloor imperfections that in a solid, glue-down or floating LVT will telegraph and be visible over time. Composite constructions can be installed directly over tiles without having to fill the grout lines."

Dossche predicts a "major shift" in solid floating LVT "with composite cores eventually being the largest share of this segment. The growth of composite LVT products will be a repeat of what we saw when laminate flooring came into the market and will grow into a \$1 billion flooring category all by itself."

Natkin agreed that composite products will fit with other LVT on the market, thus becoming an upgrade installation option more than anything else. "I think it will go through growing pains—particularly from a quality perspective—not unlike any other category. It has definitely carved out a place in the market and has taken a nip out of laminate and LVT. I look at it more of an installation option than anything else; you have basic glue-down LVT, a step up to click LVT, and WPC or EVP [enhanced vinyl plank] is really a third [choice]. If a subfloor is troublesome and not the most level or you have concerns about telegraphing, it's a nice product to use."

Metroflor's Rogg sees "great growth potential" in WPC. The company recently

launched its own composite platform called structural LVT. Metroflor seeks to round out its floating LVT offerings with the Engage Genesis product. "If positioned correctly from a price and performance perspective, we will be able to meet any and all possible product needs when a floating LVT is considered."

The commercial climate

Similar to residential, LVT continued to be the overall driving force behind commercial activity in 2015. Healthcare, retail and education remain relevant markets in this corner of the market, as are hospitality and some corporate settings. In most spaces LVT is, in fact, taking share from both sheet and VCT.

"LVT continues to take share from basically every other category," said David Thoreson, senior vice president, commercial business, Mohawk Group. "Building owners like it as a solution and visuals are getting better. There is not a wood floor out there that can't be replaced by LVT. More specifically, people are really migrating to loose lay LVT. The category has a long span of growth ahead."

While healthcare is a strong segment for sheet vinyl, Rogg explained that area of the business is still relevant for LVT. "LVT can accommodate both 'warm/home-like' environments or, in contrast, bright and robust visuals. LVT is preferred for its durability, practicality and good indoor air quality characteristics."

According to Dominic Rice, vice president, commercial flooring, Armstrong, VCT still holds significant share on the commercial side, but its growth rate is lower than the rest of the market due to the LVT surge. "Tile is bigger than sheet in the commercial market, and that's LVT and VCT combined. LVT is making gains in every market sector, offering plenty of design appeal, but just as important is its maintenance profile."

In addressing this continued shift of commercial sheet to commercial LVT, David Sheehan, vice president, commercial hard surface, Mannington, said it really depends on the end user and his/her preferences, in addition to the project at hand. "There are some folks who become more budget conscious who want the look of LVT or look of wood, but LVT may be priced slightly above what they want. Sheet may be the better value proposition for them. It really depends on what the customer views as the most important attributes."

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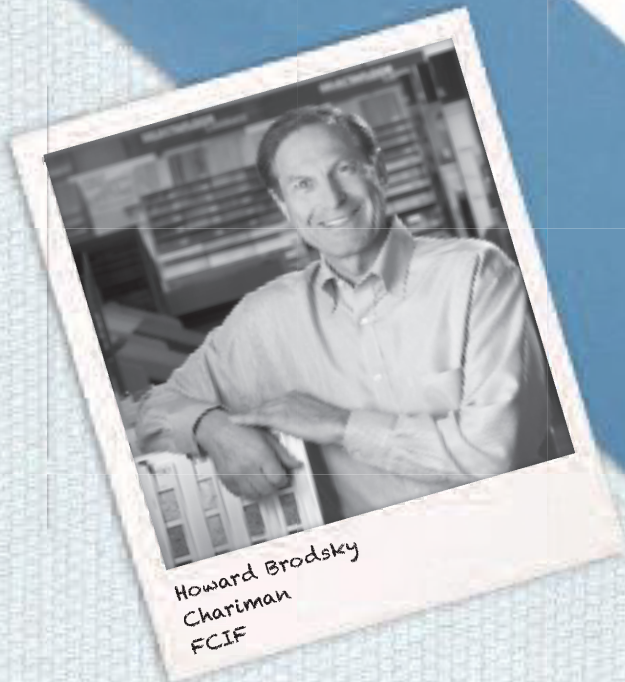
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selling

Helpful hints for selling groutable options

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

1. Groutable LVT is a

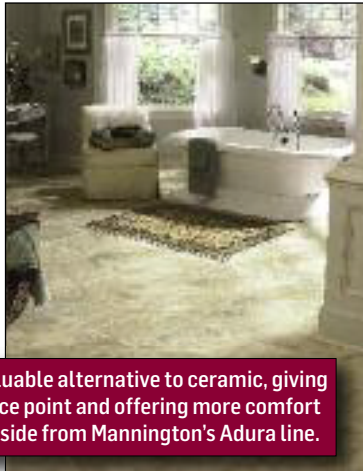
lower-cost alternative to ceramic tile, offering the aesthetic appeal of “the real thing.” According to Gary Keeble, director of marketing for Metroflor, a primary benefit for groutable LVT is its appearance. “The imaging technology that is being used to create LVT designs today has become so sophisticated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

Dan Natkin, senior director, residential products, Mannington, also cited the

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

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

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



Groutable LVT is cited as a valuable alternative to ceramic, giving a similar visual at a lower price point and offering more comfort for end users. Pictured is Seaside from Mannington's Adura line.

lvt 101: selling

What's your problem? The LVT solution sales approach

BY DON **BUFALINI**

West Coast sales manager, DuChâteau

With so many options in flooring styles, it's important to take a fresh approach to selling luxury vinyl tile (LVT). Ultimately, it comes down to one simple question for your customers: What is your problem? Without being rude, it's an honest and fair question to playfully get to the root of their needs. LVT is not just a floor covering; it's a flooring solution and not one that needs to focus on a price tag.

Yes, LVT is sold at a lower price point than typical hardwoods, but while being a much more accessible product, salespeople often make the mistake of solely capitalizing on vinyl as the cheap alternative. This tends to overshadow all of its other amazing attributes and narrows the customer perception of what vinyl can be in the future. And as technological innovation introduces more advanced vinyl products, the market needs to remain open to those potentially higher price points. Let the price speak for itself and turn your attention to the vinyl's performance attributes and the problems these attributes solve.

Ideally, all floors are built to perform but for what purpose? LVT is a unique product that offers greater versatility for customers needing more

from their floor while retaining the visuals they want and the durability and environmental sustainability they need. Ask your customers what they want their floor to accomplish and then discuss which floor will best overcome the challenges of their space.

If moisture is an issue, vinyl will fare far better than hardwood with its moisture-resistance properties. Some vinyl floors are now even fully waterproof in certain situations. If noise is a concern, sound dampening is now a feature of some high-end vinyl floors. And as technology has improved in production, the ability to synthesize a greater range of variation in the floor's visual and texturing means vinyl can attain that distinctly natural aesthetic. Completely customized designs with a particular installation method are no longer out of the question. And if all these options were not

enough, vinyl products are bringing new installation methods that are designed to accommodate a greater variety of spaces.

Finding the problem your customer is trying to solve not only puts you closer to your sales goal, but it also protects customers from making purchases they regret and minimizes potential manufacturer claims. After all, a great sale is one that actually makes people's lives better. All you need to do is ask, “What's your problem?”



Given the product's unique characteristics, retailers need to focus on LVT as a solution to many flooring needs rather than just a floor covering.

and able to absorb that impact and not crack.”

4. Grout used with groutable LVT is different than that installed with ceramic. It is typically easier to clean than traditional, pre-sanded grout, which requires sealing to avoid staining. “With groutable LVT you are primarily using pre-coloring grouts, which don’t need to be sealed, are easier to use and you can use less of because it is at a lower profile than the LVT itself,” Natkin explained. “It’s really a win-win-win. And you can continue to see grouts becoming easier to work with. Some of the first grouts that came out were particularly difficult to clean up [off the] LVT and you would get a haze.”

5. Grout strips and borders are available to help with installation and maintenance. “These strips enable customers to get the style they want with any type of product, whether they’re installing tiles or planks,” said Emil Mellow, vice president of marketing, Karndean Design-flooring. “Installing grout is a time-consuming process, whereas vinyl grout strips are quick and easy. They won’t discolor or harbor dirt over time.”

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

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

8. There are two schools of thought when it comes to how groutable LVT should be promoted to the consumer, according to Russ Rogg, Metroflor’s president and CEO. The first is to market, sell, position and promote the product for what it is, which is LVT. “But with this approach, it must also be communicated that the addition of grout is an aesthetic improvement to add realism to the installation versus an LVT without grout. It’s very important to emphasize this attribute to make the groutable LVTs stand out from the non-groutable varieties.”

Neither sealing nor surface treatment is required for Armstrong Alterna LVT as both the tiles and grout are stain resistant.

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



lvt 101: selling

LVT: Value-added benefits of rigid core products

BY GARY **KEEBLE**
Director of marketing, Metroflor

The continued growth of rigid core (WPC) or what Metroflor calls “structural LVT” has been dramatic as consumers gravitate toward the new LVT platform. To “sell-through” from interest to purchase, retailers need to consider the following techniques when highlighting the category’s features and benefits.

- Style and design are usually the entry points for interior finish product decisions. Rigid core products have all the aesthetic and technical advancements that have improved LVT: a high level of color and style, in register embossing, and a wide variety of design choices for plank and tile with unprecedented authenticity.

- Emphasize that rigid core floors are waterproof—a key reason why these products are gaining momentum over laminate flooring in higher-moisture areas.

- Dimensional stability is an important attribute. Emphasize the fact that this floating floor can be installed in larger areas without the need for t-moldings, which results in a more continuous installation.

- Plank rigidity hides most subfloor im-

perfections, resulting in a smooth, flat floor that can be installed over existing ceramic in many instances.

- Communicate the intangibles as value-added. Some products are treated with an anti-microbial material—both on the surface and the underlayment—that can assuage health concerns surrounding mold, mildew and resulting odors and stains.

FloorScore certification is another source

for peace of mind.

- A cushion provides the consumer with a perception of a better-built, consistent product and higher perceived value. A premium underlayment also promotes warmth and comfort underfoot while addressing sound performance (transmitted and reflected).

- Spotlight how Uniclic and Valinge 5G systems (when in-

cluded in a product) provide tremendous strength and reliability while also making flooring fast and easy to install.

RSAs are advised to sell rigid core/structural LVT products as the feature-rich, most authentic-looking replication of wood, stone and tile on a rigid platform that can be installed easily in a floating manner without the risk of moisture concerns.



Rigid core/structural LVT products such as Metroflor’s Engage Genesis shown here aim to replicate wood, stone and tile.

main street

Cashing in on the craze

VT continues to pick up steam, generating more than \$1.25 billion in sales in 2015, *FCNews* research shows. More importantly, industry observers attribute more than a third of those revenues to the lucrative Main Street market specifically. Following are a few basic guidelines for achieving success in this viable end-use market.

Display it well

Experts say Main Street products should be set up in a designated area away from offerings suited for residential use. “You need an area that is dedicated to commercial,” said Rick Smith, commercial manager for Watkins Floor Covering in Jacksonville, N.C. “It should be consolidated in one geographic area so customers don’t have to wander all over the store to find various products.”

Successful Main Street dealers say it’s also helpful to utilize visual selling aids that contain vignettes, specifications and other useful information. “We use a lot of architectural folders that leave the store and go home with the prospective client,” Smith noted.

Know thy market

Main Street business—although typically handled by residential retailers—isn’t the same as selling residential replacement. With Main Street there are building codes and inspectors to consider. In addition, Main Street timelines are much shorter than contract projects, which typically follow a lengthy design, bid and build process.

This is where knowledge and having good contacts can help. “Usually the Main Street retailers have relationships with the end users and that is how they secure that business,” said Keith Wiethe, Main Street channel manager for Mannington.

Offer guidance

In most cases, Main Street customers aren’t “window shopping” when they enter your store. “People who come in looking for our Main Street products are not browsers,” said Chris Williams, president and owner of OC Floor Gallery in Ocean City, Md. “They say, ‘I have a dentist’s office and I’m looking for something durable.’”

To that end, sales associates should lead customers to the best Main Street product to suit their needs and help them make selections. “We take them through the pros and cons, and if they come in with a designer we show her where everything is,” Williams said.

Train your reps

At the very least, RSAs should be up to date on the latest LVT products and their touted features and benefits. Experts say this will ensure they are better prepared when well-researched clients walk through the front door.

“Selling Main Street commercial products requires a retailer to have the necessary technical product knowledge to respond to customers’ performance expectations,” said Quentin Quathamer, commercial brand and



Main Street applications run the gamut from doctors’ offices to beauty salons.

marketing manager, Philadelphia Commercial, a division of Shaw Industries. “We provide retailers with training and other support materials to ensure they understand the technical aspects and product details required to meet the needs of the Main Street commercial customer.”

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: BEAULIEU

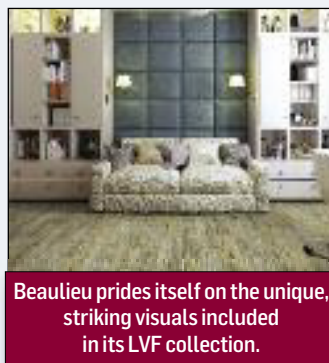
LVF products: Going the extra mile

By now everyone is well aware that “luxury vinyl” is not an oxymoron. It’s the hot flooring product homeowners are eager to get their hands on. So much so that according to HGTV, luxury vinyl is one of eight major flooring trends this year. In a market that is constantly evolving and a category as important as luxury vinyl flooring (LVF), it is crucial for retailers to stay on top of trends.

There are many reasons why LVF is the industry’s fastest-growing category. For one, it is resistant to wear, easy to install and has the look of expensive hardwood or stone without breaking the budget. It is also water resistant, which makes it an excellent choice for below-grade installations. The next step is understanding how companies can meet or exceed customers’ demands.

The ability to offer variety is a definite plus. In terms of LVF, Beaulieu has a broad selection, from economic dry back collections to the high-end, multilayered collection, The New Standard. This line offers not only the flexibility of luxury vinyl in terms of where it could be installed but is also waterproof.

Whether in plank or tile format, the common characteristic of every Beaulieu LVF product is its striking visuals. In all, customers can choose be-



Beaulieu prides itself on the unique, striking visuals included in its LVF collection.

tween nine elegant collections and 62 classic styles that closely mimic wood or stone. Thanks to extraordinary digital imaging and print technology as well as superior embossing process, consumers will have to look twice to see it’s not real wood or stone.

Furthermore, today’s price-conscious consumers are more demanding of value than ever. Not only do they want more quality for their money, but companies now have to go the extra mile. It’s exactly what Beaulieu is doing with its very own integrated lab certification process. The Beaulieu Lab Certified (BLC) logo tells customers the product has undergone many tests performed by an independent, certified laboratory. For the LVF category especially, this means the product has great dimensional stability and high wear resistance.

When you have a product that is fashionable, high quality and affordable like LVF, it is easy to understand its ever-growing popularity. For a privately owned and family-oriented company like Beaulieu, it is only natural to strive in this market category and be the supplier of choice every time. This has been the Beaulieu way for more than 50 years, and it is here to stay.

SETTING THE STANDARDS IN FLOORING FASHION

Carpet • Engineered Luxury Vinyl • Luxury Vinyl • Engineered Hardwood • Laminate

b.



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Luxury Vinyl Flooring



Loose-lay Vinyl Planks

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Installation

The benefits of true loose lay products

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

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

1. Ease of installation and replacement are major draws for loose lay products. Installers with less experience or DIY customers can easily install LVT that doesn't require adhesive or an understanding of a click/locking system. Plus, a tile

or plank can easily be removed and replaced without disrupting an entire room. "If there is a tile damaged beyond repair, that piece can literally be picked up, another tile can be taken from attic stock, it can be laid in and you are done," explained Emil Mellow, vice president of marketing for Karndean Designflooring.

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

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

3. More companies are focusing marketing efforts on promoting and telling the loose lay story. As noted by Lindsey Nesbit, head of product development and marketing strategy, EarthWerks, loose lay is ideal for the DIY market yet its features and benefits are often missed.

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

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

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



Loose lay options entail a low-maintenance installation process.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: SURFACE LINX

Global manufacturing provides top products to meet all needs

SurfaceLinx sets out to connect the best global manufacturers with international customers searching for innovative, quality flooring products. These offerings are tailored to product specifications and designs needed for each customer's geographic and channel needs.

Since 2010, SurfaceLinx along with its partner manufacturers have imported more than 250 million square feet of the highest quality resilient product into North America. Its expanded team of associates and manufacturing partners are focused on delivering quality products—without defects—with average lead times outperforming industry expectations. The company encourages specialty dealers to take advantage of its capabilities while experiencing its consultative approach to retailers' businesses.

SurfaceLinx is confident its product portfolio is unsurpassed in quality, performance and design. The manufacturing process of the components making up the finished product drives quality LVT. SurfaceLinx partners with manufacturers that are all vertically integrated, produc-



SurfaceLinx partners with manufacturers that are all vertically integrated, producing their own balance, core, print and wear layers.

ing their own balance, core, print and wear layers. This guarantees some of the most stable PVC products in the world.

Innovative products such as Quiet Comfort Acoustical Plank and Tile, QuietWeave, QuietComfort Commercial Tile and Plank and

Crescendo RVP allow SurfaceLinx to provide its customers product leadership in the market.

Quiet Comfort Loose Lay is a 5mm LVP/LVT product with superior dimensional stability and exceptional acoustical performance, achieving IIC and STC ratings greater than 56dB. QuietWeave brings an entirely new look to larger format tile with a woven PVC fiber surface to create unsurpassed textures and visuals. This product is made to serve many market channels including higher-end retail, hospitality, corporate and even residential segments.

As the resilient category has experienced an overwhelming influence of WPC-type products over the last year, SurfaceLinx has introduced the Generation II platform of rigid vinyl plank (RVP), its answer to the composite category. The 7mm, 100% recyclable hybrid product offers a 1.5mm embossed in register 20 mil commercial heterogeneous sheet for the decorative surface. The floating floor includes the Valinge 5G locking system to provide ease of installation and performance for a lifetime.

Crescendo

definition: the highest or loudest point of something increasing gradually, the peak of gradual increase.

While others keep trying and having challenges, gradually working on improvements, we started ahead, from the very beginning with the product performance and visuals you are searching for.

Crescendo Elevation in Your Lifestyle

Crescendo WaterProof Rigid Plank

Crescendo is one of the many quality offerings in the portfolio of products from SurfaceLinx™



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installation

Exploring the different options for securing

By Ken Ryan

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

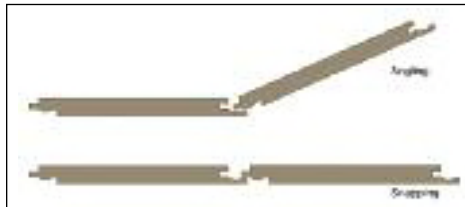
That said, the importance of correctly matching method and application is a conversation dealers must have with their customers, according to retailers and manufacturers who market LVT.

Glue down

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

down product is less likely to have problems down the road."

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



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

Barry White, owner of Carpeteria in Santa Clarita, Calif., said with glue down "there's no hollowness, it's more secure to the floor, a much better installation."

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

Grip-strip/loose lay

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

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

Lvt 101: installation

Reminders for dealers and installers about LVT

BY JIM KUPS

North America technical manager, Novalis Innovative Flooring

Based on questions from the Novalis customer service line and events observed in the field, following are some points to remember in the LVT installation phase.

•**Acclimate.** This is the No. 1 most overlooked and probably the most important item for a successful installation. All vinyl products—including the new engineered-core luxury vinyl flooring (LVF), also known as WPC/HPC/EVP, and loose lay—need some amount of acclimation before installation. Carefully read the manufacturer's installation guide and warranty to verify the length of acclimation.

•**Proper floor prep.** All vinyl flooring needs a clean, dry, smooth and flat surface to perform properly. Can thicker, more rigid core products hide imperfections? Maybe, but don't forget that most of these offerings have locking systems, which that means the floor must be completely flat.

•**Application.** Always consider the application before installing a floor. For example, should you put a floating vinyl floor in a sun-room with large windows without shades in Central Arizona? You

may want to rethink that one.

•**Shade variations.** As trends in coloring go to more monolithic designs, solid coloring and larger-format options, shade variations may become more of an issue with your installation than ever before. Manage your customer's expectations before the sale.

•Proper adhesive selection

Pressure sensitive or transitional? Spray or full-spread? Porous or non-porous substrate? Too much moisture? pH testing? These are all questions that need to be addressed for a solid installation.

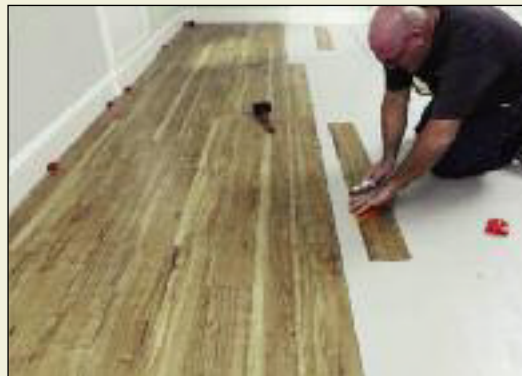
•**Trim moldings.** The industry now has a bevy of moldings available for LVF with some coordinating or matched colors and designs available. No need to just grab for the silver flat metal anymore.

•**Underlayment.** Do a little research with the flooring manufacturer before you start

installing underlayment. Ask for recommendations or restrictions.

•**Warranty.** Know the product warranty and what is and isn't covered; not all are the same. Length of the warranty isn't your only concern; most have mechanical defect and wear statements as well

•**Acclimate.** To reiterate the first point: All flooring needs to be acclimated in the installation area with stable temperatures per the manufacturer's instructions.



LVT floors

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

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

Eric Langan, president and owner at Carpetland USA in Davenport, Iowa, said his installers and DIY customers prefer the floating method because installation is “quick and easy, as is the repair if necessary.”

As for disadvantages, Wirges of 3 Kings Carpet has found that loose lay LVT should not be installed in rooms exposed to direct sunlight for

long periods of time. “The sun beating down on the floor can cause buckling.” He recommends hanging blinds or window shades, as well as using UV window film that provides a barrier between the floor and ultraviolet radiation that can damage LVT over time.

Locking systems

Locking systems have been a proven method of installation with hard surface flooring. Laminate and hardwood manufacturers across the globe license patented click systems from Välinge and Unilin, and many are now incorporating those systems into their LVT products.

Välinge’s two main locking systems are the 2G and 5G. The 2G/2G or 2G/fold down are used for products up to 3mm thick; for LVT products 4mm and thicker, 2G/5G can be used as well as 2G/2G and 2G/fold down.

“2G is always used on the long side of the product, the side that is angled down,” said Su-



An example of Välinge's angling-angling installation.

sanne Hjorthagen, key account manager at Välinge. “The benefit with 5G fold down is that it is a single action installation method, meaning the panel only needs to be angled down and the short side will automatically be locked by the flexible plastic tongue which keeps the panel from vertical movements on the short side. The flexible tongue is inserted to the panel during production of the locking system.”

More than 25 companies have already signed a license for the use of Välinge’s 2G mechanical locking system on LVT, and more than 15 have signed a license to use 5G; production of 5G in LVT flooring started in 2013.

lvt 101: installation

Loose lay flooring: The alternative LVT

BY MICHAEL RASKIN

President and CEO, Raskin Gorilla Floors

There are three ways to install LVT: glue down, floating with a click system or true loose lay which requires no glue or locking system. It is the latter that offers the most installation options.

True loose lay LVT can be easily floated with perimeter adhesive or installed using a full spray or trowel adhesive. Some are even considered waterproof. But the key advantage is reliability and a faster install. In most cases, true loose lay LVT can be installed twice as fast as a floating floor that employs a click system. And with the economy picking up and more business to be had, loose lay LVT allows more jobs to be installed in the same amount of time.

The most important thing to know about loose lay flooring is that it needs to be very stable as the plank or tile is not attached to another, so the weight, dimensional stability and locking in the perimeter with spray adhesive are the three key factors.

1. Dimensional stability. Try to find an LVT that offers a fiber-

glass layer and ask if it is fiberglass sheet, mesh or chopped. Fiberglass sheet will offer the best dimensional stability because it is denser with no holes. Mesh is second best. Also ask how many layers of fiberglass are included. Multiple layers offer extra dimensional stability as each layer could be engineered to prevent the other from moving. This will allow the product to always lay perfectly flat.

2. Weight of the product. The product must have a sufficient weight to keep it flat. Gravity applies as the product will not move if it is heavy enough. And the thick construction covers most subfloor blemishes while offering superior sound absorption.

3. Locking in the perimeter. Spray adhesive is easy to use and sets up quickly so the floor can be installed within 10 minutes. In most residential applications just spray the adhesive on the perimeter. If installing a large area, you would spray every

20 feet in a grid system, but similar to most other floors no transition strips are needed. If an installer or project manager feels the entire floor should be glued down, it can be. Spray adhesive is so easy to use that some installers will spray the floor without having to worry about missing a spot.



With an improved economy and influx of business, loose lay LVT is helpful as it allows more jobs to be installed in the same amount of time.

cleaning and maintenance

Proper floor care is key

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

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

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

Some LVT manufacturers offer cleaning products that can easily be sold as add-ons.



on a new floor.

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

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

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

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

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

Other tips

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

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: ARMSTRONG

Reinventing flooring again with Vivero

Armstrong Flooring's latest innovation, Vivero luxury flooring, features patent-pending Diamond 10 technology to deliver industry-leading durability and cutting-edge design. Made with real diamonds, Diamond 10 delivers beauty that will stand the test of time and traffic, keeping floors looking newer longer.

Vivero—a mash up of Latin roots "viv" and "vero" meaning "life" and "truth"—is notable for its composition, specifically its rigid core made of limestone and PVC, and the Diamond 10 technology used in its coating. The patent-pending, diamond-infused layer provides extra durability and scratch and stain resistance in addition to cleanability. Vivero is also waterproof; liquid will bead on the product's surface, making it easy to wipe away.

Vivero luxury flooring is exclusive to the independent specialty retail channel. It is the first product to be produced in the Armstrong Flooring LVT manufacturing facility in Lancaster, Pa. This newly refurbished facility delivers American-made product with best-in-class service,



Armstrong's Vivero luxury flooring offers superior scratch and stain resistance thanks to its proprietary Diamond 10 surface technology.

quality and performance with unique designs that reflect American tastes.

A major differentiator for products within

the Vivero portfolio are the installation options. All "good" SKUs come with simple and secure angle-angle locking technology while "best" and "better" both feature the IntegriLock system, which utilizes 5G technology from Välinge. All Vivero products are offered in glue-down options.

"Vivero stands out in the market," said Joe Bondi, senior vice president, residential floor products, Armstrong Flooring. "It helps the retailer close the sale and it is the right product to keep retail ahead of the curve. It's the right product to help specialty flooring retailers grow their businesses and build strong consumer loyalty."

John Sher, president of Adleta, offered a distributor perspective on Vivero. "Armstrong has something with this Diamond 10 technology that is demonstrably different in wear and stain resistance. It is in a class by itself. There is a story to tell for retailers."

He added, "It isn't often a major manufacturer launches a product that is a real game changer. I believe Vivero has the features and benefits to do this. And it carries with it a great brand name and great reputation with Armstrong Flooring."



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A NEW ERA IN FLOORING

Witness a revolution in flooring: Vivero™ luxury flooring with patent-pending Diamond10™ Technology. Made with cultured diamonds, it is beauty that will stand the test of time and traffic, and keep floors looking newer longer. And with both locking and glue-down options, Vivero offers flexible installation options.

Easy care – repels dirt, spills and stains ◆ Superior scratch and scuff resistance ◆ Stunning, true-to-life looks ◆ Manufactured in Lancaster, PA

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sustainability

Industry leverages category's environmental

When a customer walks into a floor covering store with a sustainable option high on her list of priorities, LVT presents a number of benefits that retailers and sales associates can tout.

More than 1 billion pounds of vinyl are recycled annually. During the vinyl flooring manufacturing process, most of the scrap (pre-consumer material) is recycled for use in the finished product. Due to widespread post-industrial recycling, more than 99% of all manufactured vinyl compound is recycled into finished vinyl products. In addition, many vinyl flooring manufacturers reclaim vinyl from the field (post-consumer material) and recycle it back into their products or other vinyl commodities.

Dean Thompson, president of the Resilient Floor Covering Institute (RFCI), noted the sustainability values of vinyl, particularly its compliance with important standards within the industry. "Scientific studies from around the world support the long-term human health and safety advantages of vinyl products," he said. "With the availability of NSF/ANSI 332 Sustainability Standard for Resilient Flooring, we

have brought more transparency to the sustainability process. The standard evaluates the entire life cycle, from raw materials to end-of-life management. Certification to this comprehensive sustainability standard provides specifiers



and purchasers with the highest level of confidence and credibility."

The RFCI website includes a "7 Reasons" page that highlights seven reasons why resilient floors, including LVT, are a top choice when deciding which flooring material to install.

Certifications and benchmarks

The NSF/ANSI 332 Sustainability Standard for Resilient Flooring is an industry-wide measurement that provides a means for consumers, purchasers and specifiers to evaluate products'

sustainability. The standard follows a life cycle assessment (LCA) approach, helping to document superior durability while driving a stake in the ground for the sustainability of resilient flooring. The resilient flooring industry is one of a few building product categories that have developed such a standard. Certification by a third-party, independent certifier enables manufacturers of flooring products to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability. It promotes greater use of sustainability practices in manufacturing while also delivering transparency and clarity.

Floorcore certification was developed by the RFCI with Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) to test and certify flooring products for compliance with indoor air quality (IAQ) emission requirements adopted in California. Floorscore IAQ certification means that a flooring product is independently certified by SCS to comply with the volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions criteria of the California Section 01350 Program; products with the Floorscore seal have been independently certified. Any product that has met these stringent

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: BEAUFLOOR

Rigid board composition sets Pure planks apart

Beauflor is a premium brand known for its high-quality products. With state-of-the-art technology for the production of luxury vinyl planks, the company is focused on developing products that benefit consumers through smart innovations and beautiful style. The Beauflor Pure luxury vinyl planks are not only beautiful to look at, but lead the LVT category in sound absorption and faster installations.

Because of the patented DreamClick locking system, the product can be installed faster than the competition with several installers working simultaneously in multiple directions. Beauflor offers the only vinyl plank in the industry with a rigid board composition, meaning Pure planks can be installed



Rigid board construction allows planks to be installed directly over existing tile floors.

directly on existing tile and are 30% lighter than the competition. Having the strongest plank connection in the industry and being 100% recyclable make Beauflor a smart, beautiful choice for all building applications.

For builders, architects and flooring subcontractors, Beauflor Pure planks are efficient and profitable with many consumer benefits. Pure luxury vinyl planks are durable and sound absorbing, providing a perfect solution for both commercial and residential applications. In areas of high foot traffic, Beauflor Pure vinyl planks wear beautifully, continuing to look new, long after installation. Beauflor Pure planks also fit perfectly with today's open concept floor plans. Since the

planks are waterproof, they can be used seamlessly from living room to kitchen and from bedroom to bathroom. The industry-leading sound absorption rating means the planks are ideal for busy households and multi-family buildings.

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

By choosing Beauflor, your customers are making the smartest, most beautiful choice in flooring.

attributes

standards is one that will contribute to good indoor air quality. Ultimately, Floorscore certification means healthier, cleaner air, creating a safer, friendlier living environment.

Another tool for determining a product's environmental impact is the Environmental Product Declaration (EPD). LVT from Amtico, Armstrong, Centiva, Congoleum, Mannington, Metroflor and Tarkett, to name a few, all have EPD transparency summaries available on the RFCI website that include information on global warming potential, ozone depletion potential, photochemical ozone creation potential, acidification potential, eutrophication potential, depletion of abiotic resources (elements) and depletion of abiotic resources (fossil fuels), in addition to material content, which reads much like a nutrition label on food.

PTDs, or Product Transparency Declarations, are becoming prevalent in the flooring industry as well, as they allow for easy identification and assessment of health information, heavy metals

and VOC content. As per RFCI, with PTDs manufacturers can report the ingredients included in products, focusing on avoiding materials that are recognized on the following six lists:

- International Agency on the Research of Cancer Terminology (IARC) known carcinogens and possible carcinogens;
 - Known or reasonably anticipated carcinogen lists from the National Toxicology Program Report on Carcinogens;
 - Primary requirements of California Proposition 65 listings for substances known to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity;
 - Persistent, bioaccumulative or toxic substances on USEPA's Toxic Release Inventory;
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Carcinogen List, and
 - REACH Substances of Very High Concern.
- In addition, manufacturers will identify whether heavy metals are added as functional ingredients to products.



An ideal flooring choice

LVT is different from other vinyl products in that it typically has much higher vinyl content for superior embossed-like surfaces and performance.

Based on its outstanding performance, corrosion resistance, maintenance and replacement cost advantages, vinyl is the material of choice for interior and exterior building products. Because of its durability, vinyl flooring does not have to be replaced as often as many other types of flooring. Many LVT manufacturers have developed products with sustainability and environmental friendliness in mind. For example, Armstrong—an RFCI member company—produces LVT that is eligible for various LEED credits based on production methods.

lvt 101: selling

The importance of product certification in today's market

BY CAROLINE FALCAO

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Nowadays, consumers are more demanding than ever when it comes to the quality and the price of the products they purchase. "There's definitely been a shift from spending to savings," the late Chris Davis, former president and CEO of the World Floor Covering Association, once said. "But that doesn't mean consumers aren't buying flooring; it means they're looking for value and comfort." In order to stay relevant in this kind of market, companies have to find ways to differentiate themselves from the competition and offer customers more value.

Product certification or qualification is the process of certifying that a certain product has passed performance tests and quality assurance tests and meets the industry's qualification criteria. Considering the problems that occurred in the past regarding certain defects on flooring products, a certification process is a great way for companies to be assured of the quality and stability of the

products they are purchasing and selling.

Five years ago, Beaulieu did just that by creating its own hands-on quality control process. The Beaulieu Lab Certification was developed to ensure strict quality control and to conform to industry regulations. In the end, the overall objective of certifying a product is to instill confidence in all interested parties that it complies with the industry's standards. The idea is to go from a "buyers' beware" to a "buyers have faith" approach. Beaulieu's integrated lab certification process with its partners ensures that each category of hard surface flooring was subjected to multiple quality and content tests. A physical inspection is executed during the manufacturing process to verify the color, length, width, etc., and each test is documented with detailed reports, photos and videos to guarantee accuracy.

For consumers, choosing products that have undergone a certification shows commitment not only to their family's welfare, but also to the quality of the products they are buying. This goes to show that product certification will become a must for today's savvy consumers.



The Beaulieu Lab Certification was developed to ensure strict quality control and to conform to industry regulations.

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