

IN THIS ISSUE

FCEF kicks off new fundraising initiative
PAGE 3

Shaw's Haicl focuses on brand differentiation
PAGE 8

Adhesive formulations solve age-old problems
PAGE 22



Hooray for high-end hardwood flooring
Suppliers know there are still many consumers who want hardwood flooring and are willing to pay for it.
PAGE 14

DIGITAL ACCESS IS INCLUDED
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The power of private label



Pelican Creations offers the full spectrum of flooring products at its facilities like this one in Vietnam.

OEM SUPPLIERS BRING VALUE TO THE SUPPLY CHAIN

By Megan Salzano-Birch

In the ever-evolving flooring industry, retailers and distributors are constantly searching for ways to differentiate themselves from the competition. One of the most effective strategies? Private label and OEM production. By partnering with established manufacturers, businesses can offer exclusive, high-quality flooring products under their own brand—without the high costs and complexities of in-house production.

Private label and OEM manufacturing allow retailers and distributors to control branding, pricing and product selection,

Continued on page 12

Retail update

Flooring dealers look to make hay as market improves

By Ken Ryan

While the post-presidential-election jolt that sustained many flooring retailers through the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025 has eased somewhat, dealers say

business conditions overall are mostly trending in the right direction—this despite persistently high mortgage interest rates.

“Following the election, we noticed an immediate uptick in traffic, although it was quickly followed by our typical holiday slowdown,” said Bruce Odette, president of The Carpet Exchange, with 17 locations in the Denver

market. “However, since the holidays, traffic has been better than usual for this time of the year. We’re experiencing a 7% growth trend for the first part of the year, which aligns with economic forecasts predicting stronger sales heading into 2025.”



In Idaho, the election was a big consumer confidence boost for Dillabaugh's Flooring America.

Many dealers say they are encouraged by consumer interest in home improvement projects, with strong inquiries from both homeowners and contractors.

For some, the momentum began three months ago. “Being in a red state (Idaho), the election was one of the biggest consumer confidence booms I can recall,”

Continued on page 24

Changing of the guard at AHF Products

By Reginald Tucker

In a move that most industry observers didn’t see coming, Brian Carson resigned from his post as president and CEO of AHF Products following a successful six-year tenure at the company. FCNews has learned Carson has taken on a leadership

role at Pittsburgh Paints, which is owned by American Industrial Partners (AIP)—the company that sold AHF to Paceline Equity Partners in 2021.

“After more than 35 years in the flooring industry, I am eager to begin a new chapter and take on the new challenge,” Carson stated in a release. “Leading AHF and building it into a premier flooring company over the past six years is one of my greatest achievements in a career that spans more than three decades. I am incredibly proud of what our team has accomplished, and I’m excited about the company’s future. AHF is in great hands with a talented and dedicated team, and I look forward to watching the company continue to thrive in 2025 and beyond.”

Brent Emore, AHF Products’



Brian Carson



Brent Emore

chief financial officer, assumes the role of interim CEO until a permanent successor is named. A seasoned executive in his own right with 20-plus years of experience in the flooring industry, Emore brings a strong track record of operational excellence and transforming businesses. He

joined AHF in 2024 from Mohawk Industries, where he held various senior leadership roles, including CFO of Flooring North America and vice president of corporate finance and global finance transformation.

“Having been privileged

Continued on page 23

MOHAWK
PURETECH
PLANET-FRIENDLY PVC-FREE FLOORING

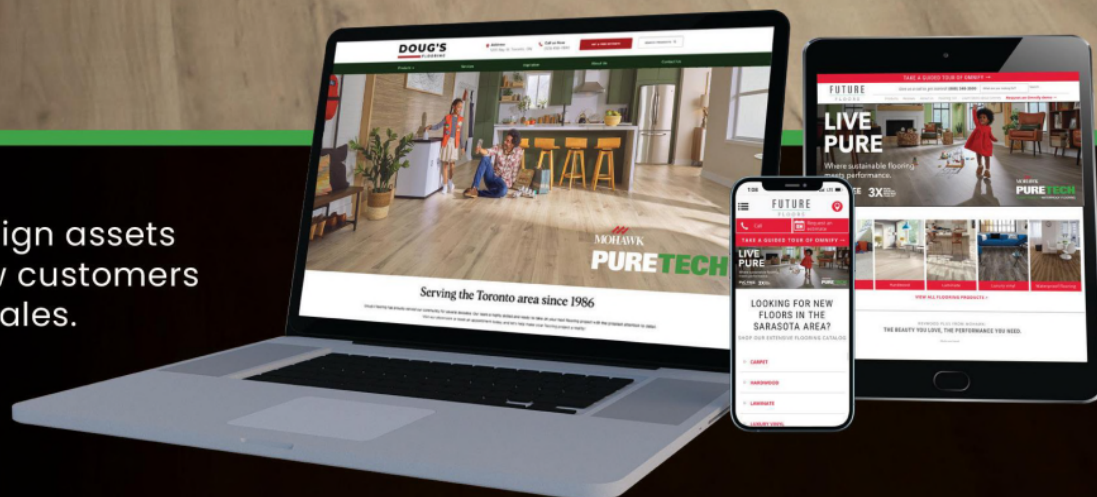
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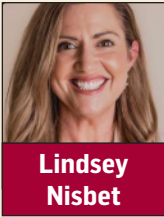


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IN THE NEWS

UCX realigns marketing, product management teams

MANSFIELD, MASS.—Top 20 distributor UCX has realigned several positions within its marketing and products teams in a move to better serve its customers and suppliers while enhancing overall efficiency.

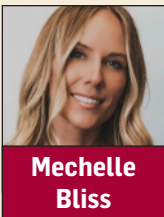


Lindsey Nisbet

Dan Doyle has been promoted to vice president of product and supplies and will be responsible for driving a unified strategy for this integral business segment. Meanwhile, Kelly Campbell has been promoted to vice president of product, flooring. Lindsey Nisbet will transition from vice president of marketing, Southwest, to vice president, national accounts and product development. Lastly, Jessie Hansen has been promoted to vice president of marketing and will lead the company's efforts to further engage customers and help facilitate UCX brand loyalty.

All Surfaces appoints new business development manager

BLOOMINGTON, MINN.—All Surfaces named Mechelle Bliss the new commercial business development specification manager. Bliss will play a pivotal role in expanding the company's presence in commercial markets and strengthening client relationships.



Mechelle Bliss

"I was drawn to All Surfaces because of its core values, particularly the commitment to 'doing the right thing,'" Bliss said. "In an industry where relationships are everything, I believe in building trust and providing expert guidance to ensure every project is successful. My goal is to expand All Surfaces' footprint in key markets while creating lasting relationships with clients who know they can rely on us."

Classen Group, i4F strengthen ongoing patent partnership

KAISERSSESCH, GERMANY—i4F, a group of companies providing patents and technologies to the flooring industry, is fortifying its long-standing patent partnership with the addition of Classen's proprietary polypropylene (PP) technologies.

"We are delighted to further solidify our already long-standing partnership with i4F—this time with future-focused PP products," said Céline Quervel, managing director of sales for Classen Group, producer of flooring and wall coverings. "Our PP solutions provide a direct response to the growing demand for more sustainable products by using a streamlined concept, comprising board production as well as surface treatments, including digital printing."

When used in flooring products, polypropylene is said to offer several advantages—including a low density for a lightweight structure, water and chemical resistance and durability with flexibility to withstand bending and stress without breaking.

FCEF announces fundraising initiative

By Ken Ryan

LAS VEGAS—The Floor Covering Education Foundation (FCEF) kicked off the Penny Program, a fundraising initiative where manufacturers and retailers contribute a small portion of sales to FCEF. The announcement of the Penny Program came during an FCEF meeting with industry leaders during Surfaces to address the ongoing labor shortage in flooring installation and explore strategies for workforce development. FCEF co-chair, Dave Chambers of Nebraska Furniture Mart, led the meeting.

Program partners include:

- Cali: Customers can opt into a 1-cent-per-square-foot contribution.
- Leggett & Platt: Offering an opt-out 1-cent-per-square-yard donation program, with L&P matching dealer contributions. Sixteen NFA members have joined.
- Cyncl: Selected FCEF as the charitable partner for the Cyncl Connect Conference in May, with a portion of registration fees supporting FCEF.
- AHSG: Tony Wright announced a new campaign encouraging members to voluntarily donate 1% of their rebates to FCEF.
- IFC (International Flooring Company): 1-cent-per-square-foot contribution on Canopy product sales and dealer participation opportunities.



Industry leaders gather at FCEF meeting.

Mission and purpose of FCEF

Chambers highlighted the organization's mission to support the future of the flooring industry by raising awareness, recruiting new talent, funding education and facilitating job placement. He emphasized FCEF's role in addressing labor shortages and equipping individuals with the foundational skills needed for long-term success in flooring installation careers.

Kaye Whitener, executive director of FCEF, provided updates on current training programs, student success stories and federal funding applications. Whitener

outlined FCEF's strategic vision for elevating flooring careers and bridging the talent gap. She stressed the importance of industry collaboration, noting that \$1.3 million is needed to sustain current scholarship and program efforts. While grant funding will continue to play a role, industry support remains crucial for FCEF's long-term success, she noted.

Chambers and Whitener wrapped up the meeting by reaffirming FCEF's commitment to supporting flooring careers, starting with installation. They called on industry leaders to contribute through partnerships, funding and advocacy to ensure a sustainable future for the flooring workforce.

Tri-County Career Center touts training success

NELSONVILLE, OHIO—Eleven high school students recently began training in a flooring certificate program at the Tri-County Career Center here. The four-day course was led by instructors Melissa Schroeder, sales associate at Advance Flooring in Clarkston, Mich., along with installation experts Dwayne Pruitt and Jonathan Varden from Advanced Flooring Technology.

"After years of negotiations and emphasizing the importance of bringing new individuals into our industry, we've been able to provide free training for anyone in the flooring industry who wants to learn—whether they're retailers, manufacturers or employees looking forward to improving their skill set," said Mark Farnsworth, president of the program.



Students from various schools took part in the recent training program.

"Workrooms are always looking for new employees with certain skills, and we're proud to be the only floor covering association approved to provide paid training

for those interested in learning."

Funding for the program is provided through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which replaced the previous Workforce Investment Act of 1998 as the primary federal workforce development legislation to bring about increased coordination among federal workforce development and related programs. What's more, the course is part of the Professional Floorcovering Training initiative.

The results, according to Farnsworth, are already apparent. "It's incredibly rewarding to watch the students' attitudes and faces change as they begin to experience success."

Lisbeth Calandrino, course develop-

Continued on page 5

SNAPSHOT

Daltille names Builders Interiors its 2024 'Partner of the Year'

DALLAS—Daltille has named Builders Interiors, based in Woodinville, Wash., its 2024 Daltille Elite Statements Partner of the Year. "Builders Interiors was [selected] because they are a very successful enterprise and an amazing partner to Daltille," said Patrick Warren, vice president of residential sales, dealer and showrooms for Dal-Tile. "They are renowned for delivering superior customer service."

Builders Interiors is owned by Ty and Teresa Mortenson—pictured here flanked by Daltille's Warren (far left) and Scott Maslowski (right). The retailer has enthusiastically embraced all aspects of the Daltille Statements program, i.e., lead fulfillment, sales promotions, co-op advertising, an automated social media posting platform and the new Statements 2.0 exclusive merchandised showroom, and has been a Daltille Elite Statements Dealer since March of 2024. Participation in the program has helped Builders Interiors nearly double its sales in a single year.

"The Daltille Statements showroom and program have been transformative for their business, elevating it to the next level in every way," Warren added.





my take

Retail advice from the outside looking in

From time to time, floor covering retailers reach out to me for guidance. Not because I have experience as a retailer, but because I have had conversations with hundreds of dealers over the years about everything from issues they are having with customers, vendors or employees to what restaurants to visit in a particular city.

I recently was approached by a friend about a problem he was having and I thought it would be a good idea to discuss it here because I think it can serve as a reminder. And just like the opening narration of the radio and television series “Dragnet,” the names have been changed to protect the innocent.

So my friend—let’s call him Hugh Drashman for the sake of this article—is a successful owner/operator of a company called Northbreeze Carpet and Floors. He isn’t the biggest and he isn’t the smallest. He’s been around for a while and knows the ins and outs of the business. He pretty much handles every function of the business himself—sales, marketing, purchasing, operations, etc. He’s been able to grow with a relatively small team.

But as his business grew, Hugh decided he needed some help. He wanted to concentrate on growing the business. Maybe get into some new categories and segments. So Hugh brought in someone from the outside, someone who came well recommended, someone with solid experience. Let’s call him Fred Paulson. Two of the functions with which he tasked Fred was advertising and dealing with vendors/suppliers.

One thing about Hugh—he is very personable and has excellent relationships with his vendors. They were win-wins. They both recognized they had a vested interest in each other’s business. Sometimes Hugh was able to secure a pricing advantage or an exclusive; sometimes Hugh would take on a line if he knew it was important to a particular supplier.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the forum. Fred Paulson came to Northbreeze with existing relationships—friendships with vendors who may not have had as strong a presence in Hugh’s store. Fred saw this as an opportunity to take care of his friends. It didn’t matter to Fred that Hugh already had mutually beneficial relationships. It didn’t matter to Fred that existing vendors may have provided more value. So Fred started diverting business to the companies with which he had relationships, often competitors of Northbreeze’s key suppliers. Needless to say, this could have been detrimental to the business and put a strain on existing relationships.

By the way, just as an aside, the exact same situation happened to another friend of mine about 15 years ago. A new general manager was dating a rep and all of a sudden a rack would show up in every one of the stores. (And by rack I mean display.)

When Hugh learned what was happening, he gave me a call. He didn’t want to micromanage his new No. 2, but at the same time he was not only concerned about the company’s relationships, but whether he picked the right person for

the job. He asked if I thought he made a mistake.

So in a nutshell, here is what Hugh and I discussed, which is what I would say to anyone reading this column:

1. As your business grows, there are reasons to hire a strong No. 2. For example, you may find that you or your higher-paid employees are spending a lot of time on tasks that can be handed off to someone else. Also, there is nothing wrong with paying more attention to that proverbial work/life balance.
2. Anyone you hire is a window pane to you and your company. That includes salespeople and executives. They represent you and your values. So do your due diligence.
3. When you hire an external company or individual to handle certain tasks or functions, make sure that person not only has the necessary skills, experience and reliability to deliver the quality of work you need, but also make sure you and this individual are aligned on direction. If you are not, it could potentially damage your reputation or relationships.
4. Make sure there is clear communication. Fred Paulson may not have been provided with comprehensive onboarding—in other words, he may not have been aware of the company’s culture, policies, existing relationships, etc. All things being equal, Fred was going to favor his people.

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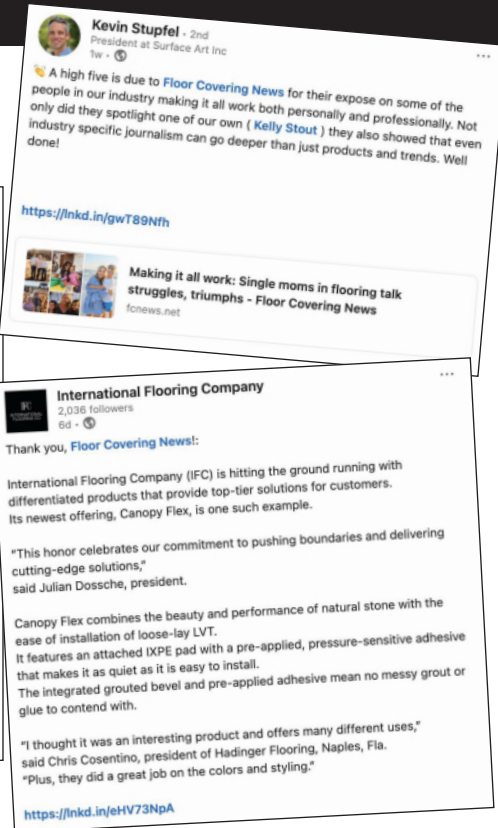
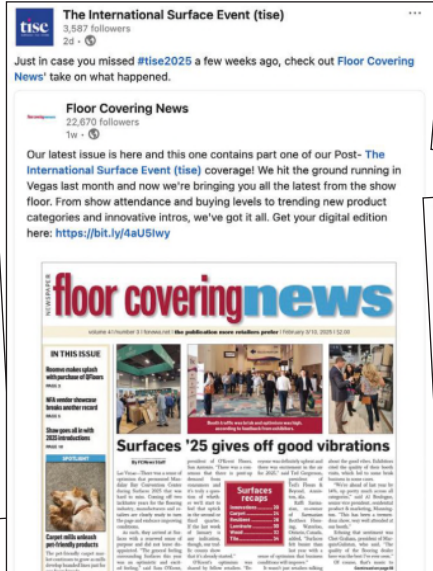
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GETTING SOCIAL WITH fcnews



Tri-County

Continued from page 3

er, retail consultant and regular FCNews columnist, praised the instructors' ability to work with a wide range of students: "They are patient and they provide top-level skills to students of all ages, helping them understand and gain hands-on experience with both installation and customer service," she said. "It takes patience and understanding of each student's background to know how best to approach them. The students

are always willing to help each other grasp the course material, which makes the experience even more engaging."

The students, who come from diverse backgrounds—including veterans, incarcerated juveniles and high school and college students—are enthusiastic about the program. "We were amazed by their eagerness to learn," Farnsworth stated. "In fact, two students even asked if they could work for Eric Lucas [president and CEO of Carpet One Floor and More]."

Course overview

The course covers a wide range of skills, including job interview techniques, job search strategies, customer service and product knowledge. "Each student has a different level of experience, so our instructors have to be flexible in adapting the training to meet their needs," Calandrino explained. "The manuals cover the basics, but instructors often need to adjust their approach to keep every student engaged and ensure they are learning effectively."

One unique feature of this

program is the opportunity for retailers to engage with students throughout the course. This not only helps students understand the work environment but also give employers a firsthand look at the learning process for individuals with little to no experience in the flooring field.

"I've taught a wide range of students—from CEOs to adult learners," Calandrino stated. "The key is understanding how people learn and caring about the outcome. When we designed this course, retailers told me that in addition to floor cov-

ering knowledge and hands-on experience, customer service was one of the most critical aspects of their work. When employees know how to engage with customers and provide great service, it helps prevent many issues. We designed the course with that focus in mind."

The educational program also offers customizable training options for businesses in the flooring industry.

For more information or to design a custom learning program, email Lisbeth Calandrino at Lcalandrino@nycap.rr.com.

OBITUARY

Jerry Gordon Arnold, 87

Jerry Gordon Arnold, one of the three original co-founders of Foam Products Co. (FPC), passed away earlier this month. He was 87.

A native Daltonian, Arnold was born on Nov. 26, 1937, to the late Gordon and Delsie Mae Arnold. He met and later married his beloved wife, Elizabeth, in 1961. Arnold enjoyed spending time with his family, playing tennis and traveling with Elizabeth. "My dad was one of the three founders to start FPC in 1978," said Erik Arnold, current president. "While American made footwear cushioning was how we got our start, he was a pioneer in flooring in one respect: FPC was first to introduce acoustical underlayment for laminate floors as we were the original makers of Pergo Silent Step in the mid-late 90s."

Arnold is survived by his wife, Elizabeth; his children, Ava Wyatt (Tony), Lisa Burton and Erik Arnold (Audra); his cherished grandchildren, Andrew Wyatt, James Wyatt, David Erik Burton, Lisa Cassidy Joy Burton, Christopher Arnold, and Stella Arnold; and his sister, Joann Middleton. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Dalton First United Methodist Church.

mirage

The choice of real wood experts

Hardwood Floors



educating the industry

FCEF extends program to military personnel

BY KAYE WHITENER

FCEF is proud to announce that it is now an approved SkillBridge Training Provider, opening a transformative opportunity for active military personnel, veterans and military dependents. This milestone comes as part of our commitment to recruit and empower highly skilled individuals through the Basic Floor Covering Installation program offered in partnership with approved college programs nationwide.

The Department of Defense's SkillBridge program allows eligible active-duty service members to participate in civilian job training during their final months of service—all while continuing to receive their full military salary. This innovative initiative bridges the gap between military service and civilian careers, ensuring that our nation's finest are well-equipped to transition seamlessly into industries that value their discipline, leadership and technical prowess.

At FCEF, our Basic Floor Covering Installation program is tailored to deliver hands-on, industry-specific training through the public college system. Participants will learn cutting-edge techniques and acquire the practical skills needed to excel in the flooring industry. Through our network of partnering college programs, we are building a robust training pipeline that not only meets the current demands of the industry but also lays the foundation for future innovation and growth.

Our approach is twofold. First, by recruiting active service members before they leave the military, we are tapping into a pool of dedicated, high-caliber talent. Second, by welcoming veterans

and military dependents into our training programs, we are expanding opportunities and enriching our workforce with diverse experiences and perspectives. This strategy is designed to create a win-win scenario for all involved.

FCEF is actively forging partnerships with college programs across the nation. Several alliances are already being secured, with additional college programs expected to be announced in the coming months. These collaborations are key to ensuring that our training remains state-of-the-art and fully aligned with industry needs. In addition to comprehensive training, FCEF

will continue to offer scholarships that cover tuition costs, removing financial barriers

and enabling more service members to take full advantage of this opportunity.

Disclosure: My daughter is an Air Force captain, my two sons-in-law serve in the Army, my nephew is a retired Marine. We know the level of training required to be in the military. Other trades are already benefiting from this program and now the flooring industry will as well.

However, for FCEF to continue expanding and developing these essential programs, our industry must step up to support our efforts. Join us today—whether through a recurring monthly donation of \$100 or an annual one-time contribution—and be a part of a community of industry companies dedicated to building a stronger, brighter future for our industry. Donate today at fcef.org.

For additional details about our SkillBridge training programs or upcoming college partnerships, visit flooryourfuture.com, fcef.org.



Kaye Whitener is executive director of the Floor Covering Education Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting recruitment, training and retention of floor covering installers. For more information, email kwhitener@fcef.org.



RETAILERS REACT



Flooring dealers have dealt with unusual weather this winter, including snow in Florida.

To what extent has the weather impacted your business this year?

The weather heavily impacted the start of 2025. Coming off the holidays we had some heavy snow fall that slowed our traffic. That immediately was followed by two weeks of intense cold that shut down schools, businesses and kept traffic away, so January was a bit slow. During our first warm up the floodgates opened. We have had tremendous traffic the last few weeks, which I think will continue.

—Bob Pireu
Bob and Pete's Floors
Canton, Ohio

We were closed a couple of days due to the historic snowstorm that hit Houston a few weeks ago. On another note, business seems to be starting to gain some strong momentum.

—Gary Touchton
Venetian Blind Carpet One
Houston

Just a couple 'Southern snow days.' We have truly been blessed when it comes to weather. As each season turns, we take the attitude that the safety and welfare of our staff and customers come first; we can concentrate on sales another day.

—Doug Peebles
Myers Flooring
Nashville

In coastal North Carolina, 'snow' and 'accumulation' are not words most here have heard. Just having the winter weather in the forecast brought things to an immediate halt. We truly lost about a week of production and traffic as shipments were impacted; we closed for a day and a half from the snow. Things have rebounded nicely, however, with the return of seasonal temperatures.

—John Bretzlöff
Barefoot Flooring
Castle Hayne, N.C.

We are south of Atlanta and when we were hit with the snow and ice for a couple of days, we could not open. We lost a little open time. Hopefully most of the customers come back.

—Chris Kemp
Kemp's Dalton West Flooring
Newnan, Ga.

CALENDAR

Feb. 27, Noon EST
FCICA Education Webinar: Basic Chemistry of Adhesives
Free for FCICA members, \$39.95 for non-members
Presented by Jeff Johnson, Mapei. Contact: info@fcica.org; 630.672.3702

Feb. 27
NTCA Regional Training
Sessions offer all-day, hands-on instruction for tile installers, focusing on advanced skills with state-of-the-art tools, materials and techniques, Mosaic Tile, Greensboro, N.C.
Contact: Elena Grant, 703.599.8993; elena@tile-assn.com

March 1-4
Fuse Commercial Flooring Alliance
Annual conference, Hyatt Grand Cypress Resort; Orlando
Contact: fusealliance.com
To register: tinyurl.com/mucwwbmf

March 7-8
CFI Residential I or Residential II Carpet Certification
Two-day event tests hands-on skills that demonstrate proper installation techniques, Kimi's CarpetsPlus, Fuquay, Va.
Contact: John McHale, jmchale@cfinstallers.org; 816.231.4646; cfinstallers.org

March 11-14
NWFA Intermediate Sand and Finish + Certification Testing
Three-day, in -person course for those with wood flooring experience, Bona US; Charlotte, N.C.
Contact: education@nwfa.org; 800.422.4556

March 12-15
Abbey Carpet & Floors to Go
Annual convention, Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, Fla.
Contact: Kimberly Payne, kpayne@abbeycarpet.net; 239.948.0900

POINTS OF INTEREST

➤ More than 60% of construction firms feel optimistic about business conditions in 2025. That's according to the 2025 U.S. Houzz State of the Industry study, which gauges sentiment among residential construction and design



businesses. The findings from data reported by more than 1,500 professionals in the Houzz community show more than three in five firms in the construction and design sectors project a positive business outlook (from 60% of architects to 73% of specialty contractors).

➤ Consumer sentiment declined 4.6% to 67.8 in early February, according to preliminary results from the University of Michigan Survey of Consumers. This represents an 11.8% decline year over year. "Consumer sentiment fell for the second straight month, dropping about 5% to reach its lowest reading since July 2024," said Joanne Hsu, Survey of Consumers director. "The decrease was pervasive, with Republicans, Independents and Democrats all posting sentiment declines from January, along with consumers

across age and wealth groups."

➤ The U.S. construction industry added 8,000 jobs in December and roughly 196,000 jobs over the course of 2024. But those numbers are down from November as more states saw losses in construction jobs. Overall, the U.S. economy added 256,000 jobs in December, up from the 212,000 added in November. All states showed job growth except West Virginia, which was flat, and South Dakota, which registered a small drop in overall hiring. The construction sector added a total of 8,000 last month, down from 10,000 in November.

Be Bold.

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textures. Flooring that
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2101 Majestic

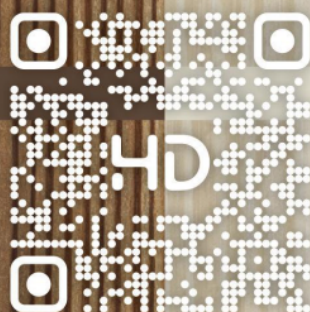
Feel Balanced.

Smooth, clean colors and
a light grain. Flooring that
compliments both classic
and modern decor to
bring serenity home.



2002 Serene

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HIGH-DEF

Haicl seeks to differentiate Shaw brands

National efforts driven through the local retailer is a winning formula

Carolyn Haicl, the new senior vice president of marketing and brands at Shaw Industries, is a brand builder. Her experience as vice president of North America marketing at Electrolux included repositioning the venerable Frigidaire brand, and she was also responsible for marketing and branding products under the Dr. Scholl's umbrella.

Now comes a new challenge: building a brand in an industry where brand recognition at the consumer level is still an opportunity. FCNews publisher Steven Feldman sat down with Haicl at the recent Shaw Flooring Network convention to get her views on the opportunity that lies ahead.



Carolyn Haicl

As someone with a fresh perspective from outside the industry, what goals do you hope to achieve from a brand and marketing standpoint?

For the past 18 months, Shaw has been focused on brand clarity and definition. We have four brands—Shaw Floors, COREtec, Anderson Tuftex and Philadelphia Commercial. We are hyper-focused on what each brand stands for because we recognize effective brands can't be everything to everyone. In some cases, our brand promise is not clear enough, so they are overlapping more than we would like. My goal will be to further define and differentiate our brands.

We are investing more than ever in consumer insights to build brands that deliver what consumers want: high-quality flooring that makes a difference in their everyday lifestyle. Our goal is to exceed consumer expectations and make it easy for them to find the right brand and product for them, and we will accomplish

that through brands that complement each other instead of competing with each other. We just got insights that focused on the home and what people want to create in their living space. So, we are taking a more holistic approach rather than only looking at flooring. Then, of course, we are working to understand how flooring ties into the big picture.

How do you want the world to perceive Anderson Tuftex?

Anderson Tuftex is a luxury, eco-conscious brand. If you want your home to feel like a sanctuary, these gorgeous products are for you. Often, this consumer segment works with interior designers. We will start building more brand awareness and relationships with designers to help our retailers increase their sales with high-end consumers.

How do you want people to view COREtec?

COREtec was innovation from

the start—and we want to keep leaning into that. We know the COREtec consumer wants to showcase that they are accomplished and like to lead in trends. These consumers do a lot of research with purchasing decisions to feel confident in their choice.

Shaw Floors?

Shaw Floors consumers want their home to be a gathering place, with homey and comfortable vibes. They are the parents who host all the neighborhood kids after school and on the weekends. They are practical and want a good value but aren't willing to sacrifice style or performance. Design within reach.

Philadelphia Commercial?

Philadelphia Commercial is a go-to, easy-to-work-with solution. Our vision here is around "work," "gather" and "play." Think about what happens in those spaces. While it's not somebody's home, it's still a place where they're

spending a lot of time—at work or at school. We want to bring to life the vision of whoever's doing the actual purchasing and the environment they want to create with the right products to do so.

What similarities are there in how you approach an appliance brand (Frigidaire) vs. a flooring brand from that lifestyle side?

Shaw Floors focuses on the benefits and innovations that the consumer will clearly see an impact to their day-to-day life and their family. Frigidaire is very similar to Shaw Floors in that way. It is the center of the home, all about the moments you have in your home. They focus not only on the product itself, but what that product enables and the experiences you have with that product. You're making home-cooked meals and gathering around them, that's what matters to the consumer more than any product. In flooring, the same is true, the emotion comes into

play when you think about all the life and memories that happen on that floor, not when you just think about the floor itself.

I'll ask people if they've ever heard of Shaw and they'll say no—because that's every flooring brand. Is that a challenge or an opportunity?

Customers tell us COREtec is one of the only brands consumers come in asking for—that's the power of a strong brand to help drive more business for our retailers and for us. That is our vision for all brands. So, I think it's an opportunity for Shaw but more so for our retailers and us to win together as we build our brands in partnership.

We know approximately 40% of people opt out of the flooring purchase once they start that purchasing journey. They throw up their hands because of the complexity of the process. I think if people understand their local re-

Continued on page 23

Anderson Tuftex synonymous with luxury, sustainability

By Steven Feldman

Anderson Tuftex (AT) debuted new branding in 2025 with a laser-like focus on luxury and sustainability. In illustration, AT is launching the Heirloom Collection, a 10-style line that marks Shaw's return to the residential wool carpet business after 18 years, and Departures, which debuts with five high-performance PET styles. Both collections will be available through an exclusive network of high-end retailers and showcased in an innovative merchandising system tailored to elevate the shopping experience. Retailers can choose from



Anderson Tuftex in 2025 is rolling out a new look, new logo, fonts and color (green).

a wall unit or island modules.

Shaw is stressing simplicity and differentiation with these two new collections. "We have not done wool in almost two decades," said Dakota Aft, product director. "What we looked at was

how do you set yourself apart in this market. And our designers, along with many partners in the industry, suggested we make simplicity the selling feature. Some of our competitors have 200 wool styles. And we know

as an industry that paradox of choice issue where some stores have 1,000 SKUs."

This is a new part of the market for AT and has been in the works for a couple of years. Shaw has struggled with differentiating Anderson Tuftex from its signature Shaw brand as there always was some overlap. "The easy way to do that has been to separate by price point," Aft explained. "But that discounts the consumer's shopping experience. She is coming in with a budget in most situations."

The direction was driven by consumer data that revealed 25% of the market is inhabited by eco-conscious consumers.

The focus on sustainability and luxury differentiates AT from Shaw, which targets the practical consumer. "We found the luxury consumer and eco-conscious consumer are the ones who will be pursuing products like Anderson Tuftex," Aft said. "They're the ones most likely to spend more on their projects. And they're also most likely to partner with a residential interior designer. That really changes the way people shop for floor covering."

The Heirloom and Departures collections illustrate this, but the developmental challenge, Aft said, was to make it somewhat limited but comprehensive.

Continued on page 23

HYBRID

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Several up-and-coming brands chose Surfaces as the primary venue to showcase their products. Pictured, from left: Allinwood, IFC, Titan Surfaces and Onn Surfaces.

Emerging brands making waves

By Reginald Tucker

ALLINWOOD

Product specialties: Wood floors, panels

Points of distinction: Allinwood may be a relatively "new" face at shows like Surfaces, but the company has 20-plus years of experience in the European market, having already sold upwards of 1 million square feet of artisan-crafted, eco-conscious premium wood flooring and wooden wall panels. The company's stated mission is to bring the timeless elegance and natural beauty of European hardwood to the U.S.

Mike Luczak, director of business development, said the company is looking to partner with flooring retailers and contractors to drive awareness of the brand and products in America. "We've seen a lot of interest from potential retailers and distributors who stopped by the booth [here at the show]," he told *FCNews*. "We're getting our name out there."

ONN SURFACES

Product specialties: Wood, laminate, WPC, SPC, glue-down planks

Points of distinction: It may be a brand spanking new name in the burgeoning hard surface arena, but it's backed by experienced leadership and a supplier network with a proven track record of producing high-quality rigid core, engineered hardwood and waterproof laminate flooring.

That best describes the upstart Onn Surfaces brand, which officially launched last fall by industry veteran Paul Dominie, who brings 36 years of flooring industry experience across retail, wholesale and manufacturing. "We're combining vast industry experience and a hands-on approach to make this a successful venture," he said.

While Onn Surfaces intends to compete hard in the engineered wood, resilient and laminate categories, it intends to do so by focusing on differentiation, diversification and innovation—not duplication. "These products are crafted by experts who understand retail," Dominie stated. "We're curating everything that we want into it, very carefully, to ensure success at the retail level is high."

While Onn Surfaces does not own manufacturing operations, it works closely with its supplier partners in China, Vietnam and Cambodia to ensure products meet and/or exceed high-quality standards. "We hand-picked these manufacturers and we hand-pick our products," Dominie said.

(Part one of a series)

They might not be household names, but that doesn't mean they don't have the potential to make a greater mark on the U.S. market in the near future. For the time being, though, these companies are looking to make some noise in the market by participating in major trade shows during the winter market season. "Surfaces has long been the preferred show for the industry's major established suppliers, but newer, emerging brands are also utilizing Surfaces as a platform to generate greater awareness of their products and services," said Amie Gilmore, show director.

Following is an overview of some of the emerging brands seen at Surfaces.

INTERNATIONAL FLOORING CO. (IFC)

Product specialties: WPC, SPC

Points of distinction: International Flooring Company (IFC) is a two-year-old resilient flooring supplier spearheaded by Julian Dossche, president/CEO; William Dossche, executive vice president; and Piet Dossche—the father of WPC—who serves as chairman of the board. And while Piet brings with him decades of experience in product development, distribution, sourcing and innovation, his sons are providing a fresh perspective—and impressive credentials of their own to bear.

That fresh perspective is what will drive the flooring supplier's go-to-market strategy, which will feature a technology-forward, consumer-centric approach. "When we started this company, we looked at how to differentiate ourselves," Julian Dossche told *FCNews*. "And it's not always product that's going to get you there. It's also about how you go to market; how you empower your customer base—and for us, that's the specialty retailer. And we continue to see in this space that digitization of the experience is paramount."

TITAN SURFACES

Product specialties: Laminate, SPC, WPC

Points of distinction: Titan Surfaces may only be two years old, but its marketing and product development team has decades of combined experience. What's more, while the company does provide SPC and even laminate flooring, it's focus, from the beginning, has been WPC flooring.

"We're just two years old, so the issues [with SPC] were already coming to the surface prior to that," explained Kelly Williams, president. "And to be honest, the past eight years, where many of us had worked together, we were also in WPC. So our confidence level in WPC was always there. We're a WPC house—probably 75% WPC. As a company, we lead with WPC when we walk in the door."

At Surfaces the company showcased its vast assortment of WPC products, including its new 5 X 60, 12mm, 30-mil line that features a painted bevel and realistic EIR texture.

FLOORING OS

Product specialties: Flooring-specific, cloud-based software

Points of distinction: In an industry steeped in tradition and resistant to change, FlooringOS has emerged as a bold innovator, shaking up flooring business management with a cloud-based software solution that prioritizes user experience, modern technology and customer-first principles. Unlike some existing software products, FlooringOS was designed with input from flooring dealers and incorporates best practices and real-world solutions to common pain points.

A unique aspect of FlooringOS is its native, cloud-based platform, which, according to Justin Wirpel, CEO, is built to be intuitive and easily updated. "When you have an antique software and a user says, 'Hey, we need this feature,' that company will listen but not deliver. One of the reasons the resistance is so high is because it's old software. We can do that in two weeks."

INFINITY FLOOR

Product specialties: SPC, WPC, LVT/P, sundries

Points of distinction: Infinity Floor offers a broad selection of flooring products tailored for both residential and commercial projects. From versatile styles to durable materials, its portfolio ensures the ideal solution for any space or application. Moreover, Infinity strives to help its partners stand out in a competitive field and attract more consumers via exclusive, high-quality offerings that give dealers a distinct edge. Whether large or small, all dealers can take advantage of private-labeling options for samples, adding a personalized touch that enhances brand identity and sets them apart.

The company's Surfaces debut was the first step in its objective to introduce the brand to retailers and convey its competitive strengths to the market. "We made new friends, connected with old ones and showed up in style as the new kids on the block," said Tyler Geren, Infinity Floor CEO. "Our goal is to be a steady partner, delivering quality retailers can count on and solutions that help their business move forward."

ULTIMATE FLOORS

Product specialties: Waterproof laminate, SPC, glue-down LVT

Points of distinction: In 2019 Ultimate Floors operated from a single, 30,000-square-foot distribution center in Southern California, serving 65-80 retailers exclusively in the region. In the past five years, Ultimate Floors has invested about \$3 million into the company and has expanded to three distribution centers: two in Los Angeles totaling 80,000 square feet and a 35,000-square-foot facility in Houston, Texas. This footprint enables the company to serve over 500 retail locations across 13 states, according to Ron Dardashti, managing partner.

So what's the secret sauce? For starters, its familial atmosphere and focus on people first. "Every person at Ultimate, whether it be a delivery driver, upper management or sales rep, cares deeply for the company because we foster a family culture—everyone feels heard and some of the changes that have provided the highest ROI have come from our team," Dardashti said.

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RAW MATERIALS

100%**

RECYCLABLE
FLOORINGS

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*90% refers to the total product weight of the raw materials: Bio Circular, Balanced PVC, Recycled Plasticizer (DOTP), Eco-Friendly Filler
 **Recyclable refers to NOX flooring that is recycled during production, and can be fully recycled at our facility post installation

installments

Pro adhesive tips help installers get a grip

Choosing to spray, roll or trowel an adhesive depends on many factors, including flooring type, manufacturer's guidelines and conditions on the jobsite. When installers properly match the application method with these factors, they can improve installation efficiency and dependably deliver durable, attractive flooring. Here's a quick review of adhesive application methods along with tips from INSTALL experts.



DAVID
GROSS

drying. This method can dramatically increase productivity on large scale jobs.

Misstep: Inconsistent coverage can create weak spots in the bond.

Pro tip: Use a short-nap roller and apply consistent pressure. Avoid overworking the adhesive and always follow the manufacturer's recommended open time to ensure optimal tack before installing the flooring.

Troweling

This is the most precise method for applying adhesive because it allows installers to control exactly how much adhesive is used and where it goes. The notched trowel is a metering tool, creating the correct spread rate. The choice of a U- or V-notched trowel is determined by the material being installed and the porosity of the substrate. Troweling is especially useful in smaller areas with obstacles or anywhere rolling or spraying would be inefficient or difficult to control.

Misstep: Using the wrong trowel notch can lead to inadequate or excessive adhesive application. Too little adhesive may cause adhesion failure, while too much can create excess moisture under the flooring.

Pro tip: Always refer to the flooring manufacturer's specifications for proper trowel notch size. A quick double-check before starting can prevent costly installation failures.

By understanding the nuances of each of these application methods and following best practices, installers can get a better grip on any adhesive application.

Spraying

This method entails using a pressurized canister or aerosol spray to apply a fine mist over the substrate. This method significantly speeds up application time, reduces material waste and allows quick drying. The installer grids out the floor to match the manufacturer's recommended spread rate and systematically sprays the adhesive within each marked area to achieve even coverage. Since overspray can occur near walls and doorways, installers

By understanding the nuances of each of these methods, installers can get a grip on any adhesive application.

place protective barriers along vertical surfaces to keep them clean.

Misstep: Failing to remove all dust/debris before application.

Pro tip: Before spraying, do a final walk-through to check for dust, debris or imperfections. If possible, use a vacuum and tack cloth to ensure the substrate is completely clean.

Rolling

This works best with pressure-sensitive products like heavy carpets that don't require high peel strength but need strong shear resistance. Using a short-nap roller, installers roll a thin, even layer of adhesive across the substrate. Once it reaches the proper dry but tacky state, often within a very short time, it's ready for flooring installation. Rolling allows for efficient application and rapid

David Gross is the executive director of INSTALL. He previously served as a full-time instructor at the Northeast Carpenter's Apprenticeship Training Fund in Hammonton, N.J., and he has also sat on the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America Local 251 executive board.



Classen's facility in Baruth, Germany, features fully automated laminate lines.

Private label

Continued from page 1

creating a competitive edge in the market. These partnerships enable businesses to provide customized, high-margin solutions tailored to their customers' needs. In an industry where innovation and exclusivity drive success, private-label flooring isn't just an option—it's a game changer.

Differentiating your brand

There are a variety of benefits for distributors and retailers who onboard private-label programs with reputable OEM manufacturers, including access to market-specific product designs and exclusive branding opportunities. This exclusivity is a boon for those looking to differentiate in their markets.

"OEM/private labeling allows our customers the ability to offer something different from everyone else," explained Yuni Choi, vice president, Pelican Creations. "Our customers are the retailers and distributors who sell directly to the end user, so they become the experts in terms of what people are looking for—they get direct feedback.

Private labeling affords them the opportunity to assess the market and build a collection of products they deem are in demand. I think the idea of customization is one of the biggest benefits [of OEM/private labeling]."

Other OEM manufacturers agree that customization is key. "One main advantage is exclusivity—private-label customers can create unique colors, patterns and finishes that differentiate their brand for both product design and customized brand packaging," noted Volkan Yazici, president, Europine. "It also allows them to control pricing and positioning, giving them an edge over competitors selling generic products."

Pacific Direct, too, prioritizes this kind of customization. "We would start off with a proof of concept and create unique product offerings competitors don't have access to within their target market," explained Fernando Ornelas, general manager. "Instead of investing in developing new flooring products, businesses can leverage our OEM's ready-made solutions."

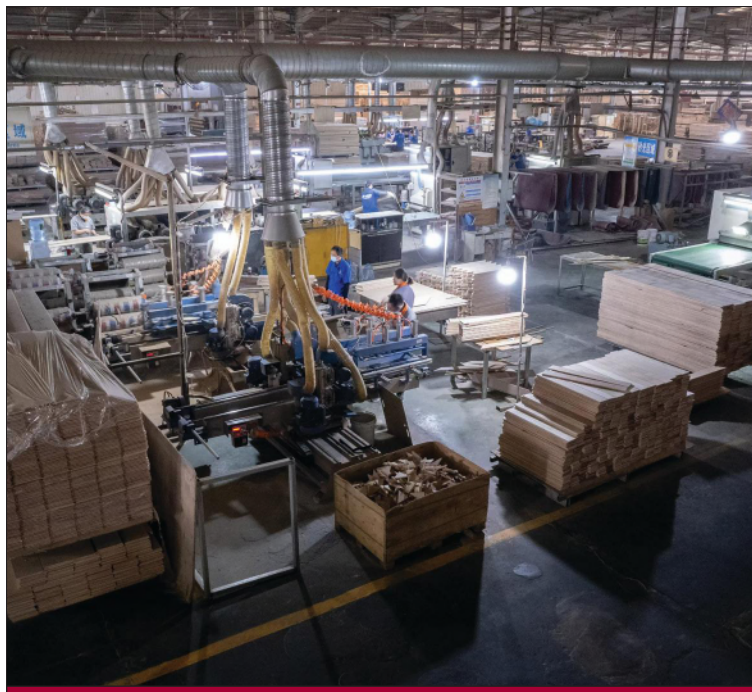
Biyork, a family-owned company, is looking to grow its presence in the U.S. and offers all the

benefits of a 30-year veteran in OEM manufacturing—including a focus on customization. "We've got over 500 million square feet of capacity, so we're global in how we can get our products to market and in various markets," said Peter Brandis, executive vice president. "Being a manufacturer, we have a tremendous amount of flexibility in what we can create to meet a specific dealer's need. For dealers that have a need or see a gap in the market, we can fill that void. If you want to create a product that is just your own, we have the capabilities, the resources and the experience to help you do that. I've seen customizations debating the colors on the box. It's all the little things that we're willing to do to make sure that it suits the unique needs of that market and our customer."

Another major benefit is the ability to control branding. "It's all about leveraging your resources," Ornelas noted. "Retailers selling flooring products under their own brand name will increase brand identity and differentiation."

Europine's Yazici agreed, noting, "OEM and private-label programs offer a great opportunity for businesses looking to establish their own brand without the high costs and complexities of manufacturing. By partnering with an experienced manufacturer like Europine – Ado Floor, companies can bring high-quality, custom-designed flooring products to market faster and more efficiently."

Classen Group, too, provides unique branding opportunities for its clients. "We provide OEM and private-label solutions tailored for industrial customers requiring high-volume, high-quality flooring products," said Céline Quervel, managing director sales and marketing. "Our partnerships enable clients to bring their own brand to market with customized product solutions, exclusive designs and a stable, scalable supply chain."



Pacific Direct offers exclusive, customized product offerings that it develops in facilities like its Malaysian plant.

Supply chain consistency

One of the biggest challenges in today's market is an unstable supply chain. This is an area where OEM manufacturers can help ease the burden. Europine's Yazici put it simply: "Supply chain issues have become a major challenge for the flooring industry, from raw material shortages to unpredictable shipping delays. Having a reliable and experienced manufacturing partner is more important than ever."

According to Yazici, because Europine controls key aspects of production—including in-house decor film printing—Yazici said it is less dependent on third-party suppliers, allowing it to maintain a more stable and predictable supply chain. Additionally, Europine's operations are built to meet high-volume demands with strict quality and logistics standards. "We also help our partners optimize inventory planning, ensuring they have the right products when they need them," he said. "Instead of scrambling for stock, they can rely on a consistent flow of materials, reducing disruptions and lost sales."

Dewevai Buchanan, CEO Americas, Nature Flooring, said simplified logistics and quality control are just two of the benefits OEM suppliers can provide. "By consolidating production

with an OEM, importers can streamline their supply chain and reduce logistics costs. This includes savings on shipping, warehousing and handling. High-quality products also reduce the likelihood of returns, warranty claims and reputational damage."

In an era of global supply chain challenges, Classen Group offers a fully automated, highly efficient manufacturing and logistics solution. "From the moment raw materials arrive at our facilities to the final container loading for shipment, the entire process is automated—without the use of a single manual forklift," Quervel said. "This level of automation ensures seamless production, minimizes delays and optimizes material flow, allowing for maximum efficiency and reliability. Furthermore, our extensive experience in overseas business means we understand the complexities of international logistics, documentation and compliance. Whether shipping to North America or other global markets, we have the expertise to manage high-volume exports efficiently."

For Wellmade, it's all about providing domestic supply. "Wellmade's U.S. production offers a host of advantages over imports," said Dick Quinlan,

senior VP sales and marketing. "For example, with 30-day lead times our customers enjoy lower inventory requirements, reducing capital costs by at least 50%. Domestic production also eliminates the risk of out-of-stock products, and unstable pricing caused by tariffs, rising freight costs and global conflict. Customers can come to our Cartersville, Ga., plant to select new design options, specify structures and build a unique private-label program, all without leaving U.S. soil. This is a tremendous advantage over imports, eliminating the need for expensive and extended overseas travel."

Bringing the knowledge to you

For those looking to grow via a private-label program, the logistics can seem like a lot to swallow. So, OEM manufacturers say to lean on them—it's what they're there for.

"OEMs typically have in-depth knowledge and experience in the manufacturing specific types of products," Nature Flooring's Buchanan explained. "This specialization means they are well-versed in the best practices, materials and techniques required to produce high-quality items. Experienced OEMs have also encountered and overcome various challenges in the past.



Wellmade's capabilities allow customers to select new designs, specify structures and build a unique private-label program.

This experience equips them with the ability to quickly and effectively address any issues that may arise during the production process, minimizing delays and disruptions."

Pelican Creation's Yuni, agreed, noting, "I mentioned that our customers become the experts in the market; however, we are the product experts and the first to know of new product or technological releases—including our own 'Comfort Core Technology' that we developed with Unilin Technologies. Our customers tend to know what they want; we are there to guide our customers in their decision making based on the cumulative feedback that we receive from

our network of customers. It truly is a synergistic relationship."

Classen's Quervel agreed, adding, "Our customers benefit from extensive knowledge of regulatory requirements, market trends and industrial-scale manufacturing processes. Additionally, we offer engineering expertise to translate unique product ideas into industrial production standards, ensuring both efficiency and superior quality."

At the end of the day, it's all about forming the right partnerships. "Working with the right OEM partner is about more than just securing products—it's about gaining a competitive edge in the industry," Europine's Yazici said.

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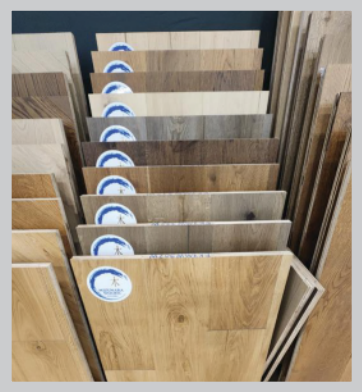
By Reginald Tucker

If there's any sector of the market that has proven to be "inflation-proof" over the past several years, it's the high-end realm. That's based on both sales activity from the major suppliers as well as anecdotal evidence from the retail community. The thought process being: consumers in the market for aspirational products like hardwood (as well as tile) are going to settle for nothing less if that's what their hearts desire.

Following is an overview of some of today's standout high-end hardwood flooring products—broadly defined as those that retail in the \$11-\$25 per-square-foot-range.

AHF PRODUCTS

Product: Mizunara Collection
Description: LM Flooring, AHF Products' specialty brand, adds its first collection of Japanese white oak products to the mix. Dubbed the Mizunara Woods collection, the extremely durable, clean-grade lumber comes out of the mountains of Kyoto in Japan on a volcano. The product surpasses oak on the Janka scale.
MSRP: \$14-\$16 per sq ft.



ANDERSON TUFTEX

Product: European ash
Description: The new European ash collection from Anderson Tuftex boasts clean lines, natural graining and grounding color transitions, creating a serene addition to any space. Available in both a 7 1/2-inch-wide format and in 4.72-inch-wide herringbone planks.
MSRP: \$13.99-\$14.89 per sq ft.



HF DESIGN

Product: Azur Grande
Description: Azur Grande makes a bold statement with 10 1/4-inch, ultra-wide European oak planks and curated selection of contemporary styles. Each 5/8-inch-thick plank is carefully thermal treated to create a unique color and finished with a brushed texture and high-performance finish.
MSRP: \$12-\$14



MANNINGTON

Product: Sanctuary
Description: Sanctuary, part of Mannington's Latitude collection, boasts a 9 1/2-inch width in lengths up to 7 feet on a 5/8-inch-thick platform. The product comes in white oak and features a sawn face, a wire-brushed surface texture and micro bevel.
MSRP: \$11 per square foot



MSI

Product: Herringbone Engineered Hardwood
Description: MSI's W Luxury Hardwood Flooring introduces the Herringbone Collection. Built for easy installation in a classic herringbone pattern, this genuine hardwood flooring adds refinement to any room.
MSRP: Contact rep for pricing

MIRAGE

Product: Oak First Kiss Smooth
Description: Part of the new Lively Collection, this product boasts earthy mid-toned brown and delicate gray undertones. Available in Character and Exclusive grades with a Smooth texture and the new DurAlive finish. A variety of widths and formats available.
MSRP: Contact your sales rep



MOHAWK

Product: Belleluxe Waterproof Wood by Karastan
Description: The Belleluxe collection touts inspired designs, flawless craftsmanship and long-lasting materials. The company sources select European oak and maples trees for raw materials that reflect the brand's high-end reputation. The product includes Wet Protect.
MSRP: \$13-\$15 per sq. ft.



URBANFLOOR

Product: Timber top Signature series
Description: Urbanfloor's new Signature line features one of the widest formats available on the market at 15-plus inches wide x 13 feet long. A 2025 Best of Surfaces winner, the product creates a sense of openness and drama.
MSRP: \$18-\$22 per sq. ft.



CALI

Product: Cellar
Description: The Cellar collection showcases exquisite European white oak in a curated A/B grade for a clean, refined look. With random lengths up to 82 1/2 inches x 7 1/8 inches wide, this engineered flooring embodies the craftsmanship and natural beauty of fine winemaking.
MSRP: \$11.49 per sq ft.



HALLMARK

Product: The Design Emporium Collection
Description: This eye-catching line features dry-sawn wear layers and precision milling for perfect pattern installations including herringbone, basket weave and more. Showcasing top-performing colors from Hallmark's Serenity and True lines, this collection blends timeless beauty with durability for endless design possibilities.
MSRP: \$12 per square foot

MERCIER

Product: Source collection
Description: Mercier's Source Collection comes in a 3/4-inch-thick x 8 1/8-inch-wide format with a 4mm sawn face veneer. Colors in the Source Collection reflect warm brown and caramel tones and are protected with either the Mercier Generations finish or the high-performance Generations Intact 2500 coating.
MSRP: \$13.50-\$16 per sq. ft.



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ARTIFICIAL TURF • HARDSCAPING • QUARTZ & NATURAL STONE COUNTERTOPS

Latest intros are dressed to impress

By Reginald Tucker

(Second of two parts)

LAS VEGAS—Hardwood manufacturers across the spectrum rolled out new wood collections across a variety of styles, formats and colors at Surfaces (FCNews, Feb. 3/10). It's all about demonstrating why hardwood is still the most aspirational flooring product available today.

Following are additional wood flooring products that turned heads at the show.

Cali

Cali continues to leverage its reputation as a lifestyle brand with the rollout of new wood products that key in on attributes today's consumers are looking for. The latest addition to that portfolio is Varietals, a collection the company calls its "purest expression of natural hardwood elegance." In the world of winemaking, a varietal is a wine crafted from a single grape variety and named

for that grape type. Inspired by this tradition, Cali's Varietals flooring collection celebrates the unique character of a diverse range of wood species, presenting ash, acacia, hickory and maple exactly as nature intended. Planks are random length, reaching up to 74 ¹³/₁₆ inches long x 7 ¹/₂ inches wide x ¹/₂-inch thick with a 2mm-thick hardwood veneer bonded to a sustainable acacia core.

Hallmark

When Hallmark launched its award-winning Serenity collection roughly two years ago, it knew it had a product that resonated not only with retailers and distributors, but also the broader design community. The product offered end users exactly what they were looking for—hardwood visuals with clean, clear characteristics in the warmer brown tones that continue to trend well.

At Surfaces this year, Hallmark unveiled the Design Emporium collection, an offering of herringbone patterns designed to enhance those longer, wider Serenity planks that consumers might already have in their home.

"We've had great success with Serenity, and the Design Emporium collection builds on that as a coordinating visual," said Mark Casper, vice president of sales and marketing. "It's a more traditional herringbone size in a range of colors that you're seeing in furniture stores, cabinetry, etc. And when you put it next to the Serenity rack, it really opens up

the design possibilities. More importantly, it positions the specialty retailer as the expert on design trends because it reinforces what consumers are seeing when they're researching their design projects."

Kährs

Scandinavian style and innovation was on full display at the Kährs space, where the company showcased its updated Life Authentic collection of engineered hybrid wood flooring. Originally launched in 2021, the enhanced line of 3-ply flooring features a real 0.6mm wood veneer bonded to an HDF core and real wood backing layer for a total thickness of 10mm.

"We've had a couple of different iterations over the past 20-plus years," said Renee Tester, marketing director, citing classics like its Linnea product that gained notoriety more than two decades ago. "Then we launched Life and now Life Authentic. With this product, we've changed the finishing and we've also added wire brushing to it to make it look more authentic. It's still a real wood product, but it's great for multifamily and those type of installations or even the residential consumers who wants a little bit more cost-conscious product. It's still going to fit all of those expectations that Kährs delivers."

Life Authentic, which is made in Europe, debuts in seven trendy colors that span the spectrum from natural tones to warm brown hues.

Stanton Design

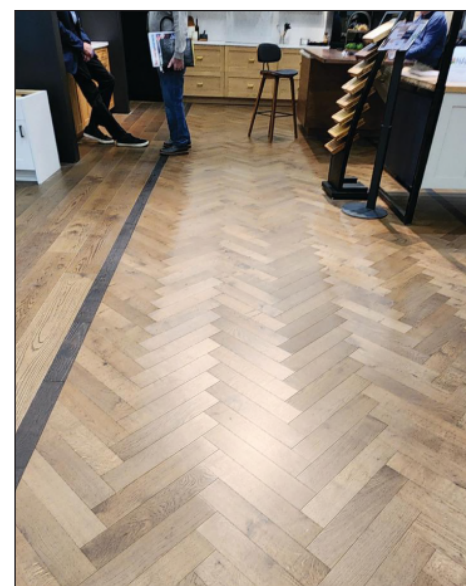
The brand that was synonymous with high-end, high-style broadloom and rug products is expanding its portfolio to include today's popular hard surface categories. First it was rigid core, followed last year by laminate. Now it's adding hardwood to the mix.

"We're entering the premium hardwood category, something that's new for Stanton," said Jamann Stepp, senior vice president, hard surfaces. "For 44-plus years we've been the leader in the soft surface category of luxury, high-end decorative carpets, and now we're emulating that same feel in our hardwood program."

The collection includes a 36-SKU offering of prime-grade options in both wide and narrow widths.

Tarkett Home

Tarkett Home is entering the engineered hardwood space with L'Artisan, a collection comprising 14 hardwood SKUs that in-



Hallmark's new Design Emporium line was created to coordinate with its Serenity collection.

clude four trending herringbone patterns. But rather than going wide and long like most suppliers, Tarkett is zigging while most companies are zagging. Specifically, it is taking more of a minimalist approach by offering narrower, 3-inch planks.

"You see a lot of longer and wider planks out in the market," said Lauren Schnakenberg, senior director of marketing and design. "We wanted to go back to a more classic, traditional look." The narrow width makes it easier to design, Schnakenberg said, "and everybody appreciates the option of the narrow width."



Stanton Design's Jamann Stepp and Natalie Sheinfeld showcase the company's new wood line.

WECORK leaves no stone unturned

LAS VEGAS—New products, new branding, new tech. Those were the main highlights WECORK showcased at its booth space during the Surfaces show last month.

First up, the company showcased new additions to Serenity, its fade-resistant cork flooring line comprising natural cork, wood and tile visuals. "We've had Serenity for a long time, but we've added red oak," said Tina Crossland, president and CEO. "It's a digital print onto a cork substrate and it has a commercial-grade coating with an AC5 rating. So this material can compete with a laminate—probably not the same price point [MSRP is approximately \$10 per square foot], but it's very durable. We can see it going in multifamily settings such as apartments as well as retail and commercial—everywhere, basically."

With cork being a wood-based product (it's repeatedly culled from the bark of a cork tree that's never cut down), the product scores green points

with consumers. "When you're thinking of sustainability, you're looking at the healthiness of cork and the fact that it's a natural product that's biodegradable," Crossland explained. "It's not going to be sitting in the landfills for thousands of years. Families are becoming more conscientious about the materials they're buying, and so we're seeing a lot more examples of people putting cork in their homes."

On the tech side, WECORK unveiled a revamped website, powered by Roomvo. Enhancements include dynamic product filtering, visualization tools and a store locator. All of which have helped specifications and sales, according to Chad Crossland, director of marketing, with more and more consumers using the visualizer tool when contemplating cork purchases.

"About halfway

through last year we signed up with Roomvo, and since then we've had dealers continually add our visualizer to their site," he said. "Some of them didn't have the site and visualizer at all, and some of them who already had it have just added us in. So we've seen a continual kind of snowball where more and more are dealers doing that. That's been exciting to see their engagement on their sites going up. Our digital footprint is expanding, and that's exciting."



Tina & Chad Crossland

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Segment evolves to meet customer needs

By Megan Salzano-Birch

(Second of two parts)

LAS VEGAS—Resilient suppliers touted a bevy of new innovations at the 2025 International Surfaces Event (TISE), including thicker, performance-driven SPC, sustainable rigid core and even collections based wholly around design style. No matter the construction, this year's resilient suppliers came to play (and steal market share to boot).

Thicker SPC

SPC returned to TISE in a big way—literally. Suppliers who launched new SPC products did so with thicker constructions in response to the black eye thin SPC has given the category overall. Failures in the field spurred some suppliers to tout beefier, performance-driven lines in an effort to assuage the minds of those who may have been burned by shoddy imitations.

MSI, for example, moved into step-up products across categories, which included SPC. At the show, the company unveiled its new Studio collection. The line is MSI's thickest LVT launch yet at 9mm (7mm + 2mm IXPE pad) with a 30-mil wear layer. The collection features two lines: Studio and Studio XL. Studio features standard extra-wide 9 x 48 planks while XL Studio features elongated 9 x 60 planks.

"It's not that SPCs were the issue, it's that entry-level spec that's causing that stigma," explained Jason Andrews, MSI's director of sales/national marketing, resilient/tile. "So, we're going with a better-quality product."

For Europine, the focus on thicker, performance SPC was always the goal. "For the last five years the market was asking us to produce 3mm to 3.5mm product, and we historically refused to do that because we never believed in the material," said Volkan Yazici, president. "So now the market is shifting to thicker product, and we are saying, 'We told you so.'"

To that point, Europine showcased Privé at TISE 2025. Privé is a 9 x 60 format with white painted bevels and EIR technology and a low gloss level.

Choice Flooring, sister brand to Healthier Choice, a sundries company, has a full hard surface lineup, which includes resilient and hardwood flooring. Choice has been in resilient flooring since 2018 and in the last two years has overhauled the entire



hard surface lineup. "Everybody and their brother's got similar products, but we've really tried to focus on the styling and design aspect of it and staying true to what our customers are asking for," said Andy Stafford, vice president, marketing and product development.

That revamp includes the launch of 29 new products for 2025. Within that broad assortment is a new SPC line called Sonoma Valley, a 5mm product with a 20-mil wear layer and a 7-inch plank.

Infinity Floors kicked off its launch at the show, and while the company is mere months old it boasts vast experience in its management and product development team. To that point, everything at the show was new in terms of product but one unique approach was the company's focus on SPC with matching glue-down products—and its "infinite" residential warranty.

"There's a lot of need for glue down," said Tyler Geren, CEO. "So yeah, we're still an SPC supplier but a lot of our SPCs have a matching glue-down option. And on top of that we have EIR glue downs—you don't see a whole lot of EIR glue-down products. It's all about quality and customer service for us."

At the show, the company showcased Sonique—just one of its SPC products—a 7mm, 20-mil, wide-plank product with an ABA core for strength and dimensional stability. What's more, the products are GreenGuard Gold and FloorScore certified with EPDs available.

BHW unveiled its new Summit collection at the show. "Summit is a hybrid product that takes the best of WPC and combines the best of SPC, but it gets rid of

the worst of WPC and the worst of SPC," explained Jason Grant, vice president. "It's 10% more dense than WPC and 30% less dense than SPC. That allows for greater flexibility and less cracking over time when you have subfloor inconsistencies. It's nearly 30% more heat stable than WPC and 50% more wear resistant than SPC. Going forward, that's the platform we're going to use for the products."

surface and subfloor waterproof warranty.

SolidTech R features a stone cycled core, utilizing 100% recycled single-use plastic. In fact, in collaboration with Plastic Bank, each square foot of the product contains up to the equivalent of 20 reclaimed bottles. The product also includes Mohawk's new All Pet Gold, an enhanced stain and scratch protection, and WetProtect Gold, which touts such



Sticking with sustainability

Another trend at the show was the continued focus on sustainability and eco-conscious design.

Mohawk, for example, showcased two heavy hitters in the resilient category: PureTech and SolidTech R. PureTech is a PVC-free vinyl flooring made from recycled and renewable materials. It is made with 70% total recycled content with an organic core that contains 80% renewable, plant-based material. PureTech also features the technologies Mohawk's retail partners have come to expect including WetProtect, offering a lifetime

advanced waterproof features that Mohawk is backing it with a flood-proof warranty.

Nox, too, is known for its innovation in sustainable design. This year the company put forth new goals in carbon reduction. "We're trying to get to a point where we have a carbon reduction number that's feasible," explained David Thoresen, senior vice president, product and innovation, business development. "Now we're putting a number to our carbon reduction and that number is 50%. And we'll meet that goal by this summer."

Nox took home the Best of

Surfaces award in Sustainability for its EMT core and the carbon reduction it's achieved.

Inhaus' Ceramin technology is a 100% recyclable non-PVC floor made exclusively in Germany. "It's made with 25% post-consumer recycled material and itself is recycled in North America as well," explained Derek Welbourn, CEO. "By end of life, it can be recycled here and made into feedstock for other polypropylene applications. But over and above the recyclability, the thing is it's 100% digital and it's finished with a lacquer surface, so what you get is incredibly good visuals."

Tarkett Home unveiled ReNue, a non-PVC, 9mm-thick hybrid—the star of the show for Tarkett Home on the resilient side. ReNue is 100% recyclable and made in the USA. "The sustainability feature is what has resonated with retailers," said Katie Szabo, senior product manager. ReNue will be available in April.

Design forward

Performance and sustainability are not the only hot topics of the day. Style and design have always been at the forefront for resilient suppliers and this year was no different.

Engineered Floors, for example, launched what it called the "strongest and biggest" launch for hard surface, all branded under the PureGrain banner. PureGrain High-Def is an American-made premium line of digital luxury vinyl flooring (DLVT) featuring striking visuals, enhanced durability and innovative PawPrint protection. The line also includes: PureGrain Renew: its most sustainable flooring option; PureGrain Comfort: warm, quiet and soft underfoot; PureGrain Endure: ideal for high-traffic areas; and PureGrain Flex: engineered for durability at any budget.

When it comes to unique design, you'd be hard pressed to find anything as eye catching as Forbo's Cinch Loc Seal, a line of Marmoleum flooring in a variety of colorways not often found in flooring. "If you look at the colors available in Marmoleum Cinch Loc Seal, you're not finding that anywhere else," said Tim Donahue, residential national sales manager. "So the ability to mix and match colors like these, either in the square or in a plank, that, to me, gives this flexibility that you don't get in a traditional LVT click product."

Outside of dynamic styling, realism made itself known at



Mohawk showed off its focus on sustainability at TISE.

this year's show. Mannington, for example, touted its "Meaningful Realism" campaign, which focused on several aspects in order to achieve a true-to-nature aesthetic. "The idea behind this launch was to elevate the visual and focus in on the areas of the aesthetics that we know are valuable for the consumers," said John Hammel, senior director, residential hard surface.

In order to achieve its goal the company showcased its True Detail, which eliminated repetition in its decors to get closer to the natural look of wood. It's Nature-Form Glaze technology provides a dual gloss for tile looks that provides depth and texture and

a tactile feel. The company also continued on its "Bevolution" with the launch of Sculpted Edge, a new bevel technology that provides a sophisticated look with a soft, smooth edge.

Wellmade also came to the show with a new twist on the classic bevel. The company unveiled what it's calling True Bevel, which aims to take realism to the next level. "The painted bevels are OK," said Richard Quinlan, senior VP of sales and marketing. "They look good, but they don't look exactly like a wood floor, whereas the bevel that we're putting on our new product does."

A unique concept that was

unveiled at the show was "shop by design," which provides the end-consumer with the option to point to her style and then choose products that fit that style.

"As a design authority in the LVT space, we wanted to say, yes, we have the best designs and these are the inspiration stories behind them," explained Julie Thomas, retail channel manager, Karndean. "Consumers respond to that very well. But we wanted to go one step deeper and say, this is why we came out with this SKU at this time."

Enter Karndean Aesthetics. Karndean curated collections of existing colors as well as its 25 new colors into three "stories" for RSAs to promote: Prana, In Control and Mix + Max.

Novalis, too, unveiled a shop by design concept that touted new product introductions meant to ease the shopping journey. "Sustainability is one of our cornerstones, but so is design and innovation," explained Kimberly Hill, vice president, product and marketing. "Our whole idea was to: a) design for the whole home to make it very easy for her to combine products that look good together; B) highlight those macro trends that we're already researching; and c) bring it all together on a silver platter to hand over to our customers."

Merchandising made easy

New display systems and customization were two touch points at this year's show. Raskin, for example, unveiled its re-branding initiative, complete with a revamped display system designed to attract today's consumer.

The Raskin's display system categorizes its 60 products into three units: SPC (True Grain and Icon), PVC-free (Stone + Wood and Woodtex) and loose lay (Elevations). "Our intention is to create a showroom within a showroom," said Gabrielle Raskin, director of business development. "A workstation with storage, samples and hand boards ensures an engaging experience for both residential and Main Street commercial customers."

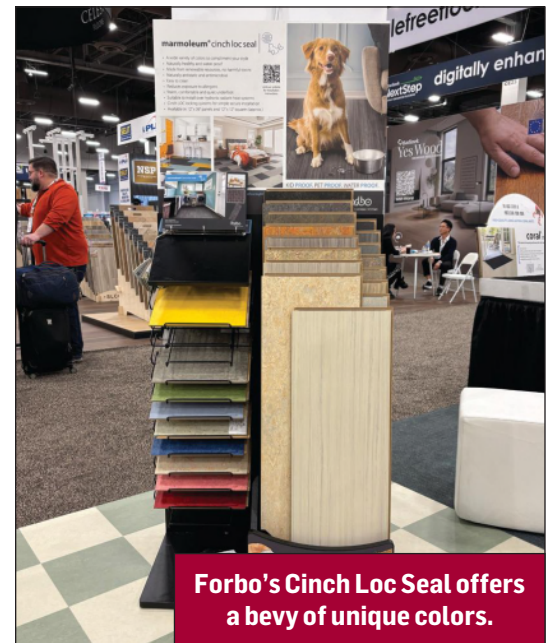
The display program, launching in early spring, costs \$2,500, with potential rebates available.

LX Hausys, a 60-year resilient veteran, focused on technological advancement and customization at the show. The company touted

its trio of technologies, which can be applied to any of its vinyl flooring products, including both rigid core and glue-down products: TrueFit, TrueQuiet and TrueMatt.

"You want there to be a choice," said Steve DeCarlo, vice president of HFLOOR, flooring brand of LX Hausys. "Now, if you just need to go with a really good quality product at the best possible price, we have that. But if you want to have some premium upgrades, we're able to work that into your budget as well."

(For the full story visit FCNews.net)



Forbo's Cinch Loc Seal offers a bevy of unique colors.



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Packaging: 4 gallon pail and 1 gallon pail

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- › Dries fast
- › Solvent free
- › Moisture resistant
- › Extended working time of up to 12 hours
- › Moisture resistant up to 99% RH and 12 lbs. MVER



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Resurgence fuels bevy of new rollouts

By Reginald Tucker

(Second of two parts)

LAS VEGAS—Laminate flooring suppliers—as well as soft surface companies looking to get in on the action—were in full force at Surfaces 2025 (FCNews, Feb. 3/10). The level of interest and commitment to the category provided solid evidence of the segment's resurging popularity in the U.S.

Following is our ongoing coverage of the laminate products showcased at the event.

Cali

As an encore to the launch of last year's breakthrough Mavericks and Shorebreak collections, Cali is expanding its growing laminate flooring portfolio with another show stopper. Santa Cruz features Cali's new NaturMatte surface texturing, a breakthrough embossing technique that blends varied matte levels to better mimic the texture of unpolished wood. This driftwood-inspired finish, combined with a subtle sand-swept grain pattern and planks edged by a crafted bevel, delivers a floor with the depth and dimension typically found in authentic hardwood. Extra broad dimensions span over 72 inches long x 9 3/8 inches wide and 12mm thick.

Dubbed by Doug Jackson, Cali CEO, as the company's most realistic luxury laminate yet, the line blends stunning hardwood realism with exceptional performance. "Santa Cruz represents a big leap forward for luxury

laminate and really is everything Cali strives to deliver—beautiful, stress-free floors you're proud to show off with a smarter design that makes home health a priority," he said. "Our team has pushed the boundaries on this one and we're confident this collection will set new standards."

Santa Cruz is positioned as the "better" option in Cali's good/better/best lineup of luxury laminate, with the Pacifica collection representing "good" and Mavericks presented as "best."

Lux Flooring

Lux adds six new laminate colors to its growing portfolio, bringing the total number of laminate SKUs to 14. Standouts include Terra Nova and Mesa Villa—a pair of stylish, trendy offerings—in addition to black laminate, red cherry laminate and a herringbone style. Rounding out the line are accessories such as laminate stair trends, standard square nosing and overlap square nosing.

Provenza

Provenza officially rolled out Modessa, a new laminate line that aims to give retailers a broader range of price-conscious hard surface alternatives to sell while still leveraging the brand's reputation for one-of-a-kind wood aesthetic designs.

"The inspiration for the collection was taken from our popular Dutch Masters collection of European oak custom floors, which are scanned exclusively for us," said Ron Sadri, principal owner, Provenza.

From the visual characteristics



Provenza's Modessa laminate planks are modeled after the company's top-selling hardwood offerings.

of the exclusive designs, to the big, bold format of the planks, Modessa aims to make a dramatic impression. It begins with the extremely long and wide footprint of the boards (86 inches long x 9.4 inches wide) to the heft provided by the product's 14mm thickness—including a 2mm attached pad. For added realism, Modessa's planks feature four-sided beveled edges and a 10-pattern design package created using high-definition printing for fewer repeats across a large room installation.

Stanton Design

Stanton used Surfaces as the official launchpad for its new, more unified brand: Stanton Design. But it wasn't the only exciting piece of news at the company's booth. Stanton Design, which entered the rigid core market two years ago, has expanded its portfolio to include two new laminate collections: NuvoLux and NuvoMax. The collections feature innovative textures, authentic colors and advanced finishes. A case in point is Sherwood from NuvoMax. With a 12mm thickness, this flooring offers a sturdy, comfortable feel underfoot, making it ideal for spaces requiring durability and style. The floating installation method simplifies the process, allowing for quick and adhesive-free setup for use in both new construction and remodeling projects.

"The new collections have been on the market for several months now, and they are doing very well," explained Jamann Stepp, senior vice president, hard surfaces at Stanton. "And the feedback here at the show has been phenomenal."

Ultimate Floors

Ultimate Floors showcased its signature Aqua Armor Tech laminate, which offers 300 hours of waterproof protection. "We invested heavily in our waterproof laminate lines, and they've been a home run for us," said Ron Dardashti, managing partner, Ultimate Floors. "Installation is easier and there are less issues with laminate than rigid core, so we see that as a huge pro for us. SPC

is not going anywhere, but our bread and butter and our main focus is waterproof laminate."

New this year is a herringbone style, reflecting a trend seen across the category. "Herringbone is starting to become a lot more popular," Dardashti said. "Four of our most popular looks we've added a herringbone. We launched these about two months ago and we can't keep these on the shelves."

Create looks to up the ante

LAS VEGAS—After a challenging 2024, Surfaces 2025 proved to be a successful start of the year for Create Flooring. According to Candince Zhu, president, the company saw strong engagement from many dealers who stopped by to connect and explore the latest innovations.

It's no secret the past year presented its share of obstacles for the industry, including high shipping costs, ongoing inflation concerns and the uncertainty of an election year. However, Create Flooring remained resilient, adapting to shifting market demands and prioritizing innovation. As such, the company unveiled eight new collections at Surfaces across laminate, WPC and engineered hardwood, addressing the evolving needs of the market. They included:

- Three WPC collections: Oakhaven, Serene Scapes and Reserve. Oakhaven is 7.5mm with a 20-mil wear layer. The durable, 9 x 60 planks feature a painted bevel. Serene Scapes is 8mm with a 22-mil wear layer featuring a four-sided natural pressed edge in fresh, creative colors. Reserve is 12mm with a 20-mil wear layer, also with a four-sided natural pressed edge.
- With the market trending toward engineered wood flooring, Create introduced two collections: Atlantic Collection, a 9/16-inch hickory with a 2mm veneer, and Pacific, a 5/8-inch hickory with a 3mm veneer.

- Essentials, a water-resistant, 11mm laminate collection. Essentials features on-trend visuals, 9 x 60 planks, painted bevel and AC4 rating.



Cali's new Santa Cruz line fits right in the middle of its good/better/best laminate offering.



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Moldings

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic Finishes | <input type="checkbox"/> Perfect Vents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Framerica | <input type="checkbox"/> Seneca |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grill Works | <input type="checkbox"/> Ventiques |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Küberit | <input type="checkbox"/> Versatrim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pennwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Zamma |

Carpet

Group A

- ☐ Anderson Tuftex
- ☐ Dixie/Fabrica/Masland
- ☐ Engineered Floors
- ☐ Karastan
- ☐ Phenix

Group B

- ☐ Gulistan/Marquis
- ☐ Peerless
- ☐ Revolution Mills
- ☐ Southwind
- ☐ Tarkett

Decorative

- ☐ 1866 by Masland
- ☐ Decorative Concepts
- ☐ Couristan
- ☐ Nourison
- ☐ Prestige Mills
- ☐ Stanton

Tile

Group A

- ☐ Dal-Tile
- ☐ MSI Surfaces

Group B

- ☐ American Marazzi
- ☐ Crossville
- ☐ Emser
- ☐ Florida Tile
- ☐ Florim
- ☐ Portobello

Laminate

Group A

- ☐ CFL (Atroguard)
- ☐ Mannington
- ☐ Pergo

Group B

- ☐ BHW
- ☐ Bruce
- ☐ Cali
- ☐ Classen
- ☐ Eternity
- ☐ HF Design
- ☐ Inhaus
- ☐ Johnson
- ☐ Lions Floor
- ☐ MSI
- ☐ Provenza
- ☐ SLCC
- ☐ Southwind
- ☐ Stanton
- ☐ Tarkett
- ☐ Urbanfloor
- ☐ US Mills

Technology

Group A

- ☐ Cyncl
- ☐ Measure Square
- ☐ Podium
- ☐ QFloors
- ☐ Roomvo

Group B

- ☐ Classen
- ☐ I4F
- ☐ Unilin
- ☐ Välinge

Best Overall

- | | Mohawk | Shaw |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Product innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Design | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Service | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ease of doing business | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professionalism of sales force | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Training/education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Handling of claims | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Digital tools | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On-time delivery | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Credit terms | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Hardwood

Domestic

- ☐ AHF Products
- ☐ Anderson Tuftex
- ☐ Karastan
- ☐ Mannington
- ☐ Marquis
- ☐ Mullican
- ☐ Somerset

Import: Asia

- ☐ Cali
- ☐ DuChateau
- ☐ Hallmark
- ☐ HF Design
- ☐ Johnson
- ☐ MSI
- ☐ Provenza
- ☐ Quickstyle
- ☐ Urbanfloor

Canadian

- ☐ Lauzon
- ☐ Mercier
- ☐ Mirage
- ☐ Preverco
- ☐ Wickham

Import: Europe/South America

- ☐ Bjelin
- ☐ Boen
- ☐ Fabrica
- ☐ Indusparquet
- ☐ Kährs
- ☐ Ribadao
- ☐ Riva
- ☐ Southwind
- ☐ Triangulo

Installation

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ardex | <input type="checkbox"/> Maxxon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Base King | <input type="checkbox"/> Roberts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bostik | <input type="checkbox"/> Schönox |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Custom Building Products | <input type="checkbox"/> Sika |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divergent | <input type="checkbox"/> Stauf |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laticrete | <input type="checkbox"/> Taylor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mapei | <input type="checkbox"/> Uzin |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> XL |

Main Street Commercial

- ☐ Aladdin (Mohawk)
- ☐ High Street (Tarkett)
- ☐ Mannington on Main
- ☐ Pentz (Engineered Floors)
- ☐ Phenix on Main
- ☐ Philadelphia (Shaw)
- ☐ Stanton Street

Resilient

Rigid Core A

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adura Max | Mannington |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COREtec | COREtec |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Everlife | MSI |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Floorté | Shaw Floors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LuxeCraft | Karastan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pergo Extreme | Pergo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PureGrain | Engineered Floors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SolidTech | Mohawk |

Rigid Core B

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art Select | Karndean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authentic Prime | Southwind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black Label | Happy Feet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courtier | Hallmark |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ceramin | Inhaus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decorative Flooring | Stanton |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EverGen | Tarkett |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FirmFit | CFL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LifeSeal | Bruce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Longboards | Cali |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lutea | Armstrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MaxCore | Provenza |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NovaFloor | Novalis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Triversa Prime | Congoleum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TruCor | Dixie Group |

Rigid Core C

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blue-11 | Benchmark |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canopy | Intern'l Flooring Co. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canyon Coast | Lions Floor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cascade | Urbanfloor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cellar House | Johnson |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EcoDense | Eternity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HDPC Vinyl | Wellmade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heartland | BHW |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painted Sky | SLCC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pure | Beauflor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pure CMF Max | Ultimate Floors |

Wood/Rigid Hybrid

- | | |
|--|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aquaproof | HF Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harmony/Aqua | BHW Floors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HDPC Hardwood | Wellmade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ingenious Plank | AHF |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stone + Wood | Raskin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Woodhills | MSI |

Commercial

- ☐ AHF Products
- ☐ Armstrong
- ☐ Forbo
- ☐ Mannington Comm.
- ☐ Roppe/Flexco
- ☐ Tarkett

Sheet

- ☐ Armstrong
- ☐ Beauflor
- ☐ Congoleum
- ☐ Mannington
- ☐ Tarkett
- ☐ Other_____

BEST OVERALL MANUFACTURER (other than Shaw or Mohawk)

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

New formulations help floors stick

By Ken Ryan

Flooring adhesives have advanced in recent years, with new products and formulations that are more moisture-resistant, easier to remove and environmentally friendly. Several of the newest offerings were shown at Surfaces 2025, including adhesives that can withstand relative humidity up to 99%, as well as adhesives boasting low VOCs. Following is sampling of new introductions for 2025:



CUSTOM BUILDING PRODUCTS

Vinyl PSA is an advanced pressure-sensitive adhesive ideally suited for most LVP/LVT and carpet tile applications. Adding to its versatility, this unique formulation can be used in permanent or releasable applications. The high-moisture-resistant adhesive has low VOCs and is FloorScore and Green Label Plus certified.



PERFORMANCE ACCESSORIES

TreadBond is a fast-curing, 100%-solids, moisture-curing, gun-grade adhesive designed for the installation of wood flooring, HDF and vinyl stair treads, as well as vinyl and HDF stair noses. Designed to work harmoniously with all stair treads and noses, Performance Accessories' TreadBond adhesive further enhances flooring installation and delivers a secure and seamless bond with quality and durability. TreadBond acts as a moisture barrier between the floor and underlying surface to help prevent moisture from seeping through. It also acts as a sound-dampening layer, absorbing and eliminating noise within the floor on selected products.



STAUF

Stauf SPU-570 is a high-performance, one-component, MS polymer-urethane hybrid adhesive designed for professional wood flooring installations. Its high shear and tensile strength provide excellent installation characteristics that are desirable for both engineered and solid hardwood floors. SPU-570 is easy to spread and works well on a variety of subfloors, including concrete and plywood. With a chemical composition that is impervious to moisture, it helps protect floors from subfloor moisture issues when used as a moisture mitigation/adhesive all-in-one product. SPU-570 is solvent-free and low in VOCs.



MAPEI

Ultrabond ECO 987 is Mapei's premium, single-component, heavy-body wood flooring adhesive featuring a hybrid-polymer formulation free from water, solvents, amines, isocyanates, phthalate plasticizers and epoxy resins. With its extremely low VOC emissions, Ultrabond ECO 987 excels in sound reduction, making it ideal for multi-unit housing. Additionally, it offers moisture control, safeguarding wood floors from vapor emissions through concrete slabs in a single application.

SIKA

SikaBond-6000 is a premium, universal, firm-set acrylic resilient flooring adhesive. This innovative, fast-setting, pressure-sensitive adhesive is designed to install LVT/LVP, WPC, SPC, rigid core planks, carpet tile, vinyl and rubber sheet goods, wall base and more. Touting a shelf life of 18 months, SikaBond-6000 offers excellent initial tack that transitions to a firmer bond, with fast dry time and ease of application. It offers high moisture resistance of up to 15 lbs/ASTM F 1869 and 99% RH/ASTM F 2170.



TAYLOR ADHESIVES

Terrain, Taylor's newest innovation in turf adhesives, is a versatile, single-component, moisture-cured urethane adhesive engineered for both indoor and outdoor use. Compatible with most turf and exterior carpet backings, it delivers exceptional performance in demanding environments. With proven waterproofing, moisture resistance and protection against topical liquids, Terrain also features low VOCs and minimal odor. Designed to meet the growing need for reliable, easy-to-apply adhesives, Terrain is the ideal solution for artificial turf in sports fields, urban landscapes and residential settings.



TOTALWORX

SV350 Adhesive by TotalWorx Accessories is a top-tier, pressure-sensitive adhesive designed specifically for residential fiberglass-backed sheet goods. With a faster flash time, this adhesive allows for quicker installations without compromising performance. Cradle to Cradle certified, SV350 adheres to environmentally friendly standards while delivering impressive coverage of 140-350 feet per gallon. It handles up to 99% RH, making it an excellent choice for moisture-prone areas. Available in 1-gallon pails (144 pails per pallet) and 4-gallon pails (48 pails per pallet), SV350 Adhesive is ideal for professional installers seeking efficiency and reliability in their projects.

Nox demonstrates environmental leadership

By Ken Ryan

LAS VEGAS—It's no fluke that Nox US has won the Best of Surfaces Award for Sustainability two years running. As a leader in LVT flooring, Nox continually elevates its game to produce the industry's most sustainable—as well as innovative—products. “Nox aims to redefine and lead the sustainability standard of flooring based on our world-first innovations and integrated vertical production system that has been leading the global LVT flooring market,” said Dan Koh, CEO.

Built on exemplary product quality and technology, Nox boasts over 60 years of expertise in floor engineering, a portfolio of 6,000-plus in-house designs recognized by the world's top three design awards and a 100% transparent commitment to sustainable manufacturing.

Nox flooring is made from a circular integrated vertical production system, a manufacturing process where all stages of

production—from raw materials to finished goods—are managed within a single company, with a strong emphasis on recycling and reusing waste generated at each stage. For Nox, this system ensures excellent stability and durability as well as some of the industry's most diverse designs. Over time, Nox has earned a reputation in overseas markets for producing high-performance flooring that can be applied to all commercial spaces—including offices, warehouse stores, airport lounges, high-end residential complexes, hotels and residences.

At Surfaces, Nox highlighted TrueTexture and EMT ecore, winning Best of Surfaces for the latter. According to Nox, TrueTexture represents the ultimate surface technology, replicating the precise look and feel of natural materials with unmatched realism. EMT ecore, meanwhile, is a sustainable technology that converts over 90% of key raw materials into carbon-reducing



Nox CEO Dan Koh accepts Best of Surfaces Award for Sustainability from FCNews' Dustin Aaronson and Steven Feldman.

materials while maintaining high-quality standards and mass production capability. Building on this commitment, Nox entered into a strategic partnership with the world's largest chemical companies to integrate certified carbon-reducing raw materials into its production:

- Bio-circular balanced PVC – a carbon-reducing material derived from discarded cooking oil.
- Recycled plasticizer (DOTP) – a waste-minimizing plasticizer sourced from used PET bottles.
- Eco-friendly filler – a repurposed filler made from post-industrial recycled minerals.

All three carbon-reducing raw materials hold globally recognized sustainability certifications, including ISCC PLUS, GRS

(Global Recycled Standard) and EcoVadis, thus reinforcing Nox's commitment to “shaping a more sustainable future in flooring.”

Nox's Lut Evereco+ and LDW+ have also commanded attention for demonstrating advancements in sustainable technology and product innovation.

Lut Evereco+ is a PVC-free flooring solution with over 70% of its composition made from recycled, carbon-reducing thermoplastic urethane.

LDW+ is a hybrid interior tile engineered to enhance the benefits of ceramic tiles while innovatively addressing their drawbacks.

Haicl

Continued from page 8

tailer's brand, and our brands are tied to the retailer's brand, consumers will feel more confident in making this purchase. A brand you trust from a business you trust is a winning combination.

Flooring brands have traditionally been retailer brands because the retailer and RSA control the sale. They more or

less can trade any consumer onto any brand they want. So how can Shaw reach and influence that consumer?

The magic happens when we take what we're doing nationally and drive it through the local retailer. I've seen this strategy be successful in the appliance industry, which also has many independent retailers like the flooring industry. We'd launch a national campaign, and then we work individually with the

retailers interested in advertising to say, “Let's build a plan. Here are the assets we can use.” With this co-marketing approach, the advertising is stronger, more effective and links the retailer with national brands. We build brands in partnership with our retailers. We help drive more traffic to their stores. The more people that come in, the better for them, the better for us and the better for everyone. There's a lot of opportunity in that.

Anderson Tuftex

Continued from page 8

sive, where the lineup includes everything from traditional wool products to more trendy styles like flat weaves. “The synthetic products use Shaw's Color Shift eco yarn technology, where we take yarn that would've otherwise been distressed or the end of lots, and we hand spin it to create a full gradient, so it really ebbs and flows.”

The 10 Heirloom styles are more classic, but there is a range in price points and design elements. Most of the styles range in weight from 53 to 104 ounces and offer between four and six colorways. Each carpet is CRI Green Label Plus certified.

Departures exhibits a focus on sustainability in that each of the five designs is constructed of Anso high-performance PET—100% post-consumer recycled content. They range in weight from 53 to and 64 ounces in eight to 12 colorways and offer R2X stain resistance and LifeGuard spill-proof backing ensuring superior durability and easy maintenance. Each style is Cradle to Cradle certified and CRI Green Label Plus certified.

Simplified merchandising

Merchandising was also a big consideration in the launch. In an effort to simplify the shopping experience, samples have been set up by color rather than by style. The consumer can find

a style she likes [on one side of the display] and then she can look for that style in her preferred color, Aft said. The other option is to simply gravitate toward a preferred color and peruse the different styles in that color.

The display itself draws its inspiration from the fashion industry, emulating a closet with samples displayed on hangers. “We were seeking a fun shopping experience for consumers,” Aft said. “If you ask people if shopping for floor covering is fun, many of them will say no. But we know people love shopping for clothes. We really wanted to mimic that experience. We wanted to make it enjoyable and different.”

AHF Products

Continued from page 1

enough to know and work with Brian for 16 years, I look forward to a seamless and steady transition for employees and customers,” Emore stated.

Jennifer Zimmerman, AHF's chief commercial officer, expressed a vote of confidence in Emore. “We are fortunate to have an executive of Brent's caliber on our leadership team who can easily step in and provide stability and continuity during this transition. His expertise, along with the support of our senior management team, will ensure AHF Products continues to build on its momentum.”

Just getting started

During a sit-down with FCNews at Surfaces prior to the resignation announcement, Carson looked back fondly on the accomplishments the company achieved since it was created following the spinoff from

Armstrong. He cited the multimillion-dollar capital investments the company has made in recent years on its way to become a powerhouse spanning more than 14 brands. Some of those brands, including Armstrong and Bruce, have origins dating back 140 years.

Despite the rich legacy, Carson said he really sees AHF as a budding company. “When you look back six years ago when we started, we had a few display towers in a suite in the basement at Surfaces. At the time we were a wood-only company; six years later we are a hard surface powerhouse with wood, porcelain, vinyl, LVT, laminate. We've got it all now.”

Zimmerman said she is confident that AHF's proven growth strategy will continue to propel the company forward. “With our strong portfolio of trusted brands and commitment to exceptional customer service, we are very optimistic about the future,” she said.



Retail update
Continued from page 1

said Casey Dillabaugh, president of Dillabaugh’s Flooring America, Boise. “Traffic is up, sales are up and there isn’t currently a murmur of a near-term slowdown. While the industry and our area were down last year, we managed modest growth primarily by capitalizing on internal cross-department synergies and taking some market share. The moves we’ve made the last two years have positioned us for what we believe will be an incredible year.”

Idaho may represent the rosiest of prognostications; others have taken their level of enthusiasm down a notch. For example, flooring retailers located near Washington, D.C., may be concerned that talk of mass layoffs and buyouts impacting federal workers—already taking place—will put a damper on business. “We’re still strong here; however, the pace has slowed post-inauguration,” said Adam Joss, owner of The Vertical Connection Carpet One Floor & Home, Columbia, Md. “Being in the D.C. market, I suspect federal workers, contractors and related workers have some pause.”

In Houston, store traffic and leads are up, yet it has not translated into written orders yet, according to Tom Connell, president of M&M Carpet Showroom. “We can only attribute it to customers being more cautious about the direction of the economy and how the current changes will manifest in the market,” Connell said.

The salvation for Abbey Carpets Unlimited, Napa, Calif., was a strong push in large commercial projects that offset an otherwise slow start to 2025, according to Janice Clifton, owner. “The residential remodel market seems to still be a bit soft,” she said. “We are dependent on people buying and selling homes for this market and that is not happening because of consistent high mortgage interest rates.”

Now is the time to invest

During a January address to 1,200 retailers at the CCA Global convention, ITR Economics’ Connor Lokar, a senior forecaster, said ITR’s research suggests 2025 will be an improvement over 2024 and that 2026 will be better than 2025. His message to flooring dealers: now is the time to invest in your business.

Several retailers who listened to that address have heeded the advice. “Looking ahead, we’re positioning ourselves for growth in 2025 in line with ITR Economics’ forecast,” said Aaron Johnson, president of Johnson & Sons Flooring, Knoxville, Tenn. “We’re focusing on strategic investments in digital marketing to enhance our online presence and attract more customers. Additionally, we are expanding our product offerings to ensure we stay competitive and meet evolving customer demands. We also recognize the importance of streamlining operations to improve efficiency and customer experience, so we’re evaluating ways to optimize logistics and inventory management.”

Investing in people more so than infrastructure seems to be a common theme among flooring dealers. As Connell noted, “We expanded our sales force last fall in anticipation of a better economic environment in 2025. By jumping on it a little early, we

were able to allow more training time for our personnel to be ready for the uptick. We also added a tile and countertop specialist to grow that segment of our sales mix.”

Dealers stare down challenges

“As the housing industry goes, so goes the flooring industry,” is a maxim that some executives cite regarding the state of flooring. Based on today’s figures—with 30-year fixed mortgage rates hovering around 7%—that would indicate a stagnant market for flooring sales.

And yet, many dealers did not reference mortgage rates as their No. 1 concern. Dillabaugh, for example, said the rising cost of homeowners’ insurance was his biggest bugaboo. “With the inflationary pressures of the last few years, insurance carriers are now catching up to years of loss and passing that onto the consumer,” he said.

Aaron Johnson said consumer confidence is his biggest concern. “Rising material costs due to tariffs or supply chain disruptions could impact pricing, which may make some customers hesitant to move forward with larger projects. In fact, we’ve already seen price hikes this year. We’re keeping a close eye on these factors and adapting accordingly.”

(For the full story visit FCNews.net)

marketing mastery

Enhancing your service with AI-powered tools

(Part two)

In the flooring industry, exceptional customer service is the key to winning business, building lifelong relationships and generating referrals. That’s where AI-powered tools come in. When used correctly, AI can enhance customer service—not replace the personal touch that makes your business unique.

Here’s how AI can improve customer service without losing the human connection:

1. AI chatbots: Your 24/7 virtual assistant. A customer visits your website at 9 p.m. and wants to know if you offer waterproof flooring. An AI chatbot can step in to instantly answer basic product questions, schedule showroom appointments and guide customers to resources like Roomvo’s visualizer to help them see flooring in their space.

- AI chatbots:
- ManyChat – best for Facebook, Instagram and website chat.
 - Tidio – best for website and

The future isn’t AI replacing humans—it’s AI enhancing how you serve customers.

live chat integration.

2. AI-powered appointment scheduling: No more back-and-forth emails. Scheduling showroom visits, in-home measures and follow-ups can eat up hours of your time. AI can automate this process so customers can book or reschedule appointments online.

- AI scheduling tools:
- Calendly – Lets customers book appointments based on your real-time availability.
 - Acuity Scheduling – Includes automated reminders and rescheduling options.
 - Drift Meetings – AI-powered scheduling built into chatbot conversations.
- AI scheduling lets your customers (and staff) book measures anytime, reducing lost leads and missed appointments with automated reminders. This frees your staff to focus on sales



JIM AUGUSTUS ARMSTRONG

and customer service instead of scheduling.

ProTip: Have your staff schedule all customer appointments through your AI scheduler so customers get automated follow ups and have the ability to reschedule online.

3. AI-driven follow-ups: More sales, less effort. One major cause of lost sales is failure to follow up. AI can automate key touchpoints like post-appointment thank-you messages, installation reminders and review or referral requests, keeping customers engaged and boosting retention.

- AI follow-up tools:
- Keap – Automates email and text follow-ups based on customer actions.
 - ActiveCampaign – AI-powered customer journey automation. Example: AI can automat-

ically send a text: “Thanks for booking! Our team will arrive on [date]. Need to reschedule? Click here.”

AI follow-ups keep your business top of mind without overwhelming your team.

4. AI-powered visualization: Helping customers ‘see’ their floors. Customers often struggle to imagine how a floor will look in their home. That hesitation can delay purchases—or worse, send them to a competitor.

By integrating AI-powered visualization, you help customers move from hesitation to purchase faster.

5. The perfect balance: AI + human expertise. AI streamlines routine tasks, allowing your team to focus on what truly matters. The future isn’t AI replacing humans—it’s AI enhancing how you serve customers.

Jim Augustus Armstrong is the founder and president of Flooring Success Systems, a company that provides floor dealers with marketing services and coaching to help them attract quality customers, close more sales, get higher margins and work the hours they choose. For more information, visit FlooringSuccessSystems.com.

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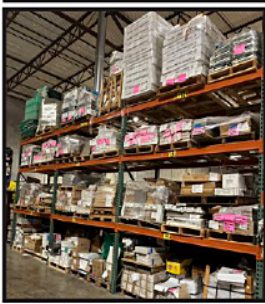
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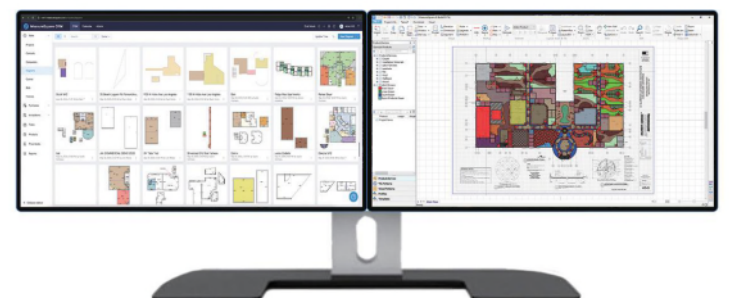
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