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Reflection White Oak, color 1079 Champagne | Insightful Journey Rug, color 533

So many people to thank

July 10, 2000. That's the day America's Floor Source opened. I think back to the months and days leading up to that date as well as the 20 years since. I get emotional thinking about it. For those of you who have done it, you know the pain and sacrifice, the wins and losses and the emotional and financial roller coaster starting and owning a business can be. But it's the relationships, the friendships and the love that I'll remember and cherish the most.

America's Floor Source would never be where it is today without the people who comprise Team AFS. Over the course of 20 years there are a lot of people who have been a member of the team. (See page 58 for the complete list.) Whether you're an employee, an independent contractor, a supplier, a service provider or a client, I want you to know I appreciate everything you have done for me and this company over the years. Thank you!

To all the AFS employees, both current and former, thank you for your dedication and sacrifice. Thank you for standing by my side in the good times and the bad, always willing to fight the battles that needed to be fought. I told myself I was not going to single people out, as once I start naming names I will never be able to mention everyone whose name deserves to be called. Regardless, here it goes: Vickie Mascarello, Jason Bush, Dan Canterbury, Becky Sweeney, Dusty Gall and Perry Stover. You were the originals—the group that took that leap of faith. Some of you are still at the company and some have moved on, but I want you all to know I will never forget you. Thank you for believing.

Randy Brenly, Bob Miller, Todd Sweeney and Scott Borah—you all weren't far behind. Thank you for sticking it out all these years and helping to build a great company. Thank you for being there when I needed you most.

Roger Slack, Joan Hullinger and Tim Myers—two of you are gone from this earth, but the lessons I learned from all three of you will never be forgotten. Thank you for being great teachers and great friends. There is a reason all three of you are in the AFS Hall of Fame. (See page 46.)

Tim Henson, my brother from another mother. This incredible success could have never happened without you leading the charge for all those years. You are truly one of the best. Thank you for always being there for me and the rest of the team.

To all the incredible AFS installers, I want to say we could never have done this without you. Thank you for being part of Team AFS. Thank you for your dedication. I've got your back because you have always had mine.

Mr. Lee, the consummate professional, class act and Hall of Famer: Thank you for always being there for me and this company.

To all of the AFS suppliers and service providers—thank you for all your support over the years. It truly takes a team and you all are a big part of Team AFS.

Shaw Industries—thank you for earning your spot as our No. 1 supplier for 20 years straight. You are a great partner and you understand what partnership means.

Bob Mosher, you were also an original—the first service provider for AFS. It has been 20 years and here we are, still together, making this thing go. Thank you.

Edgar Aya, Alex Aya and Comp-U-Floor, thank you for being my ERP (point of sale through general ledger) provider for this entire journey. Edgar, I still remember the original demo you did for me prior to even opening AFS. Man, have we both come a long way. I look forward to continuing this journey together as you put the finishing touches on your new cloud-based system that everyone in the industry should be looking at.

Brad Dresbach, 20 years of creating the brand as a service provider to now starting as an employee of the company. I cannot wait to see what we can create over the next 20 years with you being full time and focused on just our brands.

To all of our customers—a big THANK YOU! We understand without customers we are nothing. I appreciate each and every one of you. We were there for you yesterday, we are here for you today and we will be here for you tomorrow. Thank you for allowing us the privilege of working with you, your teams and your clients. We work hard every single day to earn your business.

To Dustin Leggans, my technology business partner in RLM and TraLaMa—thank you for believing in my vision. You truly are a gifted programmer and a great friend.

To my mom—thanks for raising me the way you did and for always believing in me and being there for me.

To my wife, Andrea, thank you for letting me do what I love. I love you and our two children, Beck and Owen. Team AFS broke \$100 million in annual revenue in 2019, and it feels like we are just getting started. The future is whatever we make it. Let's make it a billion dollars while having a great time along the way. Thank you, everyone!

Jason Goldberg, CEO, America's Floor Source



Journey to \$100 million

I'm going to be brutally honest here. I did not really know Jason Goldberg until about six months ago. Sure, I knew of him. Sure, I knew he owned a flooring business in Columbus, Ohio, called America's Floor Source. Sure, I knew he had started a CRM business called Retail Lead Management.

Every once in a while we would cross paths in an aisle at a trade show. In fact, the first time I walked past him some years ago I needed my business partner, Dustin Aaronson, to point him out. "That's Jason Goldberg, He is not a Steve fan." (Dustin had somewhat of a relationship with Jason because he had reached out on multiple occasions to attempt to get Jason to advertise Retail Lead Management in our classifieds section.)

Not everyone can be a "Steve fan," but in this business you never want to alienate anyone. I just didn't know how to handle this situation. You see, I have been close with Jason's dad for the better part of 25 years. For those of you who have been sleeping under a rock for the last quarter century, Jason's dad, Michael Goldberg, is the owner of Rite Rug, a significant independent flooring retailer with a sales volume north of \$300 million. Rite Rug is also based in Columbus. Rite Rug is also a competitor to America's Floor Source. Jason was also once president of Rite Rug. Jason was also fired from Rite Rug 20 years ago, which led him to start America's Floor Source.

I always felt I had to choose sides. In my book, loyalty is the most important trait a person can have. Michael is not only a friend, but he advised me on a number of personal issues. He was the one who told me I needed to get divorced. He was the one who suggested I move to Manhattan. There was a lot more.

It wasn't until a January 2020 meeting with the FloorForce folks at their headquarters in Manhattan that someone approached me, introduced himself and asked if we could step away and talk for a few minutes. It was Jason. I found him to be friendly, professional and, most importantly, sympathetic to my relationship with his dad. We had done a 75th anniversary supplement for Rite Rug some time ago, and he asked if we would be interested in doing one to commemorate his company's 20-year milestone. I said I'd have to get back to him. It may not have been fair, but I had to do some soul searching.

Over the last couple of months I have learned more about America's Floor Source than I ever knew—all of which is contained in this issue. I got to see his operation firsthand, from his enormous campus to his impressive retail showroom and builder design center to the efficiency of the entire operation. You don't invest \$100,000 in a business—selling your house and cashing in your 401k in the process along the way—if you don't believe in yourself. You don't grow that business from \$100,000 to \$100 million in 20 years if you don't have vision, drive and brains.

This special America's Floor Source supplement is not only a celebration of the past 20 years, but it also contains some digestible nuggets that any retailer can employ in his or her business. It's a journey worth sharing.

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A conversation with **JASON GOLDBERG**



There are not a plethora of floor covering dealers in the U.S. doing more than \$100 million annually. America's Floor Source is one of them. The Columbus, Ohio-based retailer blends builder, retail, wholesale and property management businesses across four cities with a carefully orchestrated strategy for growth. Founder and CEO Jason Goldberg, recently sat down with *FCNews* to discuss the journey, the present and the future.

Who is Jason Goldberg?

I'm a third-generation flooring person. My grandfather started one of the largest flooring companies in the country in Rite Rug in 1934 and then it passed to my dad. I worked there for a number of years, and that's where I cut my teeth in the flooring business. I became president of that company in 1997 at the age of 27. I was fired on March 25, 2000. I started America's Floor Source on July 10, 2000.

grow requires a knowledge of what you're getting into.

What has been the company's hallmark?

The company was built based on the mindset that service was going to be No. 1. We are just going to service the customer as best we can. 'Service, and I mean right now!' is one of our core values.

What differentiates America's Floor Source from other flooring companies, whether local or national?

I think our team is better. I'm sure everyone thinks they have great people. I know we have great people. And what differentiates us is the amount of time and effort we put into training our people on how we do business as America's Floor Source. I spent and continue to spend an immense amount of time building the system that is America's Floor Source. I built it with help from the team. So, that's the main thing for me: it's the people, the training and the processes that we've been able to put in place and that we continue to refine.

Give me a brief overview of America's Floor Source.

We're a flooring retailer that focuses on four main divisions: builder (our largest), property management, wholesale to the trade and retail. The wholesale, retail and property management pieces are all pretty close in size, and builder is close to 58% of the business. We started doing only builder, then we added wholesale, then property management and then retail came fourth. We've also dabbled in commercial, but I'm not out there looking for it. But I would venture to say at some point we will have a larger commercial presence just because we're always looking for ways to grow, and to grow the way we want to

Anything else aside from the people?

We don't play in the low-mar-

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gin business. I think that's helped make us successful. There's only so much low-margin business that I'll even stomach. We're very specific in the business we want and the business that we'll do because of the high level of service we want to offer. We want to be high volume at a high service level. A lot of people who do high volume find their service level suffers. I won't let that happen. I expect our service levels to keep increasing, not decreasing. But you can't do that without implementing a great system. And then to run a great system, you need great people. And for them to run that great system they have to be trained exceptionally well.

But it's not only the training on how you're doing business, it's the product knowledge, the installation knowledge, the negotiating knowledge, the sales knowl-

edge. I'm in a lot of Facebook groups, and I listen to what people are saying. A lot of the conversations are people talking about training. Some people just don't understand

what to be training on. It's really unfortunate. To build a large sustainable business, you need to truly understand what is important to train on. It took me years to figure it

out. But once you do figure it out, you need to work exceptionally hard with your team to make them understand and buy into the training. Then every day you work on learning and improving those things. This cannot be talk, it has to be action.



IMPRESSIONS

“Jason is one of the brightest minds in the flooring business today. He is innovative and is driving new solutions and platforms in the retail business. In 20 years, Jason has built, from scratch, one of the largest and most successful flooring businesses in the country. Shaw is honored to be a supplier and partner to America's Floor Source.”

—Vance Bell, chairman & CEO, Shaw Industries

What mistakes did you make early on that helped shape the company today?

We've opened in markets that weren't right for us and pulled out. Fort Wayne is a good example of that. We've gotten into product classes we didn't fully understand and pulled out. We've tried commercial but had the wrong team. We've done things like finished on-site hardwood and got out. We got into carpet cleaning and got out. You learn from those experiences of what you did wrong, then

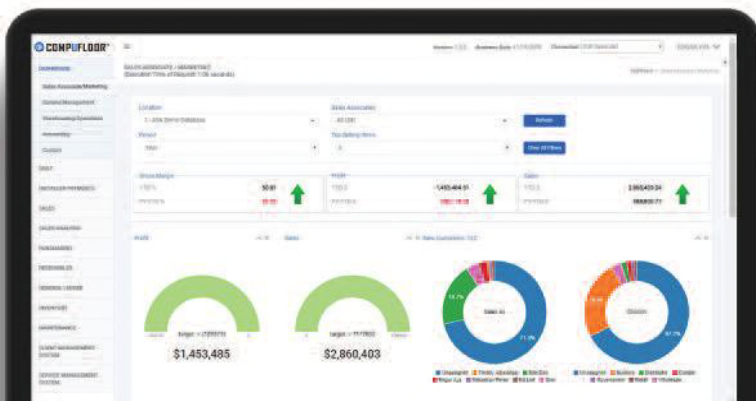
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you regroup and try it again. We've learned a ton from those mistakes, and I can tell you with confidence that when we enter a new market, launch a new division or add a new product class of business, we have a greater chance of being successful because of the lessons we learned from making those mistakes early on.

Talk a little more about why a particular market may not work out.

Expanding into markets just because a builder wanted us to go. It has to be more than that. You have to analyze that market and make sure it's a right fit for you. Our Indianapolis operation was profitable the first year. But Indianapolis is very similar to Columbus in size, setup, shape and people. Fort Wayne, on the other hand, has maybe 250,000 people, it doesn't fit our model. So, even though we went there for a builder, those 40 houses that builder was giving us wasn't enough to make any money. So, you look at the size of the market and realize this was a mistake. We closed Fort Wayne within six months. We just knew it was wrong.

We opened in Cincinnati many years ago, lost money for five years and shut it down. We simply had the wrong team. We reopened Cincinnati in 2019, and it is turning out to be a very successful market for us now. We learned from the mistakes of the past.

Cleveland was the same thing. We opened and struggled for over two years

and shut it down. Part of the issue was the team, part of the issue was installation and part of the issue was misjudging the market itself. Don't be surprised if we reopen Cleveland, having corrected all those mistakes, and turn that into another flourishing market for AFS.

What else contributed to the success of AFS?

We just talked about learning from the mistakes and having a high level of service. But to me, the absolute most important thing is our team. I know everyone says people are their most important asset. I think we would all agree with that. But we take that to the next level. It's the training and emphasis we put on the knowledge they have to have and how they interact and the type of person they are, that is really important to the overall success of America's Floor Source.

The other thing is, I own almost all my own facilities. It does make a difference in a downturn because I control the rent. A company has a much higher survival rate in a downturn if the owner of the business also owns the property.

What did you learn from your time at Rite Rug?

I learned the basic aspects of the flooring business. I'd like to be able to tell you that I learned a lot about running and operating a large business but that just wasn't the case. I would say I've learned a lot more about the flooring business and business in general since I've been out on my own

I truly believe my dad was struggling

back then with running the business because he really didn't understand how to properly run and grow a large business. As such, he did not have the proper knowledge and tools to teach me some of those key aspects. Fast forward to today and he has obviously corrected that as he has built an enormous company.

I learned product. I learned operations. My dad, to his credit, made me start in the warehouse and from there I went into cutting. I had to go through the realm of positions. He made me go into sales even though I didn't want to do it. He said if you want to become what you can become, you have to do this. I also learned a lot of things to not do, like maybe there were better ways to treat people.

Give me two things you learned from your dad.

I learned how to be tough. My dad, you know, is tough. He was tough on me. His father was tough on him. Not saying that's the right or wrong way to do it. That's just the way it happened to him. And that's the way it happened to me.

Did you learn how to negotiate at Rite Rug?

Oh yeah. I got to sit in all the purchasing meetings. I learned the core. I mean to make it to the president of the company in 1997, I would say I learned how to do everything to run a business, specifically a flooring business. But I probably learned the fundamentals better than the average person because my teacher, being my father, wasn't going to give me anything. I had to earn it. And he gets my respect for that. I don't agree with the way he did everything, but I have to attribute part of my success to the training he gave or didn't give.

If we were sitting here 20 years ago and I told you that America's Floor Source would be a \$100 million company, how would you have responded?

Not a chance. Because when I started, I was always thinking to myself, "What would it be if I could ever build a \$50 million flooring company?" That would be the pinnacle.

So now what?

Well, we hit \$50 million and now we've



IMPRESSIONS

"Jason is not your typical flooring dealer. His ability to service and adapt to all flooring market segments has set him apart with his customers. I've known Jason for nearly 15 years, and he has always pushed the envelope—he's not willing to sit around and wait for someone else to do it first. His passion and commitment to innovation have made America's Floor Source a great partner for Shaw."

—Mark Tucker, vice president of builder sales, Shaw Industries

hit \$100 million. And I believe we can get to a billion dollars. But to do that, you have to have the desire and the work ethic. I'm 49, and if I'm willing to put the time in and the team is on board, I know we can do it.

How do you get to a billion dollars at this point? Is it organic? Is it expanding geographically? Is it expanding into other segments like commercial?

The answer is yes to all those things. I'm a fan of maximizing your market penetration. For instance, when I look at the competitive landscape and I can even go back to Rite Rug, where I used to work, they do over \$300 million and have all these markets, but in some markets they may only do \$5 million. I'm in Columbus, Indianapolis, Cincinnati and Louisville. I would rather do between \$50 million and a \$100 million in one market, because when you open a new market, I don't care if you're doing half a million, \$5 million or \$50

million, you have to build an entire operations, installation and field team. You have to be able to install. And that is such a complex process to be good at. And that's what really separates those of us who provide exceptional service from those of us who don't—managing a field and an installation department with top-quality installers.

So when you've already built those components in a marketplace, like we've done in the four markets we're in, then

IMPRESSIONS



“Jason and his team have built a tremendous business over the past 20 years. We have been fortunate to support the success of America’s Floor Source. Congratulations, Jason, and here’s to 20 more!”

— Jeff Lorberbaum, CEO, Mohawk Industries

you maximize the marketplace. So, in each marketplace we have a hub store, like here in Columbus we have this 125,000-square-foot campus and I have two satellites. So, as I expand, the company's growth may not be geographic expansion. For instance, in Indianapolis with a new facility, we're doing close to \$20 million right now, but we can get that market as big as Columbus. And then in Louisville, we're going to be buying a bigger facility. My setup is a large hub location and then as we deem it necessary within the market to grow, we can add satellite retail facilities.

We also do in-home shopping via the Mobile Floor Source. Our federally trademarked slogan is "Our Showroom to Your Living Room." So, I can hit retail in a market without opening the satellites. But sometimes a satellite store does make sense.

But if we're going to look to get to a billion, then, yes, we would have to open

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Congratulations to America's Floor Source on 20 years of success and to many more years of partnership!

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additional markets. Let's say we're doing \$70 million in Columbus, we could get to \$100 million easily; all I would have to do is add commercial. We can also add product categories. I told you some categories we were in that we got out of, we know the mistakes we made. So, for example, it wouldn't be that hard for us to go back into finished on-site hardwood or carpet cleaning. And then there are a couple other categories that we're looking at.

Are you in cabinets and countertops?

No. I'm just focusing on flooring because there are a lot of avenues for that. But I'm not saying that's not a possibility.

Margins on builder work vs. wholesale vs. retail?

You have to do a lot of volume with builder. It's kind of similar with property management. Retail's the highest margin.

Talk about your installer training.

We're one of the few companies that have actual hands-on training. I break

training down into three areas: classroom training, online training where people can do it at their own pace on modules, and then you have the hands-on training where you get your hands dirty type training. And that's what we're talking about over here. We have a training center here in Columbus and we have another one in Indianapolis. It's a space where we teach attendees how to properly site assess, prepare substrates and install correctly.

But the other main benefit of that training center is addressing installer errors. If an installer is willing to learn the right way to do something and come to the training center, one of our training experts will review the issue and show them the correct way to do it.

The other thing we can do is, let's say a builder has a specific bathroom they're building with a specific tub and shower combination and they're trying to figure out the best way to lay it out. We can create a mockup of it in our training center and then we can have them come in and we can standardize a layout before they start building it.

When we build the new expansion space, the training center is going to be four times the size it is now. I want to become a regional training facility across this country, not just for America's Floor Source but for the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA), the National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA), Certified Flooring Installers (CFI) and for all these organizations that offer regional training that are always trying to find a host company. That will give us not only training for our own employees and contractors, but think about all the others it will help.

Let's talk about that design center, that service you provide for your builders.

It's a full-scale design center with designers on staff. If we're doing your business as a builder, we will do your selections at no charge, and not only the flooring selections but the accompanying products as well. The only caveat is you have to give us all the business. But this model is not unique to us. There are a lot of companies where that's their whole business model. And there's a couple of really big companies that focus just on builder business, where their whole model is design center selections with installation. But some of those companies are doing the countertops and the cabinets on their own. We don't do it. We just do the selection but not the installation of those products.

Here in Columbus you have three facilities. 125,000 square feet on 10 acres. You just bought 13 more acres. You're going to build one big facility?

I haven't decided if it's going to be one or if it's going to be multiple buildings. But we're going to move our main retail showroom. Right now, this current facility doubles as a builder design center and retail showroom. We're going to build a new retail/wholesale showroom that will be our version of a new concept store. It's going to have a massive showroom. That's where the new training center is going to go. The non-classroom part will be a minimum of 10,000 square feet. We're going to have a binding custom rug making area in that facility. And then we're going to add a whole bunch more warehousing because we're almost out of

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space with the business we're doing.

Let's talk about challenges today.

I would say the biggest challenge is always finding the right teammate, the right person who has our values, work ethic and cultural fit. And to make sure that each time you hire someone you hire that right person. We haven't always done that, but we've gotten significantly better.

What about maintaining margins?

Margins are always challenging, but that's the nature of competition. You have to decide what works for your company. We decided we're not going to play in that super-low-margin business. Everyone has a finite amount of resources. At any point in time, you only have so many salespeople, so many warehouse people and so many installers. And prior to the coronavirus hitting, the installer issue was the big talk.



All hands on deck. Jason Goldberg operating a cutting machine from Accu-Cut, one of the company's longtime vendor partners.

entry-level house, or whatever level you're trying to build, and you're constantly just beating your guy down for price, then expect the beat-down price to reflect the type of service you receive.

Everyone had limited capacity, but what do you want to use your capacity on? Let your competitor do the low-margin business. If you want to waste 60% or 70% of your overall capacity doing work for that, great. We've had builders who come to us and say, "Will you do some of this business?" Not at those prices we won't. "Well, that's all we're going to pay." The reason you're looking for a new company is because the current company you are using is obviously not performing to the level you want. The reality is, you get what you pay for. So, if you're a builder and you're trying to build an

What's the biggest opportunity for you right now?

The biggest opportunity would be our ability to continue to grow the company. We can open more markets if we want because there's opportunity for that. We can open additional divisions like commercial. We can add product classes. We can add a satellite retail location for Indianapolis. We can add a bigger hub location in Louisville.

There's so much opportunity, but we have to be cautious in which ones we decide to invest in and the speed at which we want to do it.



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by JASON GOLDBERG

I get asked all the time, "How did you do it? How did you build and continue to grow a successful flooring business?" Here are some of the keys:

Be prepared to sacrifice. You will have to sacrifice things that are important to you in order to build your business. Starting and building a business is not only hard work but also mentally taxing. You cannot half-ass it. If you want to have a chance of being successful, be prepared to sacrifice things that are important to you—things like family time, doing things you like, etc. If you are unwilling to make sacrifices, you probably won't be as successful as you could have been or may not be successful at all.

I made many sacrifices to start America's Floor Source. I sacrificed family relationships. I sacrificed time with my friends. I sacrificed material things like the home I owned and the nice car I drove. Both were sold so I could have money for the business and keep my monthly expenses low. I lived in an inexpensive apartment in a not-so-nice area of town and drove a \$500 used pick-up truck.

Build a strong team. This is actually the single-most important piece of the equation. If you want to build and grow a great organization, it starts with great people. They don't need to be great initially, but they need to have the right characteristics so you can guide, help and teach them to become great. One of the biggest mistakes I see other entrepreneurs make is trying to do everything themselves. You cannot grow a great organization by doing everything yourself. There simply isn't enough time in a day and eventually you will plateau.

You will never be able to grow a large business without that great team who you empower with responsibility and accountability.

Develop a sales strategy. Without sales you have no business. And it's not just any sale, it's the type of sale you want for your company. Where do you want to play? Do you want to do

SIX KEYS TO BUILDING AND GROWING A SUCCESSFUL FLOORING COMPANY



Jason Goldberg, CEO of America's Floor Source, places a strong emphasis on tracking data and managing leads.

builder, apartment, wholesale, retail or commercial work? Do you want to do multiple combinations? You have to develop people, techniques and systems to properly go after and handle the type of business you want.

Institute standard operating procedures. The bigger you get, the more standardized your systems, processes and procedures need to be. This is of vital importance. Great systems, processes and procedures allow you to have a standardized way to achieve a consistent result. I cannot tell you the number of companies I talk with where they simply don't have this, which leads to everyone doing things whatever way they want. That might work when you are smaller, but it will never allow you to reach the pinnacle of success. In my opinion, even small companies should have well laid out systems, processes and procedures. The earlier you start, the easier it becomes.

I spend an immense amount of time building and refining the system, processes and procedures that make AFS run smoothly. We could never do the business we do now without them.

Manage your leads. This is actually

just combining the importance of making sales with the importance of having a great system. A great lead management system helps you with both. I speak with dealers all the time who want better ways to market yet have no system to manage their leads. It's baffling that they cannot understand the management of leads is the more important piece of this equation. If you spend \$5,000 a month to generate leads and yet have no idea who is handling what leads, what stage in the process they are in, close rates, etc., you are throwing away money.

I'm relentless when it comes to lead management. We use it in every division of the company. It's one of the key reasons for our massive success.

Build, maintain a referral business. There are hundreds of things that are important in running and growing your business—too many for me to list. But let me leave you with one more: repeat and referral business. Great companies have an abundance of repeat and referral business. This is not by accident. Giving customers great experiences so they want to buy from you again and tell their friends is what we should all be striving for.



Celebrating 20 Years.

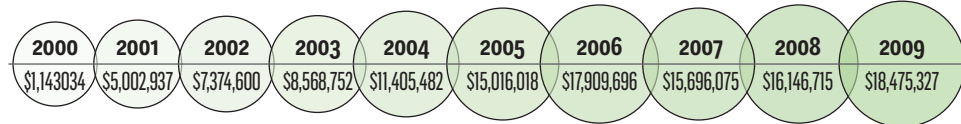
Congratulations to America's Floor Source for twenty years of providing quality flooring and service to customers in Columbus, Ohio and throughout the Midwest.

engineeredfloors.com | dwcarpets.com



How \$100,000 became \$100 million

Climbing through the years



Jason Goldberg, CEO of America's Floor Source, takes a look back over his 20-year journey. Following are his recollections, in his own words...



In the beginning...

After I left Rite Rug, flooring is really all I knew. I had worked in the business since I was 15. I worked through high school and through college. So I knew flooring. I had taken the builder division from \$2 million to \$12 million in two years. I knew I had a base. After I got fired, I needed to decide what I wanted to do. Well, I decided I wanted to do flooring. I really didn't want to work for anyone else, so I just took a leap of faith. I wasn't married at the time. I had no kids. I had a team of people who still worked at the competitor that were all looking to me, like, what are we going to do? So, I wrote a business plan. I found a 16,000-square-foot space. It was behind a church, not in a great part of town, but it was the right price.

From the penthouse to the outhouse

I had \$70,000 in my 401k and I had a house that had some equity. So, I cashed them both out. I sold my house and I netted \$50,000 on the sale. I cashed in my 401k and netted another \$50,000 after taxes. I moved



into an apartment in a bad part of town right by the store. I took my hundred grand, signed the lease and just went for it.

I remember money being an incredibly big issue because when you do builder work, you buy material, you pay labor and then you wait to get paid. And sometimes that waiting game can be quite long. So \$100,000 really isn't enough. I got declined by seven banks for a bank loan. I finally got a friend of mine to co-sign on a \$200,000 line of credit. I paid him \$3,000 every month for that signature. That's a crazy interest rate for that type of loan, but I didn't have a choice. I was also paying interest to the bank for that same loan.

Structure

I think when most people start a flooring business, they don't have the structure that I had. When you're the president of a company the size of Rite Rug and you understand technology and you understand relationships and people and divisions as well as pricing and buying, etc., it wasn't that difficult for me to structure.



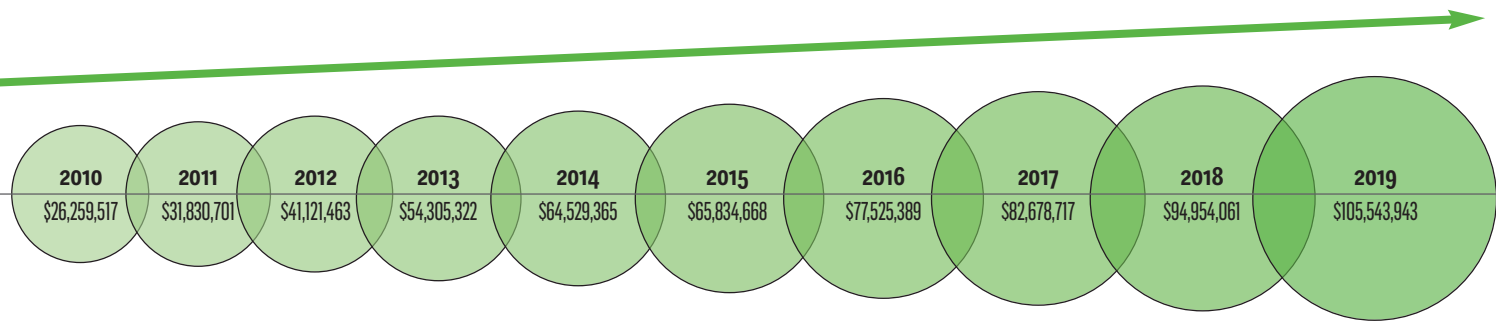
The original three

I had talked to several of the builder clients I was doing business with and said, "Look, I'm unemployed. I'm going to start my own company. If I start, will you give me just a little bit of business and then I'll earn my stripes." All three of them said yes. So, it was me and then six people who had worked with me at the previous job.

We came out like wildfire. We opened July 10, 2000, and did \$1 million between July and December. And then in 2001 we did \$5 million. And it was at that point where I was able to go to the bank and say, "Look at my inventory; look at my receivables; look at our profitability." When we came out of the gate, we were running between 7% and 8% net profit. We were making good money.

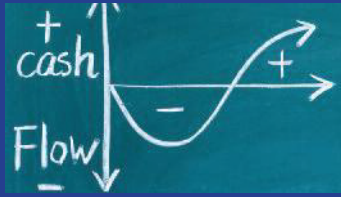
Once I was open, I could show after a few months we were legit. "You can come see my facility. I have a 12,000-square-foot warehouse, 4,000 feet of office space. You can see we're doing work for these guys." Slowly, other builders started giving us some opportunities.





The growth path

We started with builder in Columbus and it was very cash intensive and I didn't have a lot of cash. So, the second segment we added was wholesale (to the trade) business. And we added that relatively quickly—in the second year. The reason I wanted to go that way is because I only had to hire one person to do it. It was a person from the industry who I had worked with previously and wanted to come aboard. But the key to that business for me was you get paid upfront so you're not waiting for your money. It drastically helped our cash flow. If I would have added property management prior to wholesale, I would have dug myself an even deeper ditch because I would have been buying material, installing it and waiting for even more money. So, I had to figure out which division could actually help my cash flow when a bank was not willing to give me money. And the answer was wholesale, and that division did very well. We didn't actually have property management until about 2008.



Profitable from the get-go

The first year, I was profitable on day 47 and we've never looked back. Most people are not profitable that quick, but I was smart in the fact I made sure those builders all had their own design centers so we didn't need a showroom. I just needed office space and a warehouse. And all the people came to work for me for less money than what they were making at their previous job. I didn't take a salary for the first 18 months. I just lived like a pauper so I could make the company go.



continued on page 16

Congratulations
 AMERICA'S FLOOR SOURCE
 ON 20 YEARS OF SUCCESS!

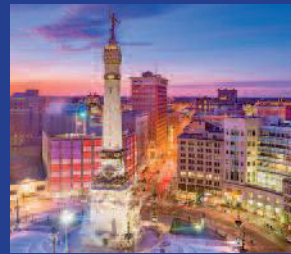
Emser Tile

Porcelain & Ceramic | Decorative | Natural Stone | www.emser.com
 Pictured | Floor: Nostalgia® Legend

Bad timing

I bought this land, built this building and moved in here in 2005. So, we went from very low rent to a 50,000-square-foot building with high rent. At the same time, we started a remodeling company. And then the recession hit in 2006. I lost more than a million bucks over three years on the remodeling side of the business. I shut down that portion of our business in 2007. I can tell you this was a critical point in my personal history and

the company's history. I had never really "failed" at anything that big, business-wise. In my own head, this was a major fail and making the decision to shut it down was extremely tough. Little did I know, it was that one decision that perhaps saved my company. That decision and the subsequent results made it easier to try things as time went on and fail at them without beating myself up over it. We've had a lot of failures since 2007, and now I can honestly say those failures helped me and the team learn and become better. If you want to succeed in business you have to come to grips with things failing as that's going to happen. It's what you take from the failure that you can build on that really matters most.



Geographic expansion

We opened Indianapolis and Cincinnati in 2010 at the exact same time for builder. In Indianapolis, we opened for a builder we thought we were going to get but ended up not being awarded the account. That was a scary time as we just made a significant investment in a market to have no business. Luckily, two things happened very quickly. First, we landed Westport Homes. And then the company for which we went to Indianapolis, Fischer Homes, actually switched the business from the company they originally awarded to us. Indy was profitable that very first year; Cincinnati was a completely different story. We opened with the wrong partner and couldn't make any money.

First foray into retail

We added retail in 2010 with the Mobile Floor Source. That's when I hired my first retail salesperson. When he wasn't out running his calls he would be in the showroom. I have 15 of them right now on the road and they do very well.



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The power of advertising

I didn't start advertising until about 2014. That's when I finally said, 'If I'm going to do retail, I'm going to do it right.' And I flooded the market. Back then, TV and radio were still great drivers. I clearly overspent because I was going to take that market share. So, when the average business spends 5% on advertising, that first year I spent \$300,000 despite having only one retail salesperson who was writing close to \$1 million. I spent 30% of our retail business revenue from the year before on advertising. The results were tremendous. The business changed overnight. And then we started hiring more retail people. Customers started coming in. The next year we jumped it to \$400,000. Then it was \$500,000 to where now we're almost at \$1 million in marketing funds just for retail.



From humble beginnings

Snapshots from AFS' original location in 2000



1 Todd Sackett, a friend of Jason Goldberg's, with original employees Perry Stover and Vickie Mascarello • 2 Goldberg and Bob Mosher, the company's IT consultant who has been with AFS since day one • 3 Mascarello, Goldberg, Teresa Bush, Todd Sweeney, Roger Slack • 4 Sales team: Slack and Joan Hullinger • 5 Tim Henson, current president of the builder division

Building the **America's Floor Source** brand

by BRAD DRESBACH



Jason Goldberg, founder and CEO of America's Floor Source, holds an enlarged image of one of the very first America's Floor Source print advertisements.

Twenty years ago, when we were first starting out, our advertisements had one simple goal: make us look legitimate so builders would accept our calls.

So, we took out full-page ads in *Builder Update*, the magazine of the Central Ohio Building Industry Association. And just like anytime we do anything, we stepped it up. We worked with an ad agency, hired models, shot original photography. The whole thing was at a different level than most local trade ads. It worked. After seeing our professional ads in every issue, builders who used to just brush us off started taking us seriously. And we've been advertising in the publication ever since.

We change the campaigns periodically. Some feature photos or illustrations; others are text driven. In any case, the message stays consistent. Our

ads targeted to builders always talk about our key competitive advantages and our commitment to builders.

An added challenge that many of us in the flooring industry have is our multiple audiences who have different wants and needs. What's important to a homebuilder might be different than what's critical to a property management client and different still from what a residential homeowner values most. Yes, they all want a good product at a fair price, but the details are different.

To ensure effective messaging across audiences, we've developed audience profiles for each of our divisions. These profiles include the wants and needs of each group, and we then use these profiles to develop all our marketing tactics.

It's important that, even if we have unique message points that vary from audience to audience, the overall brand look, feel and message must be the same. Whether it's a flyer targeted to a specific business prospect, a television

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AMERICA'S FLOOR SOURCE

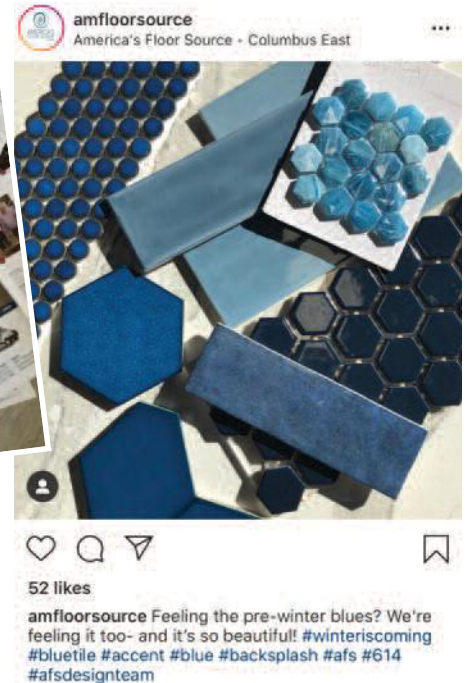
**Congratulations
America's Floor Source
Happy 20th Anniversary!**

-Your Friends at Carpenter Co.

CARPENTER
We bring comfort to your life.®



From the first print campaign, America's Floor Source has consistently created print advertisements that grab attention and deliver one key message per ad. Today, social media outreach plays a large role.



campaign promoting our Mobile Floor Source to homeowners or an Instagram post that's likely to hit both homeowners and homebuilders, it all must exude the same brand essence.

However, building our brand has taken a lot more than just running good ads

and creating professional brochures. Our brand is everything a prospect, customer or client experiences regarding our organization. It includes what our fleet vehicles look like; how we greet people when they walk into our stores; our product mix; the experience someone has on our website;

the way we set appointments and communicate schedules; what people hear and read about us in the media; the quality of our installations, etc.

In short, our brand is everything.

Brad Dresbach is chief branding officer at AFS

HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY AMERICA'S FLOOR SOURCE!

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MOBILE FLOOR SOURCE: A MORE CONVENIENT WAY TO SHOP FOR FLOORING

by JOSH KLYNN

In 2009, America's Floor Source had a substantial share of the Columbus homebuilder market but almost no retail sales—primarily because it had no retail stores and had never really focused any attention on retail sales. How could it compete in this competitive market without investing heavily in opening stores all over town? Enter the concept of the Mobile Floor Source.

Jason Goldberg, founder and CEO of America's Floor

Source, purchased a Dodge Sprinter van and installed custom shelving to transport hundreds of flooring samples. Suddenly, America's Floor Source didn't need a bunch of showrooms. In some ways, the Mobile Floor Source was like having thousands of showrooms, one in every living room throughout Central Ohio.

The vehicle would be driven by an experienced flooring salesperson and bring samples to customers' homes. Customers would see flooring products under their own lighting and next



to their paint colors, cabinetry and furniture. This was designed to improve customer satisfaction and build on America's Floor Source's reputation for excellent customer service.

The Mobile Floor Source was a huge hit with retail customers. So much so that Goldberg purchased more vehicles to service homeowners throughout the region. Today, that fleet has grown to 15 units serving homeowners across central Ohio and Indianapolis.

Appointments with Mobile Floor Source can be made Monday through Sunday at no cost to the homeowner. A personal flooring advisor is assigned to each customer; before arriving at their home the advisor reaches out to discuss the project. This ensures that when the advisor arrives at the customer's home, he or she is equipped with an assortment of samples that fits with the customer's vision. For those who don't know exactly what they're looking for, the advisor can make recommendations and provide design inspiration.

Once in the customer's home, the advisor walks through to examine the existing flooring, review basic information about usage, check subfloor conditions and discusses any concerns.

Once the flooring prod-

ucts have been selected, the advisor measures the room, draws up a diagram and prepares a detailed estimate right on the spot. Many customers opt to move forward during their appointment, and the advisor completes the order, arranges payment and, if the materials are in stock, provides an installation date right away.

The personal flooring advisor then takes on the role of project manager, following up with the order, tracking any material shipments and keeping tabs on the installation process.

In addition to providing America's Floor Source with an economical and effective way to compete in the retail flooring market, the Mobile Floor Source has proven to be a hit with customers who love the convenience of not having to drive across town to a store, the comfort of shopping in their living room and the confidence of knowing exactly how the flooring will look in their house.

Josh Klynn is the vice president of marketing for America's Floor Source

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Congratulations to **America's Floor Source** on 20 successful years
and thank you for your support of Mannington and Phenix floors!

We look forward to many more milestones ahead.

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No one size fits all for America's Floor Source customers

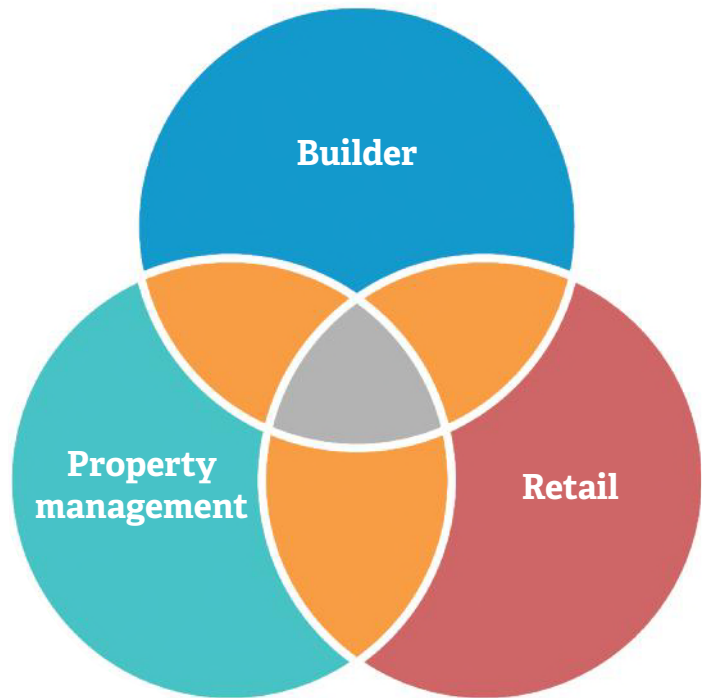
by REGINALD TUCKER

The "buck-shot" approach of servicing various end-user accounts might work for some retailers, but that's not the case with America's Floor Source. Whether it's builder, property management, wholesale or retail consumer, the key to success, according to the company, requires taking a varied and tailored approach to the respective end-use sectors.

"Each division of our company has separate sales,

sales support and installation teams," said Jason Goldberg, CEO. "So basically we have people who specialize in understanding and servicing that specific division."

The processes and approaches for each division, while sometimes similar, can be very different, he noted. "For instance, we have a team of inspectors who pre and post inspect all our builder work. Whereas in retail we have the Mobile Floor Source for in-home shopping. The needs of a builder can be very different from



that of a retail customer."

Generally speaking, a retail customer is usually more interested in getting the best quality product for the best price. While cost/value is important to other end users, it's not the only consideration. "A homeowner may be interested in paying more due to the fact that it is in their home, while a property management company is usually more primarily focused on availability of products and price," said Haley Keefe, customer service manager, Louisville region.

Tim Calhoun, assistant manager, Louisville region, agreed, providing further differentiation. While many builders seek a quality product at a great price, it's also top of mind for property managers. The key is to be competitive while protecting margins. "The best way to approach it is with quick turnaround and the fairest price along with great customer service," he explained. "With retail, you have to have a more personable approach. You have to get to know the customer and be able to re-

late to them, make them feel at home. The more you know about the products and how to install them, the more they are likely to listen to you and go with what you say and want to buy from you."

AFS views its tailored approach to serving the various end-use markets as a point of differentiation between the company and its competitors. For Chris Howell, CFO, it's all about making those key points of differentiation apparent to the customer in each of those channels. As he explained, "For retail, customers can come into our location and walk the store, or we have the Mobile Floor Source if they would rather see the products in their home or shop at home. With wholesale, we offer multiple facilities and those customers have specific locations within the store for them. However, they can still use the entire showroom if needed. We also have the outlet center for individuals or businesses looking for a bargain or special deals. Our builder clients have the option of

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BUSINESS PARTNER:



AMERICAS

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using a designer and our design centers to help them with various selections and flow through the entire home."

The specialized approach

To ensure each end-use market segment receives the appropriate attention, America's Floor Source employs specific teams that specialize in a given area. "These teams are the experts of their specific segment and can meet the expectations and perform at a very high level," Mike Stinnette, president and COO, explained.

By design, these segment experts are groomed with the expectation that they will grow into roles of increasing responsibility. To that end, America's Floor Source makes it a point to hire or promote from within its ros-



IMPRESSIONS

"Twenty years in business and more than \$100 million in revenue is an unbelievable accomplishment for America's Floor Source (AFS), and that deserves celebrating. Furthermore, Jason Goldberg's entrepreneurial spirit and forward-thinking approach has laid the foundation for significant growth. At Schönox, we believe our innovative, service-first approach is an excellent fit with AFS. We see a continued partnership, due to so many similarities, full of collaboration and collective growth for both companies."

—Mike Penney, senior vice president, nation and strategic accounts, Schönox

ter of experts. Each AFS account manager is a specialist within the division they are a

part of, and all account managers prospect and network within the community in

which they work.

As Tim Henson, president of the builder division, explained it: "A builder account manager concentrates on learning and understanding the new home construction business. They attend builder association events and seminars, and they study the products that best suit residential new construction applications. Internally, the AFS builder account manager develops relationships with manufacturer representatives who also are dedicated to and specialize in working with home builders, working together to offer our builder customers the best possible line of products that best fit their unique needs. We do the same thing in our property management, commercial, wholesale and retail

continued on page 24

CONGRATULATIONS!



On Two Impressive
Milestones!

**20 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE**

**100 MILLION
DOLLARS**

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Continued from page 23

divisions.”

Erik Warren, vice president of residential operations for AFS, shared his philosophy on approaching the different market segment. “Property management is like the training ground; it teaches how to manage an account, how to prospect and the most basic flooring products,” he explained. “Builder is a different animal altogether. It is really about planning and executing—like a party planner. Wholesale is where you need material experts and an installation understanding. In a sense, it requires the most flooring knowledge. You really need to know a lot to answer questions from contractors and installers. Retail is the complete sale. You need true salespeople, but they need to

wear every hat. To do it well you have to be quick, efficient, bright, empathetic, confident and very detailed. Builder has a whole team on both sides to help plan the party, but retail is all you and you need to get it right because there is someone living in that house.”

It's all about the customer

AFS said it owes much of its success to relationships the company has forged over its 20-year history. These close ties have provided valuable insight into customers’ wants and needs in each segment. “Having engaged relationships with our customers is key to making sure AFS is providing and offering the right product and service,” said David Sexton, general manager, Columbus West. “We are partners in the process and that makes

us uniquely positioned.”

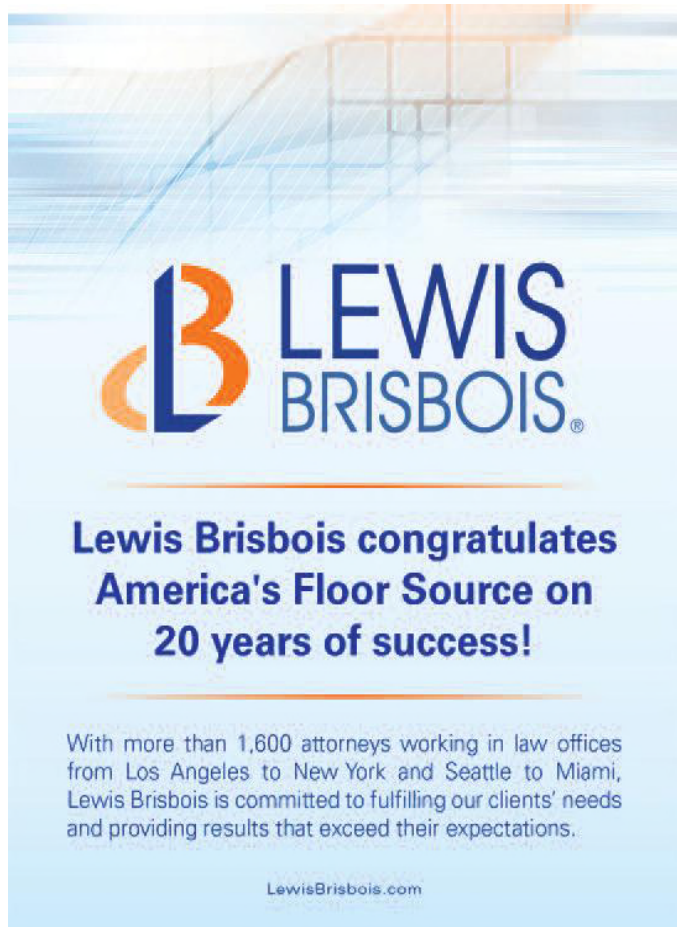
America’s Floor Source has spent years developing unique customer profiles that help the company understand the shopping experience within each market segment. Each profile is tailored by market and customer type. On top of that, the company also studies the various decision journeys that its customers experience and makes the necessary changes as needed to keep up with changing times.

“These tools allow us to customize our marketing—digital, social, email and beyond—ensuring that each individual receives messaging specific to their needs,” said Katelin Ahern, marketing automation manager. “We work diligently to understand our customers’ motivations, eliminate frustrations and ensure the purchase process and overall experience is beyond their

expectations.”

While the respective market segments have different needs and parameters, they all are approached with the same basic concept: satisfying the customer. “Everyone in the company has the mentality that we are all here to facilitate the needs of the customer and ensure they are being provided the service they require without hesitation,” said Holmes Elder, retail store manager. “Being flexible and having the ability to adapt at a moment’s notice allows AFS to stay multifaceted and a leader in each segment.”

Rocky Maxwell, vice president of the company’s Louisville region, concurred. “We approach each one with the same sense of care, urgency and consistency. Each division has its own niche, and we strive to pair up the appropriate people with each customer or division.”



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Lewis Brisbois congratulates America's Floor Source on 20 years of success!

With more than 1,600 attorneys working in law offices from Los Angeles to New York and Seattle to Miami, Lewis Brisbois is committed to fulfilling our clients' needs and providing results that exceed their expectations.

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Effective tips to providing customized service

In an operation geared toward serving a variety of clients in different end-use markets, it's important to have structures and guidelines in place to ensure the needs of those clients are served appropriately. Following are some tips AFS representatives employ regularly to address those needs:

Know thy customer. “Find out who the decision maker is and what is important to them and their business model and in what order, and then address each,” said Dick Fadley, vice president of estimating. “Remember, there are different decision makers in a company. What’s important to one may be lower on the list for the others, i.e., production managers, purchasing managers, operation managers and principals, etc.”

Bring the right attitude. “Make every customer feel like they are your most important customer,” Fadley added. “Treat them the same, make them feel valuable.”

Follow up accordingly. The deal doesn't end with the sale. To ensure you have satisfied customers, it's important to touch base with them every step of the process—even after the sale. “We do this in every division,” Fadley explained.

Maintain consistency in your dealings. Clients may differ according to their specific focus, but the one common denominator is their need to feel special. “Every customer is important and receives the same respect and service,” said Cary Jerris, president, Indiana region. “We make sure we are consistent in our approach with our core values and virtues.”

Be friendly and flexible. “Each channel has different expectations on price, product selection and urgency during the sales process,” said Rich Haight, director of business development. “We design our efforts to create customer satisfaction when meeting the different expectations.”

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20TH
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*Celebrating 20 years of
resilience and service*

From your team at  **MOHAWK**

SUPPLIERS BRING VALUE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

by MEGAN SALZANO

A major part of any retail business in onboarding new suppliers. But it can be easier said than done. For Jason Goldberg, America's Floor Source CEO, the key qualities of a good vendor/retail relationship boil down to integrity and partnership.

"At my former employer, prior to starting AFS, suppliers were not treated like partners," Goldberg said. "They were just someone you bought things from and you charged them back at every opportunity you had. I simply disagree with this way of doing business. We treat our suppliers as partners. We need each other to be successful."

The following supply partners have made a lasting impression on AFS and its leadership:

ENGINEERED FLOORS

"They have worked hard to build relationships with us over the last few years. They offer us some unique options that help control inventory."

—Jason Goldberg, CEO

SCHLÜTER SYSTEMS

"Over the years, they have provided expansive training to our staff, installers and end users. Very responsive and always willing to jump in and help."

—Jason Goldberg, CEO

5/3 BANK

"I REMEMBER WHEN PNC BANK WAS NOT WILLING TO SUPPORT OUR GROWTH. 5/3 BECAME A TRUE BUSINESS PARTNER TO ADVISE AND HELP US WHILE AFS GREW LOCALLY AND EXPANDED INTO NEW MARKETS AND LOCATIONS."

—Chris Howell,
chief financial officer

THE DIXIE GROUP

"Great style, fashion and design between their three lines. Our designers love working with their fun patterns, colors and styles."

—Jason Goldberg, CEO

ALL TILE/CARPET CUSHION SUPPLIES

"Over the years, they have been a great supplier of sundries and supplies."

—Jason Goldberg, CEO

CARPENTER

"We have used Carpenter pad for 18 years, and they have always provided us with the best pad in the industry. They have made sure we were taken care of every time the industry had pad shortages so we did not have disruptions in our business."

—Jason Goldberg, CEO

SHAW INDUSTRIES

"Shaw Industries has been our best and largest partner for 20 years. They get it. They are very consistent in what they do. They are understanding and work with us on all fronts. Their people are top notch. They are honestly the model, in my opinion, for a successful manufacturer when you factor in every aspect of what's important."

—Jason Goldberg, CEO

MOHAWK

"MOHAWK HAS BEEN A REALLY GOOD PARTNER OVER THE YEARS. IT DOES A GOOD JOB WITH BRANDING AND HELPS DRIVE CUSTOMERS TO US. WE HAVE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS AND GET GOOD SERVICE FROM THEM. MY FAVORITE PERSON TO DEAL WITH AT MOHAWK WAS MIKE STINETTE. HE WAS THE REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT FOR MY AREA FOR YEARS. I THOUGHT SO HIGHLY OF MIKE THAT I EVENTUALLY CONVINCED HIM TO LEAVE MOHAWK AND BE THE PRESIDENT AND COO OF AFS."

—Jason Goldberg, CEO

MANNINGTON

"We have a great partnership with Mannington, and they have really nice products that connect with the consumer."

—Mike Stinnette,
president and COO



26 July 20/27, 2020

fcnews

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Our family of brands is honored to be a long-standing partner with America's Floor Source. Congrats on 20 years of industry excellence!



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FLOORS



From the showroom to the warehouse and beyond, AFS is staffed with hard-working, committed individuals.

CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES

How potential stumbling blocks can be leveraged to your advantage

by KEN RYAN

America's Floor Source didn't evolve from a fledgling organization that started out behind a small church in Columbus, Ohio, into a \$100 million, multi-location company 20 years later by backing down from challenges. Every step of the way CEO Jason Goldberg and his team dealt with challenges, and often turned those challenges into golden opportunities as they grew into one of the industry's most influential retailers.

FCNews spoke with Goldberg and his executive team about challenges and opportunities facing the flooring industry today and how AFS deals with them.

Challenges

"The biggest challenge is finding great people who have the same values and work ethic that we have at AFS," Goldberg said. "Whether that be an employee or an installer, finding the right people for

your team is paramount to having and growing a successful business. We have done extremely well with this challenge as we have a team that I would put up against anyone in the country. And that team continues to grow at a rapid pace."

Another big challenge is installation and having qualified installers to do the work. "This one is never going to go away and it separates the good from the great," he added.

Installation is not the only bugaboo. Technology within the flooring industry is another major challenge. "I have been very vocal on this front as I feel our industry does not have proper technology for the future," Goldberg explained. "I founded Retail Lead Management to solve some of these problems, and we continue to invest heavily in this platform. I also founded TraLaMa, the Trade Labor Marketplace to help on the installer front." (See pages 52-57 for more on RLM and TraLaMa.)

Chris Howell, CFO, attested to the

challenge of keeping up with rapidly changing technology. His recommendation is to embrace it. "Technology has continued to help us with training, and once utilized will help improve the entire floor purchase experience."

AFS also noted jobsite readiness and ensuring the customer understands the expectation of a ready-to-go job. "Whether this be subfloor levelness, temperature or scheduling, this will always be challenging," said Rocky Maxwell, vice president, Louisville region. "However, we work hard to set the expectation up front."

Opportunities

Successful retailers are always looking



While the flooring industry continues to struggle with the installation shortage, retailers who proactively address the issue will stand out.

for opportunities to grow vs. maintain the status quo. America's Floor Source is one of those companies. "There are so many opportunities for a company like ours in this industry—too many to even list," Goldberg said. "Let's just say, we do over \$100 million today and feel that \$1 billion is not out of the realm of possibility. There is that much opportunity for AFS out there because we are an elite company comprising elite people."

This "next opportunity" philosophy is embraced across all levels of the company. "Expansion, growth and maintaining standards are challenging but offer the opportunity to capture more business," said Holmes Elder, retail store manager. "When done properly, with good management and proper training, we can continue to separate ourselves from our competitors. Challenges are opportunities with the right plan."

Specifically, AFS said it looks for opportunities to grow its footprint within existing markets, either through larger locations creating more of a destination shopping experience or opening additional locations within its current markets. At the same time, the company



IMPRESSIONS

"Engineered Floors has had a great relationship with America's Floor Source going on nine years. There has always been a mutual respect between our two companies. We have similar goals and aspirations that we feel have benefited both parties. We have an excellent relationship that is built on honest, open dialogue. We are all comfortable with sharing our goals and expectations with one another.

"AFS has a direction mapped out. They are focused on growing and offering a unique experience to their customers. AFS runs their business in the most professional way, and this is evident in how they conduct themselves."

— Brad Matthaides, regional vice president, Engineered Floors

remains on the lookout for opportunities to open in markets in which it does not currently operate.

At AFS, however, it's not just about opportunities to grow revenues—although that's clearly the objective of any business-minded retailer. It's also about

giving employees opportunities to grow within their own roles. "The best thing about AFS is the opportunities from within," added Tim Calhoun, assistant manager, Louisville region. "We always look to promote from within our branches. Hard work pays off here."

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Shaw Floors cites Goldberg's entrepreneurial spirit

by KEN RYAN

In Ken Jackson's storied career at Shaw Industries, the chief financial officer has mentored scores of flooring retailers and rubbed elbows with hundreds of CEOs, inside and outside the flooring industry.

Few, if any, have left the indelible mark that Jason Goldberg has. Jackson, who recently retired from Shaw Industries after a 30-year career, has known Goldberg for 12 years after first meeting at a benchmarking seminar related to the builder business.

Jackson said he quickly discovered Goldberg was special.

"He has as good an entrepreneurial spirit as anyone I have ever known. He is very smart, bright and driven. A lot of people can be smart, but they don't put the energy into it. He is interested in business and how to grow it."

When Jackson first met Goldberg, he said America's Floor Source was generating revenues in the mid-teens (millions). Today, as it commemorates 20 years, AFS is a \$100 million business. "Nothing surprises me about Jason," Jackson said. "A wise man once told me that he would rather bet on people than on anything a resume would say. I had absolutely no doubt he would reach the \$100 million

mark. I would never bet against him."

Not only is Goldberg an outstanding entrepreneur, Jackson added, he is an innovator. He recalled a Shaw Flooring Network convention during which Goldberg made a compelling presentation on behalf of a lead management program he developed. Goldberg subsequently signed up retailers for his lead management software. The program, Retail Lead Management (see story on page 52), is widely successful today.

"Jason is unique; he figures out a way to do something, trains his employees and instills in them the discipline to carry it out," Jackson said. "He wants his people to succeed, and they will succeed if they follow his lead."

Jackson also cited Goldberg's entrepreneurial spirit in developing TraLaMa (short for



Ken Jackson

Trade Labor Marketplace), a novel online platform designed to connect businesses to the labor they need. (See story on page 56.) "He thinks differently about how to approach issues. In developing TraLaMa, he surveyed probably 1,000 people representing different trades. He put his own resources into it, and he did a lot of research."

But it's Goldberg's vision that really impresses. "He looks beyond the immediate horizon, thinks about how to solve issues, and then invests in solutions with an aim to profit off it," he said. "He builds a team and believes in accountability. He's a forward thinker and innovator—probably as much as anyone I have come across in all my years, and I have seen a lot of people. He's a fine person and has built a great business."

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Shaw remains a No. 1 supporter

Over two decades, Shaw Industries and America's Floor Source have forged a productive and profitable relationship with Shaw emerging as the retailer's No. 1 supplier in terms of revenue.

This mutually beneficial relationship has grown stronger over the years, according to Vance Bell, Shaw Industries' chairman and CEO, and Mark Tucker, vice president of builder sales. The two executives shared their feelings about AFS and Jason Goldberg, CEO, with *FCNews*.

"Jason is one of the brightest minds in flooring," Bell said. "He is innovative and is driving new solutions and platforms in the retail business. In 20 years, Jason has built—from scratch—one of the largest and most successful flooring businesses in the country. Shaw is honored to be a supplier and partner to America's Floor Source."

Tucker noted Goldberg's business acumen and entrepreneurial drive. "Jason is not your typical flooring dealer," he said. "His ability to service and adapt to all flooring market segments has set him apart with his customers. He has always pushed the envelope—he's not willing to sit around and wait for someone else to do it first. His passion and commitment to innovation have made America's Floor Source a great partner for Shaw."



Vance Bell



Mark Tucker

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TIES THAT BIND

For AFS customers, it's all about relationships

by KEN RYAN

For two decades, America's Floor Source (AFS) has serviced a vast network of customers—from small wholesale firms to property management companies to large national home construction groups. Whether the business managed apartments or built 400 homes a year, the AFS staff was there every step of the way to ensure success was achieved.

Executives representing these diverse sets of companies gave AFS high marks for its systems, service and staff expertise.

Following are comments from some of those customers.

**Andrew Brindley,
H-E Homes
Indianapolis**

For us as a builder, we have worked with a lot of trade partners for 15-20 years, so when we switch trade partners it is a very calculated decision about which we are incredibly cautious.

Everyone likes to talk about their big service component; however, AFS does help its clients have better experi-

ences in the showroom. They ensure our process and their process is met. They have an amazing service team that actually checks their installers' work before the project starts. I don't know how many times AFS has caught a chipped tile before the project started. Things are fixed before we have to say anything.

We submit all our blueprints for estimating purposes, and they actually go through the blueprints and lay out where the carpet is going to be laid, where the carpet and hardwood are going to go, where the seams go. They make sure the installer puts it in correctly, so it is handled right the first time and we are not left with too little or too many materials at the end.

**Brad Yates, Manor Homes
Dublin, Ohio**

We're called High Efficiency Homes. I would be lying if I told you we didn't value efficiency in our partners, and they are efficient.

America's Floor Source is our first and only flooring partner, and we have been with them since our inception 11 years ago. A lot of companies talk about their customer service, and it can be overstated. Where AFS shines is they are not scared to get on a job site to make sure all the materials are there or to get in front of a customer—even if it's our customer. The personal touch they give all the way to the senior levels is impressive.

We are sole source with those guys, and we do 400 homes a year. To be able to pull that off with one source is amazing; it helps tremen-



dously and speaks volumes that we can go with one partner. They are an awesome organization.

**Jay Smith, Fischer Homes
Louisville, Ky.**

Fischer Homes entered the Columbus market in early 2010 and that's where we first started working with America's Floor Source.

Since that time, our relationship has grown. We started working together in Indianapolis in late 2010, Cincinnati in 2016 and when we opened our Fischer Homes operations here in Louisville in 2017.

America's Floor Source is truly a partner in our business of delivering quality homes to our purchasers. They help us

remain competitive by providing a wide selection of the latest flooring designs. But what really sets America's Floor Source apart is the quality and customer focus of their people. Tim Henson, Rocky Maxwell (in Louisville) and the rest of their organization are committed to error-free installations and customer satisfaction.

America's Floor Source provides competitive pricing, which is a positive attribute. They have their own internal quality control procedures. More importantly, they are a 'do the right thing' organization. They are always willing to work together to find mutually beneficial solutions in our customer-driven competitive environment.



ences in the showroom. They ensure our process and their process is met. They have an amazing service team that actually checks their installers' work before the project starts. I don't know how many times AFS has caught a chipped tile before the project started. Things are fixed before we have to say anything.

We submit all our blueprints for estimating pur-



Aside from working hard to deliver our homes on schedule and of the highest quality, they are just great people. We always find a way to have a little fun along the way.

**Tom Craig,
Tom Craig Flooring
Columbus, Ohio**

I've known Jason [Goldberg, CEO] probably 30 years, and have been doing business with AFS for all 20 years they have been around. I remember where they started—in the back of a church—and to see where they are now is amazing.

If I only had \$1 to my name, I would give it to Jason Goldberg because he would make so much money back for me with that \$1.

I buy all my material from Jason; the benefit of that is he has connections with all the mills. He supplies my samples that I give to my customers. He makes sure the product is here for me, cut for me and warehoused for me. If there is an issue, he will take care of it.

I am a small guy that is backed by a multi-million-dollar business, and I get anything I want from them—all I have to do is ask. No matter what I need, he is there to help me and make me money, which makes him money. I couldn't do this business without him.

**Will Benton, Pulte Group
Louisville, Ky.**

Personally, I have been doing work with AFS for two years. My company has been doing work with AFS for 10-plus years. What makes AFS stand out to me is their partnership. They care about the customer and about providing an exceptional experience. The Louisville management team of Tim Henson and Rocky



Maxwell are fantastic to deal with.

The value AFS brings to a builder like the Pulte Group is the ability to fully service the account. AFS will bend over backwards to meet deadlines to get the customers the products installed correctly in a timely manner.

Any business you are in is based off relationships. Tim Henson and Rocky Maxwell have been true professionals and believe in building lasting professional relationships.

**Josh Costanzo,
Preferred Living
Dublin, Ohio**

We do our deals with Randy Carter. I don't like dealing with anyone else because the man takes good care of me. If I have to get something done, he goes above and beyond to help me; he's amazing. If I call, in a moment's notice he calls back. He has always come through for me. The customer service I get from Randy is worth its weight in gold.

**Jay Bennett, RH-Homes
Hilliard, Ohio**

I have been doing business with Jason since he started AFS. He has always been honest and straight forward and always goes the extra mile to meet my needs. In fact, all of the AFS staff bends over backwards to hit the schedule set for them.

for the last 20 years.

**Steve Knazek,
Schumacher Homes
Canton, Ohio**

We've been doing business with them for 13 years, and the way they can complete jobs correctly and on time is what makes them stand out. The quality and communication that you always get job after job is special.

**Jim Gericke,
Durable Floors
Columbus, Ohio**

I work almost exclusively with AFS and have for 13-14 years. I spent a lot of years in the flooring business—wholesale and retail. They do it the best in having the people who can answer my questions and fulfill my needs. They inventory a large scale of products, from

continued on page 36



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Continued from page 35

base grade to upper-end goods, and I can hit any price point I need to depending on the customer. If they don't have the answers, they will get them to me quickly.

**Derek Gazafy,
Pulte Homes
Columbus, Ohio**

AFS has been doing business with Pulte in Columbus for over 15 years (the relationship started with Dominion Homes who Pulte acquired five years ago). What makes AFS different than other companies, in my opinion—even compared to companies in unrelated trades—is their consistency in performance and commitment to our account. Too often, as companies grow, the performance, service or care for an

account diminishes. We are a large account and AFS has grown its business very well over the years, but we still are getting the performance and attention to the account as if they were starting out.

The value they bring I can say in two words—predictability and partnership. Home building is dynamic, with new challenges every day in material supply, labor, weather, etc. AFS is a partner that we can count on to make things happen no matter the setbacks. Both of our companies recognize the value in partnership and the predictability we bring each other as we work together through the highs and lows.

**Jeremy Patton,
Epcor Communities
Dublin, Ohio**

AFS employees spend the



time to make sure everyone knows the right way to install the job. The experience of their team helps, and the team's tenure allows for long-term relationships to work together. AFS is a customer service-focused business that understands what builders need and what customers want.

**Tony Tipton, Tee's Flooring
Columbus, Ohio**

I have worked with reps from all locations in Columbus and the hands on I get from all of their reps is above the norm. Pricing matters as well, but the communication sets them apart for my needs. I own my own flooring company, so the value they bring to me is more in the day-to-day activities such as ordering promptly. Their warehouse is hands on—quicker and friendlier than any other company.

But the most important attribute for me is the consistent process on the day-to-day grind. I used to buy from three different companies—one being AFS—and found myself leaving AFS satisfied and with a smile on my face; the other two, not so much. Peace of mind matters; loyalty matters; and AFS excels in making me feel that we matter.

I realize we are just a little fish in a big pond, but over the years my family and friends have been able to support not only our families, but others in need as

AFS helps us get to that finish line time and time again. I personally am very grateful to be a part of their journey. Hopefully, we go another 20 years together.

**Tim Gagnon, Pulte Homes
Carmel, Ind.**

We've been doing business with Jason for approximately 10-plus years. What makes AFS different or unique is their top leadership managing their business. They understand the industry, customer needs, trends and the housing cycle. There is high business acumen in all their leaders. What really stands out are four things: flexibility, understanding, account intimacy and professionalism.

**Michael King,
Rockford Homes
Columbus, Ohio**

We have been working with Jason and his staff for more than 20 years. I believe we were his second major builder in central Ohio when he started AFS. From the first day they started AFS, he and his staff have operated with the upmost integrity. Their scheduling, installation and service are second to none in the industry, they are always on time, the finished quality is great and if a service call is needed after closing, the service is excellent.

**Michelle Heareth,
Perfection Builders
Louisville, Ky.**

They are a very large company that treats us like family. We have a hotline to our reps, and they are quick and responsive.

They bring consistency, reliability, professionalism and attention to detail. Their reps go above and beyond for anything I need.

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The power of giving back

America's Floor Source finds purpose in supporting a host of worthy causes

by REGINALD TUCKER

When you're fortunate enough to achieve a measure of success in life or business, it's important to pay it forward and help those who are less fortunate or in dire need of assistance. That's the philosophy that America's Floor Source embraces in its ongoing support of organizations that are near and dear to the heart of its CEO, Jason Goldberg.

"I understand the struggle that many people face—some with little or no help to make it better," he stated. "I'm in a position to make a difference."

A case in point is the company's support of an organization called In Christy's Shoes, which addresses the many issues facing women today—homelessness, unemployment, domestic abuse and human trafficking chief among them. As the organization's longtime leading sponsor, America's Floor



In Christy's Shoes, an organization near and dear to America's Floor Source, draws support from a wide range of sponsors and special events.

Source is focused on helping victims of abuse and neglect, or simply those in need of help, get back on their feet.

Given the important role women play in the world, Goldberg said it's critical that society shows its support. "When you were a kid, who was the strongest person to step up in your life?" he asked rhetorically. "It was likely your mother or a mother figure who raised you. As you grew up from child to teen and young man or woman, it was most likely your mother. As an adult, who is the strongest person in your life? Women represent strength and stability."

There are times, however, when even they need help. He referenced all-too-common scenarios such as single mothers struggling to get by. During these times, Goldberg said, it's up to everyone to lend a helping hand. "Not all women are in a position or are lucky to have people around to provide help," he said. "We all need our

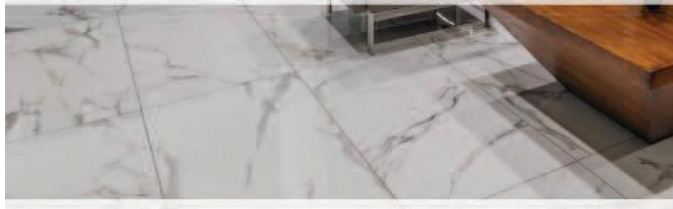
communities to step up."

Becky Sweeney, CFO and co-founder of In Christy's Shoes, cited Goldberg's enduring support of the organization. In particular, the commitment of the retailer and his entire team on the recent 'Step Up for Women' campaign. "Jason not only provided us with financial support but also leadership," she said. "He is always reaching out to suggest ways of improvement or just to say, 'Good job!' We have reached an audience that we could not have otherwise without his support. We are truly grateful for America's Floor Source's support year after year."

Spreading the love

Over the years, America's Floor Source has also supported nu-

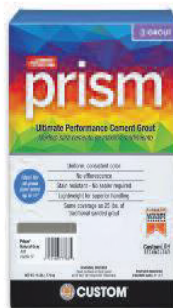
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merous other organizations and causes such as child literacy efforts, the battle against cancer, housing and more. These include:

2nd & 7 Foundation—promotes literacy by providing free books to children in need. The foundation, which recently celebrated its own 20th anniversary, has donated more than 400,000 books to kids in need since it started in 1999.

Herbert J. Block Memorial Tournament—benefitting cancer research at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center (OSUCCC). This popular tournament has raised \$6.3 million for the OSUCCC.

Habitat for Humanity—dedicated to building homes and providing shelter for people who have been displaced by natural disasters or facing other hardships. Habitat



Special Olympics Ohio provides year-round sports training and competition for more than 20,000 children and adults.

houses are large enough for a family's needs, but small enough to keep construction and maintenance costs affordable. The labor of volunteers and partner families, efficient building methods, modest house sizes and no-profit loans make it affordable for low-income families.

Special Olympics of Ohio—a global inclusion movement using sports, health education

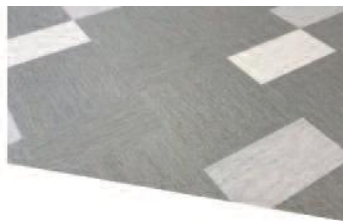
and leadership programs to empower people with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Ohio provides year-round sports training and competition in 18 different sports for nearly 22,000 children and adults.

Pelotonia—a three-day experience that includes a week-end of cycling, entertainment and volunteerism to fund life-saving cancer research.

Through its first eleven rides, Pelotonia raised more than \$207 million for cancer research. Thanks to its generous funding partners, Pelotonia is able to direct 100% of every rider-raised dollar to cancer research at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center, James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute.

Columbus Jewish Federation—representing a new way of thinking about Jewish philanthropy, supporting community needs and how to engage the next generation of philanthropists and leaders.

The Villages of Indiana—helping abused, neglected and abandoned children find stable families. The organization opened its first family model group home in April 1980, in Bedford, Ind. Today, it operates more than 20 offices.



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FIVE TIPS TO BETTER RETAILING

by KEN RYAN

Achieving success in the flooring retail business isn't merely about training or hard work or lead generation systems or delivering excellent customer service. It's all these things and more, according to executives from America's Floor Source.

The executive team and staff touched on several key points—from integrity to technology—that go into developing a winning formula.

Here are five valuable tips to help any retail business:

Tip #1: Stay on top of your leads

Prospective customers not only start their buying experience online, studies show they may spend all of their time online. As such, having the right lead management platform in place is essential for flooring retailers today. "If you want to improve your business—then get on this platform," said Jason Goldberg, CEO of America's Floor Source and creator of Retail Lead Management (RLM), a first-of-its-kind software system specifically designed to help flooring retailers manage their leads. "From there, you need the discipline to use it and hold people accountable. No other technology can help your team and company more than this simple, affordable platform for managing leads. It's a game changer when implemented and used properly."

Tip #2: Train vigorously

The right team with the right training—nothing is more important to your business than the right people. "Build a solid team that you never stop training," Goldberg said. "Most companies



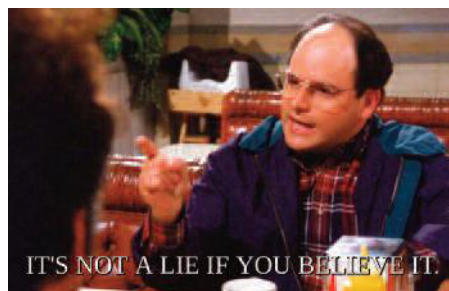
train on the things they think are important because it's what everyone else is doing. The reality is you are most likely training on the wrong things. Some things can make a much bigger difference than others. And those things are typically not what the masses are working on."

Tip #3: Emphasize teamwork

Build a committed team by putting your employees first. "Their happiness and well-being are important, and it will show when they represent you with your clients," said Theresa Gomez, customer service manager, Indiana region. "Set the bar high by improving your staff through training on installation methods, product knowledge and modern technology to better meet the needs of your customers."

Don't forget to celebrate with your team in recognition of its accomplishments. "We do a Hall of Fame ceremony every year to honor three employees who have earned the right to be called AFS Hall of Famers," Goldberg said.

Truly understand that it is a team ef-



fort. "Your warehouse, delivery staff and installers are just as important to your image as your sales team," said David Sexton, general manager—Columbus West.

Tip #4: Keep customers happy

The best type of advertising is by creating happy customers. So said Allison Schmaltz, executive assistant. "Day in and day out, over half of our retail opportunities are generated by repeat customers and referrals," she said. "Therefore, customer service has to be a priority. Providing excellent customer service should be a goal of every employee in every department in every position at your company. Being well versed in all things flooring, honesty, having integrity, communicating effectively—these are all attributes that contribute to providing great customer service."

Tip #5: 'Quit lying to yourself'

Goldberg said he hears retailers all the time say they are better than the competition. "Here's a reality check for most of you: You are not. Just because you say it does not make it so. George Costanza [actor from "Seinfeld"] says, 'It's not a lie if you believe it.' Well, I'm here to tell you to quit lying to yourself because you are not helping your business. I constantly analyze where we are falling short against others and then put plans in place to improve so we are significantly better than what or who we are up against."

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We asked 10 members of the America's Floor Source team...

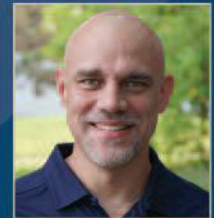
“What do you love about working



Theresa Gomez
10 years
Customer Service Manager

I love that I work for a company that will do the right thing no matter what.

The collective drive and constant striving for improvement. The determination to solve issues to the source, and the willingness to implement new ideas in the name of progress.



Brett Wilcox
6 years
Builder Account Manager



Chandra Simms
2 years
Customer Service Assistant

I have learned so much about flooring in the short amount of time that I have been here, and I very much appreciate the opportunities to continue to learn and grow with this company.

This is the only company that treats independent contractors as partners. AFS is endlessly training and helping installers learn because they genuinely care about the quality of the work and their people.



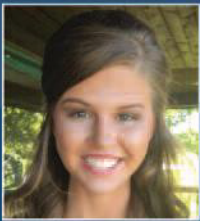
Mr. Lee
20 years
Independent Contractor



Kate Allen
12 years
Sr. Vice President, Builder Sales

I love working for America's Floor Source because of our strong Core Values. We strive every day to ensure that our customers know they are our #1 priority.

at America's Floor Source?"



Anna Richardson
4 years
Account Manager,
Builder Sales

I love the fast-paced environment, and that each day brings something different. I am so blessed to have such a great work family to build my career with.



Sheri Jernigan
3½ years
Installation Manager

America's Floor Source genuinely cares about the staff who work hard to achieve excellence, and the customer who uses our services. The company is true to their values and wants the best experience for everyone. I love that I'm encouraged to learn new things every day, to be innovative and to take on challenging opportunities.



Reggie Amey
4 years
Residential Sales Assistant

I love America's Floor Source because of the commitment to excellence and learning. When everyone is committed to giving their best it not only creates a very positive environment to be in everyday, but it also shows our customers that we are here to educate and service them like no other.

Everyone here is so open and willing to assist that it never feels like we are in silos, even if we are in different departments. This gives us all the ability to provide excellent customer service and build lasting relationships, internally and externally.



Patrick Quickert
1 year
Account Manager
Property Management



Ashley Kalley
2 years
Wholesale Sales Specialist

I have never worked for a company that wants their employees to succeed as much as AFS does, and I am extremely appreciative of the opportunities that are provided to ensure that success.

Employees reflect on winning culture at AFS

by BY K.J. QUINN

Behind every great company is a team of employees committed to its success. That's certainly the case with America's Floor Source, which prides itself on not only the caliber of employees working for the company but also the sheer dedication they bring to the job day in and day out.

Following are the experiences some of them shared:



Erik Warren

Vice president
residential division

"What I like best is that we are on a quest for excellence. Jason constantly pushes us to be

better today than we were yesterday. I have always felt very aligned with the direction of the company and am constantly challenged."



William Gibson

Chief technology officer

"Management encourages and is not afraid to embrace new ideas and learning. This leads to continual improvement

and growth, so employees feel like they are contributing and moving the company forward. That sense of accomplishment and purpose makes AFS a great place to work."



Todd Sandberg

President, wholesale sales and chief procurement officer

"The main benefit I see with AFS is that it's a growing company with opportunities to develop your skills and

grow. I have seen many people start in warehouse and sales assistant positions move up to sales and management positions. With the growth we are seeing, the need for skilled people is so important, and Jason is willing to spend the money to develop skills in people."



Tim Henson

President
builder division

"I have been with AFS or Jason my entire 32-year flooring career. I have seen time and time again

his willingness to invest in people and how that culture has spread throughout his company. A company with this kind of culture is a company I am truly honored to be a part of."



Chris Howell

CFO

"I have worked for America's Floor Source for 10 years. My role has changed over the years and consisted of every-

thing from entering invoices for payment, processing payroll and financial closing of the books. The main benefit I like about the company is the opportunity to better yourself. Hard work is rewarded and if the company does financially well, everyone gets rewarded."



Dan Canterbury

Estimator (original AFS member)

"Through AFS, I am able to grow both as an individual and employee as the industry's challenges

change with the market. Our management team has helped me adapt and learn new skills as the market has changed. We are always encouraged in both personal and educational development."



Todd Sweeney

Vice president
wholesale division

"I have been fortunate to have had opportunities to

work in several different capacities in my time here. During the past 18 years, I have been able to move to/from locations and divisions to fill several roles.

"We have the freedom within a framework to do what we need to in order to accomplish our goals. The drive towards constant improvement and continually learning is satisfying."



Rocky Maxwell

Vice president
Louisville division

"I have been with America's Floor Source for five years. I always feel valued and know that I have a

strong team behind me every step of the way. This will always urge someone to take the extra step and rise up. Being given the opportunity to lead a branch was such an honor. I felt that my hard work had paid off and did not go unnoticed."



Carla Porter

VP, merchandising
and design

"I'm proud to have played a part in the achievement of \$100 million in annual revenue by the end of

2019, an aggressive goal set by America's Floor Source years ago, which seemed impossible at the time to accomplish. But with a vision, ambition, hard work and persistence, anything is possible."



Dave Oste

Vice president of
operations, Columbus

"We have always focused on training, furthering education and self evaluation.

I have personally grown a lot in my time here and, in turn, have been encouraged to share my knowledge and experience with my team but also across other groups and with new hires. I love to see employees grow, earn promotions and prosper."



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Congratulations to America's Floor Source in Columbus, Ohio on your 20-year anniversary. Wishing you many more successful years to come!



RECOGNIZING THE BEST AMONG THE BEST



AFS 2019 Hall of Fame inductees, from left, are: Randy Brenly, Dan Canterbury and Hyo-Seung Lee.

Acknowledging his employees for hard work, loyalty and dedication has always been important to Jason Goldberg, CEO of America's Floor Source. Since founding his Columbus, Ohio-based flooring business, Goldberg has consistently shown his appreciation to the devoted team around him, hosting celebrations of success, offering travel experiences and providing opportunities for advancement.

In 2013, Goldberg began formally acknowledging outstanding members of his team with the establishment of the America's Floor Source Hall of

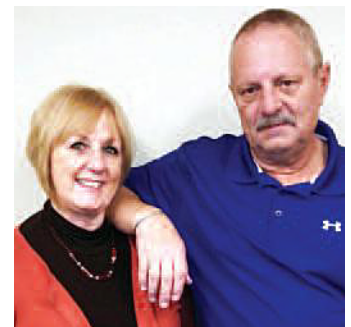
Fame. The AFS Hall of Fame was created to recognize those who have made an indelible impact on America's Floor Source with a long history in the flooring industry. The ideals set forth by the company's core values are embodied by those who would become part of this elite group:

1. Service
2. Care/clean/consistent
3. Do the right, fair thing
4. Learning/reading/knowledge/understanding/experience/reflection
5. Family & community

The first inductees during the initial 2013 ceremony were

Roger Slack and Joan Hullinger. Slack and Hullinger were integral to the early success of AFS, working together as a sales team and managing accounts. In the days before America's Floor Source, Goldberg had the opportunity to work with Slack and Hullinger, learning from them the flooring essentials that would later help shape America's Floor Source.

Their induction was part of



Roger Slack and Joan Hullinger, charter members of the Hall of Fame, at the 2013 induction.

a formal event that included the entire company. Honoring them as the first members of the AFS Hall of Fame became a source of inspiration for years to come.

"Roger and Joan were simply the best," Goldberg said. "Their commitment to the success of America's Floor Source was second to none."

The next class of inductees was honored in 2018. Surrounded by over 200 AFS employees and spouses, Tim Myers (posthumously), Rusty Borah and Ray McGuire were installed as Hall of Fame members at a formal company dinner, this time including the presentation of diamond-studded Hall of Fame rings.

Myers had a long history working in the industry when he joined the AFS team in 2013. He was widely known by his colleagues as an outstanding salesman, and was always willing to impart his depth of



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knowledge and experience on anyone willing to learn.

Borah came to work for AFS in 2010 to help with warehouse organization and promptly became indispensable to the company. Meanwhile, McGuire was known as a steadfast and conscientious member of the AFS team, helping to keep warehouse operations smooth for nearly 18 years before retiring.

In 2019, yet another class of inductees was honored and presented with Hall of Fame rings. Nearly 400 AFS employees and spouses attended another full-scale event, while Randy Brenly, Dan Canterbury and Hyo-Seung Lee were ceremoniously installed.

Brenly, who has been with AFS almost since its inception, was recognized for his expertise as a skilled installer and inspector, thanks to his 35 years in the industry and deep understanding of installation



IMPRESSIONS

"I have been fortunate to work with Jason and his team, as a supplier, since the beginning. One of the many things that I admire is the vision Jason established very early on. It was very clear that he did not want to

just start a new flooring company, but rather establish a company that differentiates itself—different in the way they go to market, supplier relations, technology and, most importantly, how they treat their customers. Jason has a management team that shares his vision and communicates that vision to all associates. It has been a pleasure working with him and his team."

— Bob Stein, strategic account manager, SAR Floors

methods, challenges and pitfalls. Canterbury, an original AFS employee, has been providing his estimating talents for 20 years. His comprehen-

sive grasp of flooring layout and the take-off process has been a difference-maker as the company has grown over the years. Lee—affectionately

referred to as Mr. Lee—is the first independent contractor to be included in the Hall of Fame. Mr. Lee's induction is the beginning of a new Hall of Fame wing honoring independent contractors, a vital part of America's Floor Source operations. Also original to the company from the start, Mr. Lee's meticulous approach and careful organization ensures AFS projects run smoothly and result in beautiful installations.

The AFS team takes great pleasure in celebrating these exceptional individuals. The loyalty and dedication exemplified by each of them has become the standard pursued company wide.

The success of AFS depends on the care and dedication of its employees. The Hall of Fame is the ultimate form of recognition for employees, celebrating outstanding leadership and customer service.

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Lasting impressions

Suppliers to America's Floor Source attest to the retailer's accomplishments, vision and commitment to the success of its partners across the supply channel. Here's what some of them had to say:



"America's Floor Source and TDG work very well together, and I am proud of the strong working relationship our regional and local sales team has

developed with the AFS team. The company culture is very positive, and it allows our local salespeople to work effectively with them in presenting new, innovative products and discussing style and design trends. Our relationship with AFS continues to grow, and we look forward to a bright future together."

— T.M. Nuckols, president, The Dixie Group



"Mannington and America's Floor Source have had a long and successful relationship. They are committed to doing everything first class and setting themselves apart by providing the best service and the best products. We at Mannington appreciate the great partnership we've had over

the years and congratulate Jason and his team on this milestone anniversary."

—Jay Kopelson, vice president, corporate accounts, Mannington Mills



"The Stanton/AFS partnership has been a long-standing, collaborative business relationship for many reasons. Jason is a very smart leader who has built a strong team from the management level down to the retail and wholesale sales associates. He is a true entrepreneur with tremendous drive and leadership that has enabled his business to flourish immensely over the last 20 years. We look forward to our growth together over the next two decades."

—Jonathan Cohen, president/CEO, Stanton Carpet



"All Tile and Carpet Cushions & Supplies is proud to have a partner in America's Floor Source. They have partnered with us on both flooring as

well as supplies in order to provide their customers with unique products that are not available at big box stores or online merchants. We congratulate Jason Goldberg and his team on a great, first 20 years, and we look forward to growing together during the next 20 years."

—Bob Weiss, CEO, All Tile and Carpet Cushions & Supplies



"I have been calling on AFS since their inception and cannot say enough good things about them. Their team, from the top down, are the best of the best. When they get behind a product and/or program, they are committed and work hard at making it successful."

—Dave Buck, sales & marketing manager, Palmer Donavin



"Congratulations to America's Floor Source on its 20th birthday celebration. Southwind Carpet & Hard Surface is proud to be a growing partner with a successful and innovative flooring retailer. America's Floor Source's unique business model challenges the status quo, which has led to their growth to be among the largest flooring providers in the nation. We look forward to continuing to partner with a great organization."

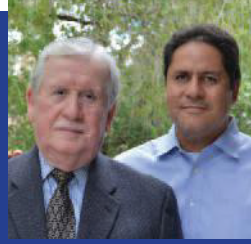
—Richard Abramowicz, executive vice president, Southwind Carpet & Hard Surface



“We have a really great relationship with AFS and Jason Goldberg. Anything that has to do with our system—installation, heated floors, etc.—they incorporate into their business model. It’s also a great relationship as far as education.

Jason is a joy to work with—very personable and responsive. We’re definitely appreciative of that relationship.”

—Art Porter
territory manager, Cleveland Metro, Schlüter Systems



“We are proud of our unique and rewarding business experience with Jason Goldberg and America’s Floor Source since May of 2000, when a dynamic and entrepreneurial

businessman purchased two licenses of our Comp-U-Floor ERP Business Management Software. The nature of our business relationship over the past 20 years may be used as a narrow frame for us to describe our great esteem and admiration for a true leader and innovator.”

—Edgar & Alex Aya, Comp-U-Floor

“Mobile Marketing is proud to be America’s Floor Source’s digital agency. I personally love working with Jason and the AFS team. He is a visionary in the space and is always challenging himself, his company and his partners to find ways to continue to improve the floor shopping process. We congratulate AFS on their 20th anniversary and look forward to helping them achieve their next major milestone.”

—Carol Cross, founder/CEO, Mobile Marketing



“We deal with many contractors throughout the country, but when you think of the word ‘partner,’ America’s Floor Source lives up the expectations of a true partner. I have known Jason Goldberg for years and value his leadership and commitment to our partnership.”

—Bob Baldocchi, chief marketing officer, Emser Tile



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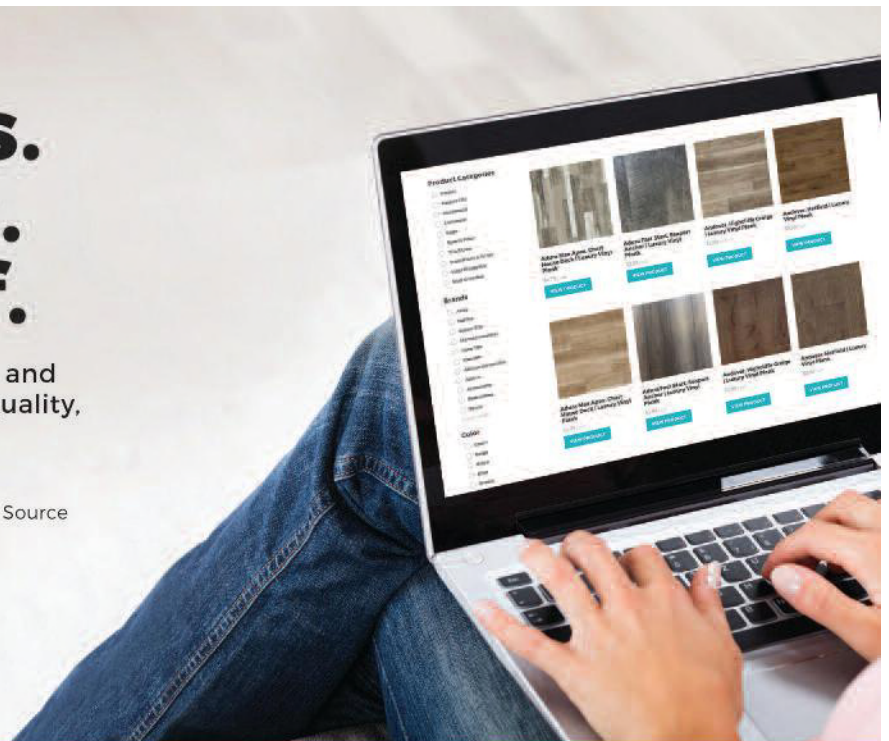
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— Jason Goldberg, CEO America’s Floor Source



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"The nice thing about AFS is there's a culture of partnership when dealing with Jason and the management team. Not only are they looking out for their best interests but also that of their suppliers. We're also both forward-thinking companies, not only on the product side of business but also on the technology side of the business. We're definitely appreciative of that relationship."

—Troy Zwick, regional manager, MSI



"DriTac has had a strong and prosperous partnership with America's Floor Source for several years. Our company objectives align perfectly, as we both strive to enable efficient, reliable and diverse flooring installations with a deep appreciation for our customers. As an ally, they have proven to always go the extra mile to meet the needs of their partners and customers. Congratulations on this well-deserved 20th anniversary milestone!"

—Dave Cima, eastern sales director, DriTac

"Accu-Cut has been working with Jason and America's Floor Source for 19 of the 20 years they have been in business. We are honored and proud that they considers our carpet-cutting machines a vital part of their business. If you know Jason, you know he has an incredible work ethic. He will always take your call and is very honest. Congratulations to Jason and the entire America's Floor Source team!"

—Trevor Brockie, VP/sales, Accu-Cut



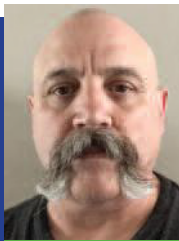
"What I appreciate about Jason and his whole team is the opportunity that they offered to me as a new vendor. They are a large and very successful company, which can oftentimes make it difficult to get a listening ear for a new product. We are thrilled to be a tiny part of their overwhelming success, and are excited to see how they grow in the future."

—Joe Kennedy, president, Perfect Vents



"Jason Goldberg has taken his company from a start-up to a viable business. He is driven and an out-of-the-box thinker. AFS and its leadership have been empowered to keep the growth mindset alive. AFS regards training on the products they use very important, which meshes perfectly with Ardex's philosophy on training. My hope is that the partnership grows along with AFS in the future as we work together to find solutions for their customers."

—Pete Basar, sales, Northeast region, Ardex



"What makes AFS so special to work with is the partnership at all levels, from the sales associates to the C-suite. This kind of engagement at all levels throughout the organization has driven growth in credit sales year over year. We greatly appreciate your partnership over the years. Happy 20th anniversary on behalf of the Synchrony team!"

—Anna Stickel, relationship manager, Synchrony



"It has been great to have a continuous growing relationship with America's Floor Source over the years. Jason and his team set themselves apart with their always positive attitude, willingness to learn and work with their customers and their desire to give their customers the premium experience."

—Jay Reikowsky, branch manager, Florida Tile



"AFS and Certified have had a very successful partnership over the years. Jason Goldberg and his management team are welcoming, have allowed us to present any and all opportunities and are full disclosure on how to navigate and gain the business. We are grateful for our partnership with AFS. Certified Flooring looks forward to continued growth in our partnership over the next 20 years."

—Dave McGee, EVP/general manager, Certified Flooring





thankyou.

To America's Floor Source for their continued care and consistency. Cheers to the next 20 years!

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 AMERICA'S
FLOOR SOURCE

Retail Lead Management tracks prospects from start to finish

by MEGAN SALZANO

Three years ago, Retail Lead Management (RLM) hit the market as a first-of-its-kind software system specifically designed to help flooring retailers manage their leads. Developed by America's Floor Source CEO Jason Goldberg and an outside tech partner, Retail Lead Management has grown to become one of the most praised solutions in the industry. "Besides the fact that I believe we write more business because of it, [RLM] is just a great tool for analyzing everything that's going on in our stores—from

lead management to sample checkout, 30-day trends," said Steve Cosentino, vice president, Capitol Carpet & Tile with five locations in South Florida. "I have recommended it to other dealers since the day I signed up. It's really a no brainer as far as I see it."

For Mindy Arnette, residential sales manager, Brian's Flooring & Design, the system has updated stagnant industry norms. "We had our own way of doing things as a company and as individual sales reps but using RLM has threaded all facets of our business into one entity," she explained. "It simplifies everything. Simply, it has shown us where we excel

within our processes as well as where we need to work on improving."

Deby Winter, owner of Carpet & Tile Warehouse in Vero Beach, Fla., found the system to be much more valuable than its competition and knew it would become an asset to the company right off the bat. "Many years ago, we used a very inexpensive software program from one of the better-known flooring software companies and it was awful. Twenty-two years ago, we started a check-out log on a clipboard and then notebook. These handwritten logs were impossible to work with. I scheduled a demo with Jason and before the demo was completed, I knew we were going to sign up."

While flooring dealers have come to laud RLM, it originally began as a solution for one.

"RLM didn't start off as RLM," Goldberg explained. "RLM started off because I needed a better way to manage my leads at America's Floor Source. I looked at 200 different CRMs before deciding to build my own because I realized what I needed didn't exist. So, we came up with the name Retail Lead Management, we launched it and I took the top 100 list of flooring companies and started calling every one of them. Now, we've just taken it to an extreme. We are so far behind the times as an industry. We're getting better and people are starting to advance, but I think RLM has been instrumental."

Today, the system is multi-functional and enables users to build leads and update a lead's stage as it progresses through the sales funnel. All leads can be viewed and managed on a



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52 July 20/27, 2020

IMPRESSIONS



"America's Floor Source has been a longtime customer of AHF products and our portfolio of brands. The entrepreneurship that Jason Goldberg and his team have brought to market has made them a very successful

company, always staying focused on the future and innovative ways to grow their flooring business. [Jason Goldberg] has a very close pulse on the market and not only on what is working today, but he drives his business across channels and anticipates with impeccable timing when to drive new trends into his showrooms. AHF's focus on new products along with AFS' vision has created a strong recipe for growth and success together."

— Chris King, vice president, sales, AHF Products

fcnews

Where are all your leads?

If you don't know...

- how many of what types of leads you have,
- who should be doing what, by when, to close which sales,
- which salesperson has the highest (or lowest) close rate,

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centralized dashboard while notes and attachments—like quotes and pictures—can be added to a lead. Appointments can be scheduled and follow up tasks can be created.

Managers also have full visibility and can assign and track leads that are being handled by their sales personnel. The data within the system can be exported and automated email notifications can be created to

keep users on task.

“Our customers never fall through the cracks anymore,” said Karyn Mitchell, owner/CFO, Simply Floors, which services the Denver, Colo., area. “Lack of customer follow up is the biggest factor in lost sales. With RLM, sales managers can watch over the sales staff and make sure they are following up and coach them when they don’t. It helps

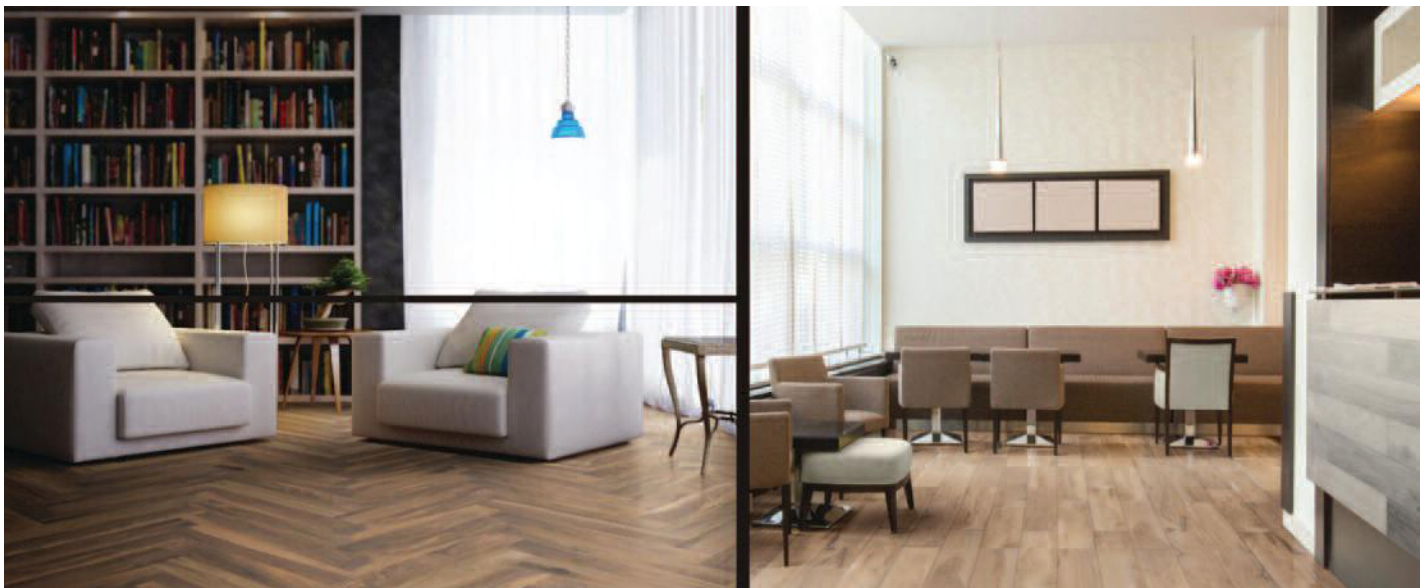
all the team members know the information needed to move through the sales and operations process of a flooring sale and installation. We consider it invaluable to our system and success.”

Keith Carlson, general manager, material management director/web director, Century Tile & Carpet, Chicago, agreed, noting the importance of on-line leads in today’s market.

“We all realize that today’s customer is shopping for flooring differently than they did in the past, and navigating flooring websites and making a contact is just as important as a phone that rings or a customer that walks in the door. This tool allows us to get that information into a CSR’s hands almost the minute it happens.”

Simply Floors’ Mitchell

continued on page 54



Congratulations and thank you for giving us the opportunity to be a part of your growth over the last 20 years. Your success and innovation in the industry should be recognized. Your RLM software has allowed us to streamline our commercial business by letting us communicate effectively and efficiently with our customers and our sales force. We want you to know that you have been a vital part of our growth over the last 20 years. Your honesty, availability, and dependability are just a few of the reasons that you deserve to be an ambassador in the flooring industry. It’s been a pleasure to work with you and your team over the past 20 years. We are looking forward to the next 20 years my friend. - Your Friends at Lint Tile



Continued from page 53

added that the system not only helps streamline processes and hold RSAs accountable but has helped grow the business. "After fully implementing RLM, our sales increased over 35% and our close rate has improved," she said. "Even great sales staff are more efficient with RLM."

The system also has a simple, easy-to-use interface that offers full functionality on desktops, tablets and mobile phones. "As complex as it is, meaning all the tools it has, [RLM] is really simple," Capitol Carpet & Tile's Cosentino said. "RSAs are in the store with customers, the phone is ringing, they're filling out forms—if you add something new, it has to be easy and simple. And that's what RLM is."

What's more, Goldberg said revenue derived from RLM is reinvested back into the system itself. "Every dime RLM makes goes right back into programming," he said.



IMPRESSIONS

"A few years ago, Jason Goldberg recognized a need in the industry for flooring-specific lead management software, so he created RLM and made it available to the public. He was already extremely busy with running

his large flooring business, but he had the energy and passion to invest the time and money to provide a new solution for the industry. We at QFloors appreciate the sacrifice that went into creating his RLM software. Once he launched RLM, he immediately worked to create an interface so it would integrate smoothly with QFloors business management software. Having RLM seamlessly transfer leads directly into QFloors has been a benefit to our customers wanting extensive lead management options. We're grateful to Jason for his willingness to work to better the flooring industry."

— Chad Ogden, CEO/president, QFloors

Century Tile & Carpet's Carlson noted that giving RSAs the ability to sell more is al-

ways a worthwhile investment. "There really has been nothing like this in our in-

dustry before. This is not a 'break the bank' kind of tool and is very reasonably priced."

Carpet & Tile Warehouse's Winter agreed, adding, "It's impossible to calculate how much time and money we have saved since implementing RLM. I always felt it made us look disorganized and unprofessional in the eyes of the customer when we could not find their paperwork because it was misfiled or simply disappeared. RLM is worth every penny and more. If you are in the flooring business, you need RLM."

While Goldberg admits onboarding the new system is "a good 60 days of hardcore effort," retailers agree the juice is worth the squeeze. "The beginning is somewhat painful as you have to get your entire team to adopt it, which is not easy," said Phil Koufidakis, president of Baker Bros with seven locations in Arizona. "But the longer it goes, the easier it is, and it's one of those things that we look back and say, 'How did we function before it?' It has been a great addition to our business."

Moving forward, Goldberg said two new tools will be added to the software: scheduling and field management and site assessments. "We're building scheduling and field management directly into the platform," he explained. "So, anyone who wants to know how I run my field, schedule and manage the installers, when I give people RLM I'm giving them the America's Floor Source blueprint."

When it comes to site assessment, Goldberg said it will include the most important measurements that can fall through the cracks. "Floor flatness, temperature, relative humidity, moisture content of the wood—all kinds of things that you should be looking at, analyzing and recording that almost no one does."

Congratulations to our long time friends and partners



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on your 20th Anniversary!

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here at team

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"We were spending all this money to get leads, but I had no idea what was going on with any of them, and neither did the managers..."

...and that's why we created Retail Lead Management."

- Jason Goldberg, CEO

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"Like everyone, one of our biggest challenges has always been finding reliable, skilled installers available when we need them..."

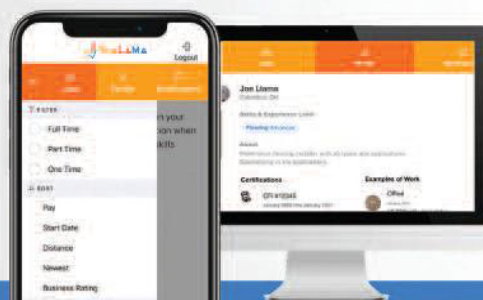
...and that's why we're launching TraLaMa."

- Jason Goldberg, CEO

TraLaMa is the Trade Labor Marketplace, where business can find skilled labor, and where skilled trade laborers can find work.

TraLaMa.com

LAUNCHING FALL 2020



TraLaMa aims to connect retailers with installers

by REGINALD TUCKER

Most retailers who have ever needed an installer or installation crew to complete a project can attest to a common challenge—difficulty locating a laborer with a specific set of skills. TraLaMa—a novel online platform designed to connect businesses that need labor with installers/mechanics—aims to alleviate that problem.

Developed by Jason Goldberg, CEO of Retail Lead Management and America's Floor Source, TraLaMa (an abbreviation for Trade Labor Marketplace), allows installers—not just floor layers but all construction trades—to use a dedicated website (tralama.com) to connect with dealers who are looking to complete various jobs.

How it works: A dealer or business signs up with TraLaMa and pays a fee to place a job posting in a given area. This post will essentially include the type of job as well as the day and time the installation needs to be completed. Once the job is posted, qualified installers within the dealer's area will be notified. Next, the installer can reach out to the dealer to talk more about the job.

"We basically connect construction labor with businesses that need trade labor," Goldberg explained. "Today, there are a gazillion sites that connect labor to homeowners. And then in some other industries, there are some that will connect labor with, say, restaurants. What we do is we connect trade labor to businesses that need trade labor."

In explaining the principle behind TraLaMa—which functions like an app—Goldberg used Uber as an analogy. "When you take an Uber, it's five bucks to a hundred bucks, depending on where you're going," he said. "But unlike Uber, where the transaction occurs through the platform, TraLaMa is a connection site. All I'm doing is saying, 'I'm going to connect you, but you're responsible,'" Goldberg explained. "I have no liability."



But here's the best part, according to Goldberg: There is no charge to the installer or mechanic to use the tool; it's the retailer or business that pays for the listing. Posting fees charged to retailers can range anywhere from \$19 to \$75. As Goldberg explained, the fee structure is all based on time. "Let's say you do a 30-day post on Indeed or even LinkedIn, you're going to pay approximately \$300 for that post," he said. "But if you just want to do a 24-hour post—there's a nominal fee for that."

For the laborers, TraLaMa is com-

pletely free—which is unlike the labor-to-consumer model where tradesmen have to pay for those leads, according to Goldberg. "And, by the way, not only do they try to get installers on those platforms, it can start to get a bit like HomeAdvisor where they will call me and they'll call Joe the installer. Those sites are awful. If you look, everyone always bitches about how bad those leads are, and you're paying for those."

Goldberg is quick to emphasize the difference between TraLaMa and third-party sites installers use to find work, i.e., HomeAdvisor and Angie's List.

Existing sites and apps, he said, fail to deliver on qualified leads for installers or bona fide mechanics for retailers or contractors. "If I'm looking for an installer and I put it on Career Builder, Indeed or any of those regular platforms, you get minimal to no response because that's not where they're at," he explained. "We realized no platform existed where true labor in the construction trade can go to find work directly for a business."

Another major aspect of the TraLaMa program/app is it's not exclusive to floor-



The TraLaMa online platform was designed to bridge installers with retailers looking for skilled laborers.

ing. All totaled, there will be roughly 30 categories of laborers represented. "It's also siding, windows and framers—anything pertaining to the construction trade," Goldberg explained.

TraLaMa in practice

To illustrate how seamless the system is designed to work, Goldberg provided a hypothetical situation: "Let's say America's Floor Source has a 500-square-foot hardwood job starting next Monday, and I want to get an installer to cover it because our own crews are overbooked and I don't want to try to push it. So, as a retail owner, I agree to pay \$20—or whatever the charge is—to post it for 72 hours. I post the job and then that will automatically feed to any trade laborer who's signed up. So, Joe the Installer can see this and he can then click a button to say he's interested in doing that job."

Another benefit for the installer is he doesn't have to go on the site each time he's looking for a potential job. Once he has signed up, he will simply get a notification about a new job in his geographic area. "He can set his range to 10 miles,

25 miles, 500 miles, whatever," Goldberg said.

Aside from the job-specific post, there's also a more generic listing that might be of interest to installers searching for more consistent work. For example, a retailer might simply post an employment listing to the effect of: "I'm looking for five installers or one installer who wants to do hardwood for me every single day. If you're interested, let me know and I'll interview you."

But what about verifying an installer's skill level? Who's responsible for that? Some existing sites that businesses and consumers utilize to locate or vet potential laborers or contractors strive to put consumers and users at ease by "pre-screening" installers, electricians, plumbers or other professionals, particularly when it comes to licenses or history of complaints. (The Better Business Bureau is one of them.) In the case of TraLaMa, installers are judged on an accrual rating system. "When a retailer connects with an installer, they may see he has already done 20 jobs through TraLaMa," Goldberg explained, citing the

program's star-rating system. "They can see how people rated him."

There is also a feature embedded in the program whereby an installer can rate himself or herself. For instance, installers can classify themselves as "intermediate," "beginner" or "advanced."

Spreading the word

In developing regional pools of installers, Goldberg said he is targeting the usual suspects such as popular social media sites as well as installer-focused industry associations. "We can either notify them if they're a member of any of the Facebook groups, where it's predominantly installer based, and we can do targeted digital advertising through social and Google," he said.

Phoenix has the most sign-ups right now, according to Goldberg, but Dallas and Atlanta are also key targets for the sign-up initiative. "Of course, we are going to do our own markets," he said. "Once we have enough installers signed up in the different markets, then we flip the marketing tool toward the floor covering retailers."

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No man is an island

In celebrating the 20th anniversary of America's Floor Source, Jason Goldberg, CEO, took the opportunity to recognize his dedicated employees for playing a key role in the company's success and longevity.

"Thank you for making this company what

we strive for it to be each and every day," he said. "Your daily actions reflect our culture and commitment to each other. This machine we call AFS does not run without all of your hard work, dedication and loyalty. Thank you for all you do."

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