

floor covering news

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THE GREAT REVEAL

The winter markets. Surfaces. It's what flooring retailers rely on every year to chart their course for the next 12 months—the catalyst being solution-oriented products that resonate with end users while boosting retailers' bottom lines.

With the COVID-19 pandemic in the rear-view mirror and supply chain issues largely under control, 2024 has the potential to be a very good year for product launches.

As such, *FCNews* once again delivers The Great Reveal in our first issue of January. This feature is designed to help suppliers get their new products in front of the specialty retail community, which is eager to learn what's new for 2024.

Coverage begins on page 48.

UFLPA update

'Game over' as LVT suppliers seek new sourcing avenues

By Ken Ryan

When U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) added polyvinyl chloride products (PVC) as a "sector of concern" to its Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) enforcement efforts last February, it marked for many suppliers the beginning of the end of sourcing products from that region of China.

As it turned out the burden of proof on U.S. suppliers to verify that their materials were not sourced from the Uyghar Region (XUAR) became so onerous most suppliers simply gave up and pivoted to other countries

for their sourcing needs.

"The conversation is done," said Jeff Striegel, president of flooring distributor Elias Wilf, who has followed this issue closely. "Anybody impacted by



A U.S. Customs inspector takes a closer look at the contents inside a container ship.

it has moved on by now and re-sourced their product or adapted to the new world order."

Continued on page 28

DIGITAL ACCESS IS INCLUDED

See our latest issue at fcnews.net

California carpet recycling hike takes effect

By Ken Ryan

In a move that was panned by some flooring retailers, California consumers began paying as much as 36% more for carpet on Jan. 1, 2024, as part of a California recycling statute.

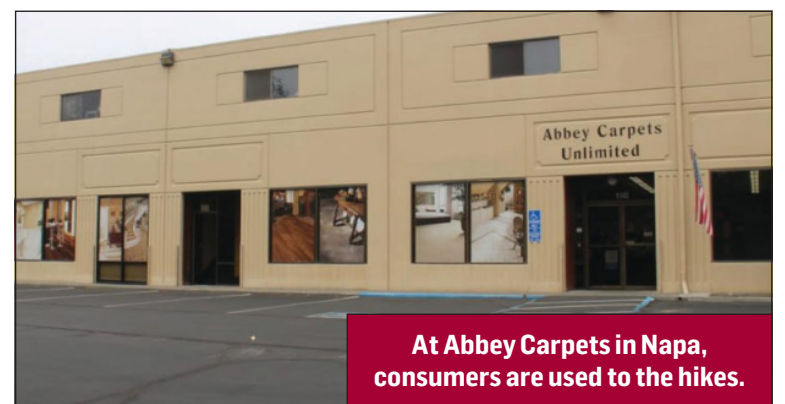
The Golden State requires

CARE, the carpet stewardship organization, to implement a so-called "differential assessment" on each square yard of carpet sold that reflects its cost burden to recycle.

CARE's differential assessment plan is based on two factors: 1) carpet material, as in broadloom vs. tile; and 2) percent of post-consumer content, as in greater than or equal to 10% post-consumer content and less than 10% post-consumer content.

The changes in cost are:

- Broadloom with greater than or equal to 10% post-consumer carpet rises from \$0.56 to \$0.68 per square yard, up 21%.
- Broadloom with less than 10% post-consumer carpet rises from \$0.58 to \$0.70 per square yard, also a 21% increase.



At Abbey Carpets in Napa, consumers are used to the hikes.

• Carpet tile with greater than or equal to 10% post-consumer carpet rises from \$0.71 to \$0.97 per square yard, a 37% increase.

• Carpet tile with less than 10% post-consumer carpet rises from \$0.73 to \$0.99 per square yard, up 36%.

"We recognize that this assessment increase undoubtedly is a serious burden for the nearly

2,000 California carpet retailers and the 84 carpet mills with operations and sales in the state," said Bob Peoples, CARE executive director. "This assessment increase is needed to meet the minimum reserve fund balance by the end of 2025, as required by CalRecycle in CARE's new plan. This comes at a time when the

Continued on page 30

elevate

2024

TRANSFORM THE NORM



The future is in focus.
Uniting with our community will push us forward.
It's time to collaborate, engage, innovate and elevate.

Let's connect at a 2024 market near you.

DALLAS

January 10 – 12, 2024

TORONTO

January 10 – 11, 2024

WEST COAST

January 11 – 12, 2024

CHESAPEAKE

January 24 – 25, 2024

SURFACES - LAS VEGAS

January 24 – 26, 2024

MIDWEST

January 31 – February 1, 2024

ATLANTA

February 7 – February 8, 2024

ANDERSON
TUFTEX

COREtec
The Original

PHILADELPHIA
COMMERCIAL

Shaw
FLOORS

[totalworx]



IN THE NEWS

Elias Wilf announces pair of executive promotions

OWINGS MILLS, MD.—Elias Wilf, a top-20 distributor, has elevated Marc Faucheux to the position of vice president of sales, northern division, and Ben Brumbaugh to vice president of sales, southern division.

“Congratulations to Marc Faucheux and Ben Brumbaugh on their new roles,” said Jeff Striegel, Elias Wilf president, citing how their collective proficiency and dedication to driving success align with Elias Wilf’s core values of excellence. “We look forward to the incredible impact Marc and Ben will make as they assume their new job responsibilities.”



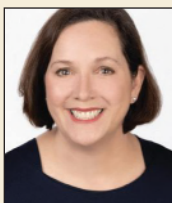
Marc Faucheux



Ben Brumbaugh

The Dixie Group adds Eileen Zelazny to its stable of talent

DALTON—The Dixie Group (TDG) has named Eileen Zelazny vice president of national accounts. A veteran of the floor covering industry, she brings more than 20 years of experience, industry knowledge and strong customer relationships.



“Zelazny is a U.S. Army veteran and a marathoner,” said T.M. Nuckols, president of the residential division. “Her strong work ethic and can-do attitude make her a great fit for The Dixie Group, and we are very pleased to have Eileen join our team.”

Zelazny previously held leadership roles in several industry organizations, including DuPont/Invista, NRF Distributors and CCA Global. Most recently, she has served as a field business consultant for ProSource Wholesale.

i4F, Amorim enter into strategic partnership

TURNHOUT, BELGIUM—i4F has signed multiple agreements with Amorim, whereby i4F has secured exclusive licensing rights to Amorim’s sustainable rigid bio-cork composite patent portfolio. In addition, i4F will represent Amorim on



IP-related matters associated with those technologies. Simultaneously, Amorim has signed two license agreements covering i4F’s drop-lock and digital printing technologies and has also acquired a Jupiter digital printing line with DLE plus from Hymmen.

Teaming up with i4F, according to Fernando Melo, CEO of Amorim Cork Flooring, facilitates “broader access to our magic formula for sustainable cork flooring. This collaboration not only streamlines the installation process for our products but also allows for limitless designs.”

Shaw seeks to ‘elevate’ its partners

2024 market season puts education front and center

DALTON—This month Shaw Industries kicks off its highly anticipated 2024 winter markets season with the first of seven stops around the country. This year’s theme, “Elevate,” puts a major emphasis on education, training and brand immersion.

During the winter markets, residential customers will have the chance to actively engage in a series of training sessions designed to foster meaningful connections. These sessions are crafted to not only deepen the understanding of Shaw’s residential product offerings and brands but also to elevate the consumer experience.

“We are elevating the market experience by providing hands-on engagement sessions that go beyond product demonstrations and immerse retailers in Shaw’s brands, people and innovations,” said Julie Beth Fisher, vice president of marketing operations and experiences, Shaw. “These learning opportunities will arm our customers with the knowledge and acumen to grow their businesses via mar-

keting, product information and a better understanding of how to respond to today’s consumers.”

Topics that training discussions will cover include:

- Elevating the consumer experience at retail
- How to sell financing
- Attracting consumers in a slower economy
- Recruiting, hiring and retaining talent
- Installation solutions with FCEF



(Floor Covering Education Foundation)

- Design 101
- Pet Perfect
- TotalWorx products and innovations
- Anderson Tuftex 2024

Products galore

In addition to exclusive training sessions, customers will be among the first in the nation to see new and exciting carpet, hard surface and accessories introductions for 2024 from Anderson Tuftex, COREtec, Philadelphia Commercial, Shaw Floors

and TotalWorx.

“We are eagerly anticipating the upcoming market events this year and cannot wait to welcome our valued customers to engage in exciting and enriching experiences,” said Jon England, senior vice president of residential brands. “Customers will have the chance to elevate their product knowledge and business acumen in 2024 like never before.”

Ultimately, the main objective for Shaw is to inspire its retail partners. “We’re thrilled to engage our customers in immersive brand experiences,” England added. “It goes beyond showcasing products; our goal is for customers to leave with innovative ideas on how to reach consumers in their local store.”

The 2024 show dates and locations are as follows:

Dallas—Jan. 10 – 12
 Toronto—Jan. 10 – 11
 Dana Point—Calif. Jan. 11 – 12
 Baltimore—Jan. 24 – 25
 Las Vegas (TISE)—Jan. 24 – 26
 Chicago—Jan. 31 – Feb. 1
 Atlanta—Feb. 7 – 8

Register online at shawshows.com

Salzano-Birch promoted to FCNews managing editor

HUNTINGTON, N.Y.—Floor Covering News announces the promotion of Megan Salzano-Birch to the role of managing editor. In this new position, she will have increased responsibilities in the day-to-day operations of the magazine in addition to maintaining her existing responsibilities as digital director.

“Since Megan joined the FCNews team in the fall of 2018, she has consistently demonstrated not only her skills as an experienced trade publishing journalist, but also her exceptional planning and organizational capabilities,” said Steven Feldman, co-publisher and editorial director, FCNews. “Megan has also honed her magazine layout and design skills, bringing a fresh perspective to page presentation on the print side as well as navigational concepts on the digital end. She is a rising

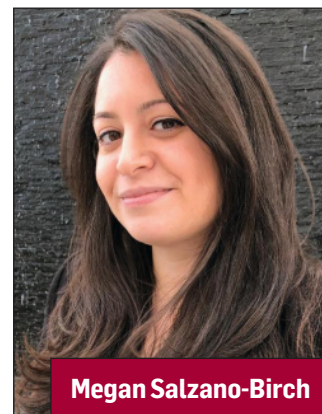
star not only among the FCNews team but also across the product category segments and markets she regularly covers for the magazine. Her elevation to managing editor is hard earned and well deserved.”

Salzano-Birch looks to continue making positive contributions to the magazine and the flooring industry in this new capacity. “I’ve learned a lot from this amazing team and the industry as a whole, and I’m excited to bring that to play here at FCNews,” she said. “I also look forward to developing fresh ideas to help move us into the future. But what I’m most excited about is developing and expanding my

relationships within the industry. In this new leadership role, I plan to do just that.”

After joining the FCNews team in October 2018 as senior associate editor, Salzano-Birch was elevated to the role of senior editor/digital media director in short order. Prior to joining FCNews, she served as senior associate editor for *HomeWorld Business* and *Gourmet Insider* magazines, two prominent ICD publications.

Salzano attended Hofstra University in New York, where she earned a Master’s degree in English and creative writing, along with a Bachelor’s degree in print journalism.



Megan Salzano-Birch

SNAPSHOT

Mapei contributes to first Habitat for Humanity 3D-printed home

NEWPORT NEWS, VA.—Mapei’s Planitop 3D mortar/ink played a pivotal role in the building of Habitat for Humanity’s first 3D-printed home, which was unveiled at a ribbon cutting here last month. The project, executed in collaboration with Alquist 3D and powered by 3D-printing technology from Black Buffalo 3D Corp., marked a significant leap in the application of innovative construction methodologies.

“The completion of the first 3D-printed homes in Newport News is a momentous occasion, and Mapei extends heartfelt congratulations to the two deserving families who now begin new chapters in their lives within these innovative residences,” said Fabrizio De Rossi, Mapei’s national sales director for Concrete Restoration Systems/Building and Major Projects.



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BOOTH #2437



my take

New year, new chapters to be written

Happy new year and welcome to 2024. A new year always brings new beginnings and continuations of (hopefully) the good things in our lives. That statement couldn't hold more validity for us here at *Floor Covering News*.

The new year quietly brought the culmination of Dustin's and my purchase of *FCNews* from former owner Mike Blick. Even though we have been running the publication for 15 years, the official buyout was a 10-year agreement where we gained more and more equity with each passing year. It was an arrangement that was beneficial to all parties by virtue of the three-fold growth we executed during that span.

Before I go any further, I want to pay homage to Mike. He didn't have to sell the business to us. He wanted to. He has been a friend, mentor and father figure to both Dustin and me, given how we both lost our dads at young ages. When Dustin and I arrived here in late 2005 and early 2006, respectively, Mike gave us only one marching order: Run the business like you own it because someday you will. On Jan. 1 Dustin and I officially owned 100%.

I mention this because I want all our readers to understand that we are no different than you: small business owners. We face many of the same challenges you do on a daily basis from growing the business to managing increasing expenses. We wake up at night worried about the same things as you. That's probably why we are so good at providing the content you need to be more profitable and professional.

Many of you bought your businesses from family, an employer or a random stranger. Many of you have worked hard

to grow your businesses over the years. You missed your kids' birthday or spring concert. Many of you sat up at night worried about your future when a recession hit or COVID-19 forced you to shut your doors. We feel you because so did we.

Most of you were not born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Many of you graduated from the school of hard knocks rather than some overpriced university. Many of you built something from nothing. Many of you are living your dreams that you never thought would come to fruition. We're right there with you.

Dustin and I didn't come from much. I grew up in an apartment in Queens, N.Y., without air conditioning. On a hot summer night, we cooled off by getting in my dad's Chevy Bel Air station wagon, rolling down all the windows and using the breeze as a make-shift AC. Fun consisted of throwing a Spalding rubber ball against the apartment building until the super would chase me away. We moved out to Long Island when I was 10 because my parents feared me getting killed in the "bad" junior high school. The house we moved to had neither a finished basement nor enclosed patio. The basement was never finished; the patio never enclosed. I had to beg my parents to buy me the same sneakers and jeans everyone else wore to avoid ridicule. The one thing I did have was family. I was taught values that allow me to have the desire to help make you all successful.

Dustin also grew up on Long Island in a modest, relative-owned ranch house. The difference between us was that he was in and out of trouble as a teen and learned street smarts at an early age. He learned how to be resolute and overcome

adversity. If I say I came from nothing, he will tell you he came from less than nothing. His father passed away when he was 17, forcing him to immediately enter the workforce. He always had a knack for sales and servicing customers, which plays well in our business today. For example, as a salesman for a moving company, he had to work with customers on a regular basis and understand their needs. That plays well in his dealings today with our advertising partners.

Advertising was always in his blood. In his 20s he took job at a local newspaper and saw how advertising could help his customer. He saw it as a good, honest living. When I met him at *Floor Covering Weekly* in 2004, he was initially charged with selling classified ads. The person who sat in that seat hadn't grown the business in 10 years. Dustin doubled the business in the first year, making him an attractive target for *FCNews*.

Dustin learned the value of hard work and checking your ego at the door. Today he wears 20 hats at this company, overseeing sales, circulation, printing, human resources and more. Just like you all do. Some days we both can be found vacuuming the floor or ordering lunch for the team. We will never forget where we came from.

I'm sure almost all of you can relate to some of the above. It's why we understand you and your plight. We're in this together. For the long haul.

Now, let's have an incredible year together.

Steven Feldman

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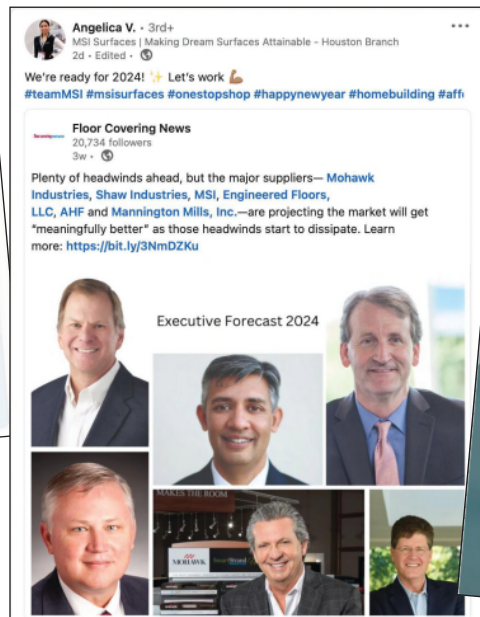
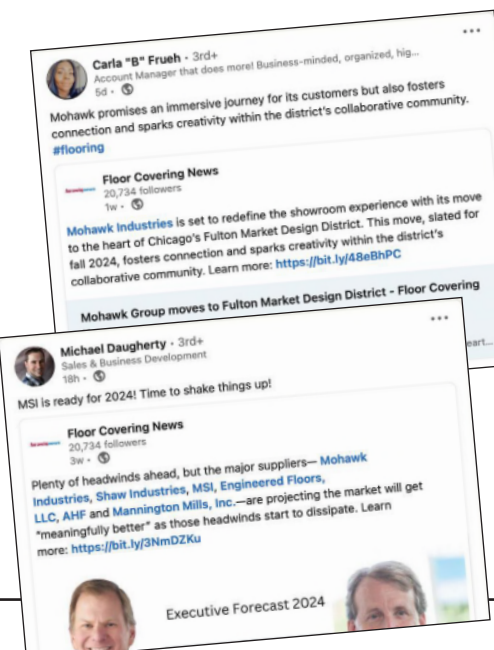
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GETTING SOCIAL WITH fcnews



U-Haul report reflects ongoing migration trend

PHOENIX, ARIZ.—The move from big cities on the East and West coasts of the country to suburban areas continued apace in 2023. That's according to a newly released report from U-Haul, which reflects a trend that accelerated in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Texas netted the largest number of movers in one-way U-Haul equipment in 2023, marking the third consecutive year it has finished atop the U-Haul Growth Index. In fact, Texas is the No. 1 growth state for the sixth time in eight years (2016-18 and 2021-23) and has ranked no lower than second on the U-Haul Growth Index throughout that stretch. DIY movers arriving in Texas accounted for 50.4% of all one-way U-Haul traffic in and out of Texas (49.6% departures) to keep it the leading growth state.

Florida, which ranks right behind Texas among growth states for the third year in a row, remains equally appealing to new residents. In fact, the state netted almost as many one-way U-Haul customers as Texas in 2023. The Sunshine State has been a top-four growth state for nine years in a row. Florida topped the U-Haul Growth Index in 2019.

North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee follow Florida, while Idaho, Washington, Arizona, Colorado and Virginia round out the top 10 states for growth.

So, where are people moving away from? For the fourth year in a row, California reflected the largest net loss of one-way movers. Other bottom-five states for growth are Michigan, New Jersey, Illinois and Massachusetts. New York ranks No. 43.

"While one-way transactions in 2023 remained below the record-breaking levels we witnessed immediately following the pandemic, we continued to see many of the same geographical trends from U-Haul customers moving between states," said John Taylor, U-Haul International president. "Migration to states in the Southeast and Southwest is still very pronounced. Demand for one-way equipment out of certain markets in the Northeast, Midwest and West Coast mirrors what we have seen during recent moving cycles."

Movin' on up

U-Haul calculates growth states by each state's net gain (or loss) of one-way equipment from customer transactions in a calendar year. The U-Haul Growth Index is compiled from more than 2.5 million one-way U-Haul truck,

trailer and U-Box moving container transactions that occur annually across the U.S. and Canada.

The biggest climbers year-over-year are Arkansas (+26 spots), Wyoming (+19), Vermont (+18), Washington (+16), Delaware (+12) and South Dakota (+12).

By comparison, the biggest fallers YOY are Oregon (-15 spots), Connecticut (-14), Pennsylvania (-14), Ohio (-14), Mis-

souri (-13) and Indiana (-13).

While U-Haul migration trends do not correlate directly to population or economic growth, the annual U-Haul Growth Index is an effective gauge of how well states and cities are attracting and maintaining residents.

By and large, the latest research from U-Haul mirrors what many others have discovered when it comes to tracking the movements of people who have relocated in recent years.



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Journey to our **Surfaces** space
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Can't wait to toast your arrival at **Booth #2629!**

educating the industry

Finding teachable moments in new places

BY GRANT PETRUZZELLI

For the past couple weeks, my son, Nixon, has asked to go to work with me. During a recent school break, it seemed like a good day to do just that.

As the leadership team here at DCO Commercial was preparing for our company's annual summit, I warned him that I would be focused on prep work, including poring through reports and sifting through data, which could substantiate achievements and supplement plans and sales presentations.

After hanging out for a while, Nixon asked if he could help. Sarcastically, I replied with, "How are you with spreadsheets?" Surprisingly, he replied, "I'm pretty good at adding up columns using the Sum formula in Google Sheets." That was good enough for me.

I exported a copy of our Work In Progress report into a more navigable PivotTable and uploaded it onto a laptop. Then I took out an index card and asked him to answer five questions for me:

1. Which top three clients account for the most revenue?
2. Which three clients contribute the most profit?
3. Which three jobs still have the most work to complete (balance to finish)?
4. Who are our top producing project executives based on this report?
5. Lastly, who did he think were our best clients based on his findings?

After a few minutes of demonstrating how the information could be found and filtered, I turned Nixon loose and he dove in. After 20 minutes or so, he presented me with an index card complete with his answers.

I showed him what gross

profit margin was, how it was computed and how it could affect some of his answers. A few minutes later, he refined his list.

The exercise was fun for a few reasons:

1. It was certainly a proud dad moment, a clash of two worlds. It was fun to see my son connect some dots between the two.
2. It illustrated how someone who is willing to learn can perform rather sophisticated tasks, regardless of their age, experience or prior familiarity.
3. When something complicated can be simplified—and the right things can be put into focus—extraordinary results can follow.

I had a chance to illustrate to my 11-year-old son why the little things matter. By showcasing

what I do each day, why it's important and how I do it, I got to "pull back the curtain" and help him understand how math, logic, deductive reasoning, etc., can affect business. For an 11-year-old, it's hard to see how those things create value, but a light bulb surely illuminated.

Will he become a CFO or a work-in-progress report guru? Who knows! But I never imagined he would be asking me about the profitability of specific customers on our drive home!

I have to give credit where it's due, though. My wife, Courtney Petruzzelli, deserves a shout out. A home school teacher's days are often hard fought. (We also have a 7-year-old daughter, Channing, who has also demonstrated an interest in the work I do.) Amid the journey, it's hard to see the impact being made, but this experience was a good reminder that you are doing something special for our kids.

Grant Petruzzelli is vice president of DCO Commercial Flooring, an Atlanta-based commercial flooring contractor. As a third-generation contractor and industry thought leader, he is focused on encouraging the next generation of sales and organizational leadership. Petruzzelli is also actively involved in Starnet.



RETAILERS REACT



What gives Carpetland USA president Eric Langan hope in 2024? Having great confidence in his team.

What gives you hope that 2024 will be a good year?

I'm confident that we'll have another strong year in 2024 because I'm confident in my team. We are an organization of hard working, determined and loyal people who work together as a team and value each other as well as our customers.

—Eric Langan
Carpetland USA
(The Langan Group)
Davenport, Iowa

I believe 2024 will be a good year if the Fed's ease the interest rates mid-year as expected. Economists lowered the probability of a recession in the next year by 8 points to 41%. Rate cuts, an increased chance of a soft landing and lower inflation should help 2024 be a profitable year.

—Kevin Rose
Carpetland USA
Rockford, Ill.

Rates. I'm hopeful that falling interest rates will jump-start the housing market. Getting back to a normal level of activity, particularly in existing home sales, will surely help the residential replacement business.

—Adam Joss
The Vertical Connection Carpet
One Floor & Home
Columbia, Md.

We have an expanded and strengthened staff. With that, we need to be sure we communicate, repeat and overcommunicate as a team. We need to improve daily.

—Roy Tokuhama
Abbey Carpet & Floor of Hawaii
Honolulu

One thing that always keeps me confident—no matter what we are going through or looking toward—is our team at Bob's. We continue to work well together, no matter our differences, and our end goal is the same: we endeavor to succeed.

—Ashlie Butler
Bob's Carpet & Flooring
Tampa, Fla.

► **Home builder sentiment moved forward** in December while putting an end to four straight months of decline. According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), falling mortgage rates is the catalyst behind the

increase in builder confidence and a signal of improved housing conditions. Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes climbed 3 points to 37 in December, according to the latest National Association of Home



Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI).

► **Existing-home sales will rise by 13.5%** to 4.71 million units sold in 2024. That's according to the latest projections from the National Association of Realtors (NAR). Lawrence Yun, NAR chief economist, also expects the median home price to increase by 0.9% to \$389,500. Yun also said that rent prices will calm down further in 2024, which will hold down the

consumer price index. He predicts foreclosure rates will stay at historically low levels in 2024.

► **U.S. single-family homebuilding surged** to an 18-month high in November and could gain further momentum, with declining mortgage rates and incentives from builders likely to draw potential buyers back into the housing market. The report from the Commerce Department also showed permits for future construction of single-family housing in November increased to the highest level since May 2022.

CALENDAR

Jan. 10-11

Mohawk Momentum Roadshow 2024
Stop 2/7: MGM Grand, Washington, D.C. Exhibit hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Contact: Caroline Humphries, 865.806.0985; caroline_humphries@mohawkkind.com.
To register, go to: mohawkmomentumroadshow.com

Jan. 10-12

Shaw Winter Markets
Dallas Market, Embassy Suites, DFW Airport North, Grapevine, Texas. Exhibit Hours: Jan. 10, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.; Jan. 11, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; Jan. 12, 9 a.m.-noon.
To register, go to shawshows.com

Jan. 11-12

Southwest Flooring Market
Globe Life Field, Arlington, Texas.
Contact: Sammie Nipper, sammie@flooringmarkets.com; 770.559.0293, x-2

Jan. 15-18

CCA Global
Annual convention, Gaylord Texan, Grapevine, Texas
Contact: Terri Daniels, 800.450.7595; info@ccaglobal.com; ccaglobal.com

Jan. 17-18

Mohawk Momentum Roadshow 2024
Stop 3/7: Sheraton Grand, Chicago. Exhibit hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Contact: Caroline Humphries, 865.806.0985; caroline_humphries@mohawkkind.com.
To register, go to: mohawkmomentumroadshow.com

Jan. 24-26

The International Surface Event
Annual trade show, Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas. Contact: Michelle Swayze, 800.547.3477; michelle.swayze@informa.com; intlsurfaceevent.com

POINTS OF INTEREST

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MOHAWK
MOMENTUM
ROADSHOW 2024



But we're not stopping there. Removing PVC
from our floors is just the first step. Mohawk
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What will be the hottest flooring categories in 2024?

By Ken Ryan

It's that time of year again when flooring retailers make their product selections for what they hope will be big winners—for their customers and for their bottom lines.

While the usual suspects like SPC/rigid core will be at the top of dealers' wish lists, they are also looking for emerging products or hidden gems to latch onto.

FCNews asked retailers what they think will be the hottest flooring categories for 2024:

CUSTOM RUGS

SAM LOCHER

**A.J. ROSE CARPETS & FLOORING
BURLINGTON, MASS.**

"I see patterned carpets that can be custom fabricated into area rugs as being a category that will continue to grow. Customers can take more of a design risk on these and can roll up and replace it if their taste changes in a few years. Classics such as Stanton Zambezi [a hand-loomed wool fiber] or Crescent Tattersall are also trending. Animal prints are big, too, like Antelope Ax from Couristan."

HYBRIDS

ERIC MONDRAGON

**RC WILLEY
SALT LAKE CITY**

"I think laminate flooring will continue to take back some market share from LVP, although the new LVP hybrids (mineral core, RPC, MTC) should help the category from some of the issues the low-end SPC products were having this year, which also has consumers looking at engineered hardwood again."

QUALITY, TRENDING DESIGN

**CARLTON BILLINGSLEY
FLOORS AND MORE
BENTON, ARK.**

"My thoughts are thicker floating installation floors will continue to grow, such as laminate and thicker-core LVP. Waterproof, sound protection and pet-friendly will be top customer concerns for '24. The lighter, more coastal colors will be the trend with a slant toward retro oaks such as gunstock and butterscotch."

DURABLE STYLE

JON DAUENHAUER

**CARPET WORLD BISMARCK
BISMARCK, N.D.**

"Laminate flooring will be the hottest flooring category in 2024. Laminate now fills the wants of most consumers. Durable, stylish, water resistant and it stays locked together."

NARROW WIDTH LVT

MATT WIEN

**MARSHALL FLOORING
MAYFIELD HEIGHTS, OHIO**

"Laminate is becoming more accepted by our customer base; however, I don't see it overtaking LVT. A trend that we are seeing across all hard surface categories is the request for thinner planks for wood looks. I predict most vendors will be offering widths under 5 inches to meet this demand."

WATERPROOF LAMINATE

JOE ELDER

**HILLER'S FLOORING AMERICA
ROCHESTER, MINN.**

"We believe the laminate category will make the biggest move. As that category sees more waterproof offerings—and the quality LVP market keeps going up in price—the scratch-resistant advantage of laminate will make it a better value. We have added a few new laminate brands hoping that is the case."

NATURAL LOOKS

KELLI KADLEC

**FLOOR CRAFT, LLC
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.**

"What I think will be popular are natural tones for wood/luxury vinyl/laminate flooring—clean, not rustic; light finishes, think natural white oak; textured tile; geometric tile; marble-look tile; surface drenching with tile (i.e. same tile on bathroom floor as shower surround/wainscot). We are seeing a terracotta revival, so that will be interesting as more vendors release new terracotta-look series. Also, earthy/organic/concrete-look tiles with a more organic, minimalist feel will continue to be a popular look. Less is more."



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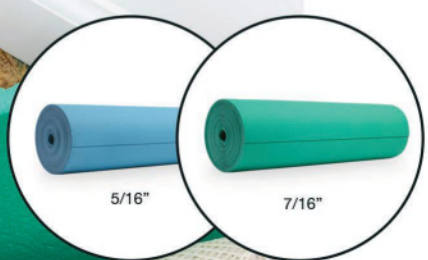


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TISE 2024 educational sessions cover host of hot topics

In keeping with years past, Informa Exhibitions has planned a robust educational schedule for TISE 2024, which kicks off on Jan. 23—a day prior to the start of the show—at the Mandalay Bay Conference Center in Las Vegas. All sessions are scheduled to take place in the Islander I section of the convention center.

Following is an overview of some of the courses and Pulse seminars on tap:

Tuesday, Jan. 23

1 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

NAVIGATING AN UNPREDICTABLE WORKFORCE: BUILDING A TEAM THAT WILL WORK... ACROSS GENERATIONS

(Speaker: Scott Beebe, owner/founder of Business On Purpose)

Gen Z is the newest generation to enter the workforce, and they have different expectations, values and preferences than their older counterparts. Some of the values that define Gen Z are diversity, inclusion, social responsibility, innovation and flexibility. In this seminar, you will learn how to understand and communicate with Gen Z workers, as well as how to foster collaboration and harmony among different generational groups. You will also discover the strengths and challenges of Gen Z, and how to leverage their potential for your organization's success. This seminar is designed for anyone who wants to improve their intergenerational relationships and productivity in the workplace.

2 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

DESIGN TRENDS & INSTALLATION TECHNIQUES FOR EVERY INDUSTRY PRO



Emely Roque

(Speakers: Emely Roque, Yellowstone Marble and Granite; Mark Heinlein, NTCA; Roland Thompson, Thompson Flooring, Installation & Consultant Services; and Jennifer Farrell, celebrity interior designer.)

There's often a disconnect

between what designers and consumers want, and what fabricators and installers can properly implement. How can manufacturers and distributors balance the surface trends that buyers desire with the installation that contractors can actually achieve? Celebrity designer Jennifer Farrell and her panel of leading installation experts dive into this lively conversation, offering key takeaways for every industry pro across all fields. Farrell will share six design trends that will drive the market in flooring, stone and tile. Demos to follow in breakout sessions in Stone Expo, Tile Expo and Surfaces.

3 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

PRODUCT CATEGORIES UPDATE

(Speaker: Aaron Toomey, managing director, Anchor Peabody)

This session will examine which product categories will continue to capture market share, which countries will import and export the most and how shipping and transport will influence the floor covering industry. This seminar will provide attendees with valuable insights and data to help you make informed decisions and stay ahead of the competition.

4 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

LEVERAGE AI TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

(Speaker: Daniel Moscovitch, co-founder, Flooring Pros)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the way businesses operate and compete in the modern world. AI can help you optimize your marketing, sales, management and other processes by automating tasks, enhancing customer experience and providing insights and recommendations. In this seminar, you will learn about the opportunities and challenges of integrating AI into your business strategy and how to leverage the best prac-

tices and tools to achieve your goals. Whether you are new to AI or already have some experience, this seminar will help you discover how AI can take your business to the next level.

Wednesday, Jan. 24

8 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

FLIP YOUR ORG CHART UPSIDE DOWN

(Speaker: Kyle Hedin, CEO, Illustrious Hardwood)

In most organizations, the hierarchy is top-down with managers and leaders having more power and influence than the staff. But what if we flipped the organization chart upside down, so the leaders serve and support the staff rather than the other way around? In this seminar, we will explore the benefits and challenges of this radical approach to organizational design, culture and leadership. We will also discuss how to manage the manager in this new context and how to foster a culture of empowerment, collaboration and innovation.

9 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CLIENTS

(Speaker: Sharon Sherman, ASID, CID, CKD, founding owner, Thyme & Place Design)

Dealing with difficult clients can be a challenge, but understanding their personality traits can help you communicate more effectively and resolve conflicts. In this seminar, you will learn personality types using the four elements of air, earth, fire and water. You will also discover how to adapt your own style to match the client's needs and expectations. Whether you are dealing with an air client who is curious and creative; an earth client who is practical and reliable; a fire client who is passionate and assertive; or a water client who is empathetic

and intuitive, you will gain insights and strategies to handle any situation with confidence and professionalism.

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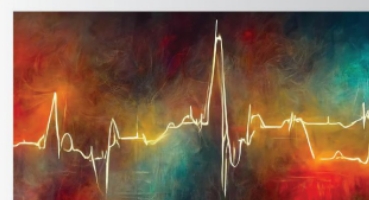
Design Trends & Installation Techniques for Every Industry Pro



Flip Your Org Chart Upside Down



Dealing with Difficult Clients



Bold, Fearless Color



Finessing the Sales Process from Lead to Close



The Kitchen and Bath Trends Influencing the Floors



Re-igniting Your Marketing Engine

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10 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

CAMPAIGNS WE'RE RUNNING

(Speaker: Chris Ramey, president, The Home Trust International)

Join us for an insightful examination of the latest marketing trends and best practices from the past quarter. Sharing live campaigns, the speaker will break down the creative, copy and effectiveness of each one. You will learn how to craft engaging and persuasive messages

that resonate with your target audience and drive conversions. Don't miss this opportunity to get inspired and informed by top marketing campaigns in the industry.

11 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

SYSTEMOLOGY: PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

(Speaker: Michelle Winters, founder, Women of the Flooring Business)

Systemizing processes is a pro-

cess—and there's a method to it. Intentionally or not, your business is already "systemized." But are those systems going to produce the result you want? Understand how to analyze systems and find opportunities to improve them. Know when and



Michelle Winters

how to do it. Incorporate this crucial element of growing a scalable business into your schedule without interrupting the work that needs to be done in the business. Moreover, eliminate inefficiencies, reduce costs, know what to intentionally systemize and in what order.

1 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

BOLD, FEARLESS COLOR

(Speaker: Rachel Moriarty, founder Rachel Moriarty Interiors)

Color trends are constantly evolving and influencing various aspects of our lives, from fashion to architecture to art. In this seminar, we will explore the latest color trends for 2024 and beyond, based on research, data and expert insights. We will also discuss how to apply these trends to your own projects and create impactful and harmonious color schemes. Whether you are a designer, a marketer, a creative professional or simply a color enthusiast, this seminar will inspire you and help you stay ahead of the curve.

Thursday, Jan. 25

8 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

FINESSING THE SALES PROCESS FROM LEAD TO CLOSE

(Speaker: Alison Mullins, founder/lead consultant, Rep Methods)

How do you turn a sales lead into a loyal customer? In this seminar, you will learn the best practices for selling your product and service, becoming an expert in your field and nurturing the client relationship. You will discover how to identify the needs and pain points of your prospects, how to present your solution in a compelling way and how to overcome objections and close the deal. You will also learn how to follow up with your customers, provide them with ongoing value and turn them into advocates for your brand.



9 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

WE ARE THE ANSWER: GROUP SOLUTIONS TO INDUSTRY ISSUES

(Speaker: Chris Ramey, president, The Home Trust International)

Feel like your voice isn't heard? This is your opportunity to share your insights and answers in a dynamic and engaging conversation where everyone's voice matters. Do you want to share your insights and learn from others who face similar challenges and opportunities in your field? If so, join us for an audience-driven, interactive seminar that will address the most pressing issues and questions that you and your peers have. You will have the chance to vote on the topics, participate in discussions and get feedback.

10 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

GETTING PAID

(Speaker: Michelle Winters, founder, Women of the Flooring Business)

One of the biggest challenges for business owners is getting paid on time and in full. If you struggle with collecting accounts receivables, setting your rates or negotiating contracts, this seminar is for you. You will learn how to value your services, communicate your expectations and enforce your payment terms. You will also get tips and tools for dealing with late or non-paying clients, resolving disputes and avoiding legal issues.

11 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

THE KITCHEN AND BATH TRENDS INFLUENCING THE FLOORS

(Speaker: Ebony Stephenson, owner, Designs by Ebony LLC)

Kitchen and bath design trends are constantly evolving and influencing the floor covering product selection for these spaces. In this seminar, you will learn about the latest trends in kitchen and bath design, covering color schemes, materials, finishes and styles. You will also discover how these trends affect the floor covering choices for these rooms, such as durability, performance, aesthetics and maintenance.

12 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.

REIGNITING YOUR MARKETING ENGINE

(Speaker: Shannon Vogel, owner/founder, Reach Social)

If you want to boost your marketing performance and reach new customers, you need to rethink your strategy and tactics. In this seminar, you will learn how to allocate your ad spend effectively, how to measure and improve your KPIs, and how to craft compelling collateral and messaging that resonates with your target audience. You will also get tips and best practices from real-world examples of companies that successfully reignited their marketing engine.

1 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

LEADERSHIP BY THE LETTER

(Speaker: Scott Humphrey, CEO, WFCA)

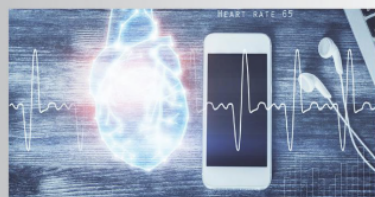
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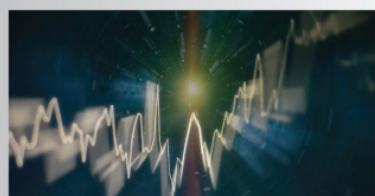
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NAFCD members hash out pressing issues

High inflation in an uncertain economy. Challenges in recruiting, hiring and retention. Ongoing shipping and sourcing issues. These were just some of the hot-button topics on the table at the 2023 North American Association of Floor Covering Distributors and North American Building Material Distribution Association (NAFCD+NBMDA) convention held here at the group's fall conference.

During the convention, *FCNews* caught up with several NAFCD executive board members (past and present) to get their take on some of these pressing issues as well as the overall state of the floor covering distribution industry. Participants in the roundtable discussion included: Dori Blitzstein, NAFCD president and vice president of Roessel-Heck Co.; AJ Warne, NAFCD immediate-past president and vice president of sales and marketing at Abraham Linc; Brian Green, NAFCD president-elect and chief sales marketing officer, Belknap-Haines; Austin Starnes, NAFCD vice president and VP of product strategy, BPI; and Kyle Gorny, outside sales, All Surfaces. Reginald Tucker, *FCNews* executive editor, served as moderator.

Following are excerpts of the discussion:

Q: In their presentations, Brian Beaulieu and Connor Lokar of ITR Economics offered a sobering take on the prospects of the U.S. economy. They surmised that most distribution companies in attendance are not expected to have a "great" year in 2023. Furthermore, Beaulieu and Lokar predicted a mild downturn in 2024. Looking at your respective businesses, are you in agreement with those projections?

Gorny: We were very lucky in Michigan. Things got off to a good start in 2023, then things started tapering down a little bit insofar as residential. Commercial stayed strong for us throughout the rest of the year. We were expecting a downward trend during the second half, but we're doing all right.

Looking into the future to 2024, I believe [Beaulieu] is right in that interest rates will continue to drop—so that's going to be good for new builds.

Starnes: BPI had a really good first quarter of 2023, so we were pumped at the first of the year. During the summer months, we started coming back to reality but we saw some positives in the fall. Last month was a good month for BPI and we are encouraged about how we will finish 2023. ITR projections going into 2024 are very much in line with what we are seeing.

Green: For us at Belknap-Haines/STC, we mirror those comments. The first half was solid. Second half we

saw some softening, especially in the residential remodel replacement segment. Our business consists of builder, multi-family, commercial and retail. Retail was the hardest hit for us. Looking at the builder business, we know home sales have softened but we're still seeing the backlog being worked through the year.

We saw a drop-off in the middle of 2023, but things have stabilized. We thought 2023 was going to be a reset year, believing there was going to be a lot more economic headwinds in 2023; we see that moving into 2024. [Last year turned out to be] a good year for us. I think 2024 is going to be a challenge, but it'll just be a year where we just need to tighten our belts and go out there to find market share.

Warne: At Abraham Linc we described 2023 as our rocket ship coming down for a landing. Since 2019, every year has been exceeding our wildest expectations. We've never been anywhere close to our budget until 2023. We're actually ahead of our budget for 2023, but we are right about flat in dollars. However, unit growth in 2023 was fantastic. Product to product growth is still very good. We're seeing a lot better growth in units in the commercial space and in the multi-family arena. Multi-family replacement has been good, but not as good as new construction business. And then obviously residential replacement was kind of dragging everything down,

with mixed results for our customer base.

However, we're really optimistic about 2024. If you look at residential multi-family starts, and then we add the proper amount of time for them to get the sticks in the ground and the roofs on top and get ready for us to put some flooring in, I feel like that's going to drive some strong growth throughout 2024.

Blitzstein: I pretty much echo what everybody else on the panel has said. We started off strong in 2023, and then we started seeing by mid-year it became a little bit stagnant. Our summer months weren't as strong as we had expected them to be. Knowing that residential was falling off a little bit, we strongly pivoted toward our commercial side, which is typically our strength. Our executive leadership resumed meeting personally with accounts, selling them on our competitive advantages and how we're different from everyone around us.

We try to entice customers to consider our products. We do that by not only grabbing the low-hanging fruit but also challenging our customers to value-engineer larger, more pricey jobs to our products.

We measure our growth by our profitability, and our profitability is up by one or two points right now although our sales are just about flat. We expect that we're working off old inventory. Because of freight, pricing has gone up and down so much in the past year and a half. But I expected, like everybody else, that we would be flat by the end

of 2023; we were hoping to be a couple points up.

Q: Many of you noted shared challenges with respect to certain end-use segments, namely the housing market. What other challenges are you facing? During our roundtable discussion last year, some participants mentioned challenges on the labor front, particularly the availability of truck drivers. Is that still an issue you're facing?

Gorny: It's definitely still an issue at all the satellite locations, trying to find drivers and counter help. In meeting with my customers, though, the biggest thing they're facing right now is the shortage of installers. If we're going to have a future in flooring, we need to train the young people today and let them know the flooring business is an option for them.

Q: Anyone else struggling with the truck driver issue?

Starnes: At BPI, we put a big focus on the truck driver and labor issue over the past two years. We experienced some labor challenges in '22, and heading into '23 things really stabilized for BPI. Obviously, we still have labor issues, but not to the extent we had the year before last.

Green: Once we saw less government subsidies things have somewhat normalized. We try to measure everything back to

2019, and it's still much more challenging than it was then. Obviously, rates are much higher today, and there's a lot of competition for folks, but it's not like it was back in 2021-22.

Warne: I consider us a leader in most of our markets in terms of wages for our frontline folks, whether it's truck drivers, warehouse or customer service. We've had an extremely stable labor force through most of '22 and '23.

Blitzstein: As far as the truck drivers, I think that problem has subsided a little bit. We've been having more success with recruiting truck drivers, and they're walking through the doors all the time. But I agree with Kyle that the lack of installers is still an issue for our customers—which is definitely being reflected in our business as well.

Where we are seeing labor issues is in the recruitment of salespeople in specific areas. I think that it's becoming challenging to find youthful talent, just trying to get young blood into the industry. But that requires a lot of training and an in-depth analysis of their talents from the beginning. Getting them even to consider the flooring industry is a challenge.

Q: I wanted to pick up on something that Dori mentioned about adjusting current pricing for older inventories. Looking back at the situation we faced early on during the pandemic and the immediate aftermath in terms of getting



products shipped, to getting it from the ports onto trucks and finally to customers. Has that issue been largely resolved for you? And how has that impacted your strategy in terms of sourcing product?

Blitzstein: It depends on the company you're working with; some are able to move containers faster than others. I'm still waiting for containers from December 2022. However, we're still able to service our customers. We partner with companies that also have local inventory, and that's a big thing for us. We purchase by container as well as from local stock. While we're waiting for containers, we're able to pull out locally. We've never had to tell customers that we're not able to service them or provide them with anything, and that's because of our business model.

Q: So you're able to make adjustments based on your strong inventory position?

Blitzstein: Yes. That's never been a problem for us.

Q: How has that impacted pricing?

Blitzstein: Regarding freight and pricing in general—I had heard at one point in time, maybe three or four months ago, that freight was coming down and everybody was decreasing their pricing. But now I'm getting notices that everyone's increasing their pricing. I don't know which way to turn and how to make projections. I don't know what my competitors are doing. I can't imagine coming out with price increases after we just decreased them. Internally, we're cost-averaging a lot of our inventory, but it's all over the place.

Warne: We felt like our supply chain has been more resilient in the last year than it had been prior to that. We focus really hard on having a deep bench in terms of the folks that we work with in order to have our products produced. Obviously, we have a little bit of a different business model than most distributors—OEM manufacturing more than 90% of our own goods. Our focus is on making sure that we have consistent quality across our products through various levels of the bench in our supply chain.

We really are focused hard on being deep on inventory, so if we are facing 30- or 45-day delays

on material related to port challenges, or issues that are going on with customs and border patrol in the world today with the UFL-PA, or anything along those lines, that is something that doesn't ever rise to the level of something that we even need to notify our customers of. We're probably in a better position to do that by being narrower and deeper, but we've spent a lot of time focusing on having that bench strength in our supply chain so it's something that our customers just don't have to think about.

Gorny: A lot of our products that we buy are made in the United States, so we don't really have too many problems at the port—which is a good thing. We bring it in as we need it. We don't have to overstock inventory because we're getting trucks from manufacturers within the United States on a weekly basis.



Q: Generally speaking, in the last year and a half, two years, has your product mix changed dramatically from what you've stocked and in-

ventoried, either on a branded or a private-label basis?

Gorny: Not really, no.


Green: Moving from 2021 into '22, there was a lot of availability challenges, and then there was a tremendous amount of flow of inventory that came in. I think what it probably made all of us as distributors think about is if there was ever that type of challenge again, how would we work through it differently? But the

reality is, once the pricing reset on freight, some of the products that were very challenged in the market are much more advantageous in terms of costing. So, if you take the freight factor out of the equation, now they're much more competitive, unfortunately, than some of the domestic products that replaced them during that time. So I think it's continually changing, but I think for us it's just understanding how do you position yourself when the market changes to make sure you can service your customers?












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Builder: State of the industry

Steady growth predicted for back half of 2024



By K.J. Quinn

The storm clouds are lifting for the builder business after two years of rough sailing. Following a turbulent 2023—which saw sharp declines in demand and home prices—falling mortgage interest rates and positive economic data signal improving housing conditions as 2024 kicks off.

“With moderately lower interest rates in 2024 and outright Federal Reserve cuts during the second half of the year, single-family home building will post an increase this year, rising by approximately 4%,” said Robert Dietz, senior vice president and chief economist, National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). “We are forecasting more rapid growth in 2025 with still lower mortgage rates and a persistent housing shortfall.”

The housing market, a major driver of residential flooring sales, appears to have passed peak mortgage rates. This is an important development, observers say, as it is expected to help spur home buying demand in the coming months. The proof is in the pudding, as builder confidence for newly built single-family homes rose for the first time since July, according to the latest NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI).

“With mortgage rates down roughly 50 basis points over the past month, builders are reporting an uptick in traffic as some prospective buyers who previously felt priced out of the market are taking a second look,” said Alicia Huey, NAHB chairman and a custom home builder/developer based in Birmingham, Ala. “With the nation facing a considerable housing shortage, boosting new home production is the best way to ease the affordability crisis, expand housing inventory and lower inflation.”

To say that the homebuilding

market in 2023 was tough would be an understatement. Mortgage rates more than doubled to higher than 7% through November, and many builders reduced home prices and provided sales incentives to boost sales. Fanning the flames were high costs for land development, lumber and other building materials—all fueled, in part, by high inflation.

“Single-family construction has been on a downward trajectory over the last two years, as higher interest rates and skyrocketing home prices created the worst affordability in 15 years,” said Sarah Martin, associate director of forecasting, Dodge Construction Network. “Supply has been crimped by a lack of workers, high materials prices and, in some regions of the country, unsupportive zoning regulations.”

The pulse of the single-family housing market began to strengthen in December following a flurry of encouraging economic news. Freddie Mac reported 30-year fixed-rate mortgages fell under 7% for the first time in four months. Single-family housing starts in November—the latest period for which reliable numbers are available—jumped 18% to a seasonally adjusted rate of 1.14 million and a whopping 42% higher than November 2022, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Most of this new housing growth occurred in the Northeast and Midwest regions as mild temperatures and dry conditions reportedly contributed to surges of 43% and 50%, respectively, over the seasonally adjusted rate for November. On a year-to-date basis, NAHB reports new home sales are up

between 2.6% and 5% in each of the four U.S. regions. “The long-term outlook for the single-family market continues to be very robust,” said Scott Baker, vice president of sales builder/single family, Shaw Industries. “Once some of the affordability aspects like mortgage rates, cost of goods, etc., come back to traditional norms, the single-family market should have many years of solid growth.”

Turning the corner

While economic indicators point in the right direction, the housing market is a long way from recov-

“With moderately lower interest rates in 2024 and outright Federal Reserve cuts during the second half of the year, single-family homebuilding will post an increase this year, rising by approximately 4%.”

—Robert Dietz
NAHB

ery. Despite positive news about drops in inflation and mortgage rates, the Mortgage Bankers Association’s (MBA) weekly mortgage applications survey reports a 1.5% decline for the week ending Dec. 15. “At least as of that week, borrowers’ response to this rate move was rather tepid,” stated Mike Fratantoni, MBA’s SVP and chief economist. “Refinance applications jumped 18% for the week, but otherwise both refinance and purchase applications showed small declines.”

The snail’s pace of the housing market’s growth is amplified by the number of privately owned units authorized by building permits. In November, this figure

was nearly 1% higher from the previous month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.46 million, the Census Bureau reports.

“The first three months of 2024 are likely to be reasonably flat, showing neither improvement nor contraction in single-family starts,” Dodge’s Martin predicted. “But once the Fed begins the long process of loosening monetary policy, more steady growth will take hold in the back half of the year.”

The projected housing market upswing is welcome news to the flooring industry. “Single-family sales started to plateau and then rebound in Q1 and Q2 of 2023, which made us think 2024 would be possibly up 10%,” Shaw’s Baker noted.

Indeed, the two-year downward trend in single-family housing came to an end in the first quarter of 2023, reports show. In the nine months since January, single-family starts increased 35%, Dodge reports. “The impetus for this growth was a stabilization in mortgage rates,” Martin noted.

“When combined with a healthy labor market, demand for new homes was strong enough against a backdrop of tight supply that builders resumed construction.”

As inflation levels and mortgage rates drop, consumer budgets and purchasing power are expected to escalate. Which is good news for builders and residential flooring contractors as more consumers are incentivized to purchase a home sooner rather than later. “The No. 1 concern is the cost of money,” noted Dan Butterfield, Dal-Tile’s vice president of residential sales. “Interest rates will continue to largely impact the health of our economy and industry.”

Impact of still-high costs

While most industry observers see lower interest rates as good news, there’s still another challenge to contend with—the unusually high construction costs. “New construction costs have gone up for builders,” said Brian Carson, AHF Products president and CEO. “But as interest rates go down, you’re going to see spaces getting bigger and people trading up as they want the nicest place they can afford.”

Housing affordability is one of the biggest issues facing builders in the new year and has a trickle-down effect for providers of interior decorating products such as flooring. For instance, single-family builders are increasingly focused on mortgage rate buy-downs to get buyers in homes. “This is driving larger builder margins on hard surface upgrades to help fund projects,” said Todd Hershauer, director, builder and multi-family, Mannington. “There is also price pressure from the home buyer for lower cost options.”

If more production builders adopt an “everything included” package, it could reduce customization of homes by consumers, observers note. “This can reduce profitability for those builders, flooring contractors and manufacturers who have enjoyed customized material selections made within design studios,” Dal-Tile’s Butterfield said.

Further impacting home sales in 2024 are rising regulatory costs, which, on average, represent nearly one quarter of the price, builders report.

“There are proposals under discussion that would require FHA-mortgage home buyers to only buy new homes built to the 2021 energy code,” NAHB’s Dietz stated. “This could spread to other financing means, raising the cost of buying a home and pricing out many prospective home buyers.”

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Mannington's Campbell looks back on career

After 46 years at Mannington Mills—the last 28 as chairman of the board—Keith Campbell retired on Dec. 31, turning the reins over to Zack Zehner, his nephew and previous president of Mannington Residential. As of January 1, Zehner is officially executive chairman of the board. The transition ushered in the fifth generation of Campbell family leadership at the 100-plus-year-old company.

Campbell spent his entire career at Mannington, which was founded by his great grandfather, John Boston Campbell, in 1915. He joined the company in 1977 and held a variety of positions in sales, manufacturing and finance. Campbell was named to the board of directors in 1983—succeeding his father, John B. “Johnny” Campbell II—and was appointed chairman in August 1995.

FCNews senior editor Ken Ryan recently caught up with Campbell, who now lives in Sarasota, Fla., and will retain his seat on the Mannington board.



Keith Campbell

? Why was the timing right for you to retire now?

Succession planning is a very important aspect in a company and extremely important when talking about a family-run business. My retirement was in the works for quite a long time. I actually waited to retire as we had a transition with Russell [Grizzle, former CEO] and now Tom Pendley, the current CEO. Everything is working tremendously. Now is the time for a fifth generation to step up. Zack is ready, willing and able.

We've worked hard on the transition. It's a big thing. Not many companies can say fifth generation.

? As you look back over 46 years, what were some of your biggest challenges?

During my time the biggest challenge we faced was with Mannington Gold, which was a massive product failure. Thank goodness for the leadership of Tony Kelly [then CEO] who did a marvelous job in guiding our way through it; we were able to traverse our way through it successfully. In looking back, Tony orchestrated something that could be written up in the Harvard Business Review; it was quite an accomplishment. It backed up who we were as a company. We took care of every claim as it came through and re-established our reputation as a strong ethical company.

The Mannington Gold episode lasted approximately five years and would have lasted longer had we not reinforced our product offering with dynamic new products, which stemmed the tide and put us

in a positive direction. It was a tremendous financial hit that we took. In a period of five years the financial hit we took we earned back.

? Your proudest moments?
Being inducted into the [WFCA] Hall of Fame where my father had been inducted. Our centennial celebration, celebrating 100 years to the day on Dec. 27 in Philadelphia, are two that come to mind. And without a doubt, there are proud moments every year I have at Surfaces when I look at our booth and see what we do and what our hard work and all of our associates have done. I think of my dad and grandfather and see how the company has grown so much; it's not me, it is the associates and the team that got us there.

? What has been the secret to your/Mannington's success during your term?
We've stuck close to our core values, and by doing that humbly we've been able to grow and weather the economic storms along the way. Those values—we talk about them: doing the right thing, controlling our own destiny, working hard and playing hard—we've developed a phenomenal culture around those values at Mannington, which is distinct in our industry and with many businesses. Mannington is a unique company. We like to say 'Yes,' and we like to figure out how to say, 'Yes.'

? What will you miss the most?

I'll miss being with our associates; I'll miss the people the

most. I'll miss the customers. But it's not like I'm going away. I'm staying on the board, but I won't be actively engaged. It's now time for generation five to step forward.

? How is Mannington positioned for the future?
We are well positioned. We have both strong residential and commercial businesses in the U.S. and North America. We have a very strong LVT presence in the U.K. and Europe. We're positioned financially to grow and are always ready to invest—whether in new plants or, when the time is right, for an acquisition. We are in a position of strength. We know the industry well; that's our concentration. Mannington is something precious and we want to see it continue.

? What will you miss the most?

I'll miss being with our associates; I'll miss the people the

Digital initiative off to promising start at Mannington

Recently Mannington embarked on a new digital initiative with Broadlume that allows the manufacturer to leverage Broadlume's digital capabilities—particularly in the area of lead generation (FCNews, Nov. 20/27). The partnership is already beginning to bear fruit based on retailer feedback Mannington received at the recent FloorCon convention.

“This partnership with Broadlume and Mannington signifies a pivotal moment for us as still a relatively new flooring retailer,” said Gianna Kramer, co-owner, LG Kramer Flooring, Lakewood Ranch, Fla. “We firmly believe that this digital retail selling system aligns perfectly with our vision of creating a flooring adventure that resonates deeply with our retail clients.”

How it works: Broadlume's Digital Retailing technology enables shoppers to complete most of the transaction online and finalize it in a showroom. In this case, the program is designed to help Mannington's retailers by offering a seamless shopping experience that increases sales opportunities, improves how flooring businesses operate and ultimately leads to more sales.

Broadlume will be the technology provider for Mannington's retailer programs including One Mannington, One Phenix and Compass Loyalty Programs.

“We have confidence in the possibilities this collaboration holds for our business growth and client satisfaction,” Kramer added. “I believe this digital retail program is 100% going to be a home run; it will be a big boost

for our revenue. This is absolutely a no-brainer to go forward with.”

Through its research, Broadlume found that Mannington is one of the most searched brands across its entire ecosystem—which makes it an ideal candidate for the Digital Retailing program. “By offering a better user experience through visualization and e-commerce sample ordering, this partnership will immediately unlock new sales opportunities for retailers solely based on the existing demand we see for Mannington products,” said John Weller, CIO at Broadlume.

“The ability to offer a seamless shopping experience for Mannington's retailers will provide a much-needed boost as the economic outlook continues to be

was seeking a partnership with a supplier that not only shared the same core values as her business but also one that understood lead-generation strategies.

“Knowing that a manufacturer is just as committed to creating leads for our business as we are for creating brand exposure for their products is what makes this a great partnership,” she said. “We love that Mannington is creating customer loyalty in our market. Any supplier that doesn't offer their support and understanding of the small dealer in the future will not be successful.”



Mannington's Jay Kopelson (third from right) and Sean McCormick (second from left) with Gianna Kramer (second from right) and her team.

unpredictable.”

More importantly, Kramer—who only entered the flooring business in 2020—said she

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5 surefire ways to retain talent

By Marilyn McSweeney

After 25 years of filling positions, we experience, firsthand, the trends and cycles in hiring weighed against candidate demands and expectations. Astute candidates are aware of the talent shortage we are facing in the industry. Many reach out to us with a desire to

broaden their experience, better balance their time or, in some cases, to simply get big raises.

While there are a variety of reasons that employees are seeking a career transition, top five that we have been hearing on a consistent basis are: more money;

advancement opportunities; greater flexibility; purpose of work; and workplace diversity/inclusion.

So, what's the best way to stem the tide and prevent more of your people from walking out the door? Following are five ways to accomplish that objective:

1 Offer competitive compensation

Compensation shows how much a company values an employee and rewards for performance. Ensure that your company is competitive in incentives, benefits and base compensation.

2 Support career development

Everyone wants to work for a company that promotes from within. Invest in leadership development to build inclusive leaders and, whenever possible, seriously consider "growing your own" by providing mentors to help coach and lead your employees.

3 Promote work-life balance/flexibility

We are increasingly hearing more reports of burnout. Despite any perceived short-term gains, the churn-and-grind approach is not sustainable over the long haul. Allow employees to have a voice in how they accomplish mutually agreed upon goals. Trust them.

4 Define purpose of work

Roughly 65% of those who participated in a Gartner Research report stated that the pandemic made them rethink the place work should have in their lives, while 56% of employees reported wanting to contribute more to society. Employees are less likely to leave when they have purpose.

5 Promote diversity and inclusion

Clients and employees want to work with companies that have people with similarities to themselves, who understand their culture and do not discriminate in any way. In today's environment, it's important to have a sincere commitment to inclusivity.

Marilyn McSweeney is the president of The McSweeney Group, a firm specializing in recruiting and contract staffing.

Recruitment vs. retention: What's more important?

Small and large businesses alike welcome the advice of expert and hiring firms specializing in hiring and retention. These firms provide valuable insight into the needs and wants of the current labor pool.

However, it's often also the proven practices of retailers and small businesses themselves that deliver the most consistent results. Small businesses have a wealth of insights into this topic.

As such, here is what some floor covering dealers advise for anyone looking to better understand the choice between

retention and recruitment, and how, exactly, they tackle both:

Roy Tokuhama Abbey Carpet & Floor of Hawaii

"I would do both, but I would place the greater emphasis on retention [vs. a new hire]. Both require a financial investment. A new hire is never a 100% correct hire because you never truly know a person until you begin working with that individual, which could take anywhere between two to three months. During that period, you are pouring in your time, resources and finances with a

50% chance they are the right hire to get a return. With our existing 'A team,' you know with more certainty their worth and ROI."

Mike Foulk Foulk's Flooring America, Meadville, Pa.

"Our greatest emphasis is on retaining the top installers that we currently have. Our belief is mentoring the new ones is the way to go for training purposes."

Sheldon Yoder Budget Carpet and Flooring,

Columbus, Ohio

"Both retention and recruitment are so important. I place a greater emphasis on retention because without your top people, training the next generation becomes much more difficult."

Marjorie Benson Friendly Floors, Port Charlotte, Fla.

"Retention. Our installation teams are top-notch and we treat them like the gems they are. We have more work than we have flooring installation professionals."

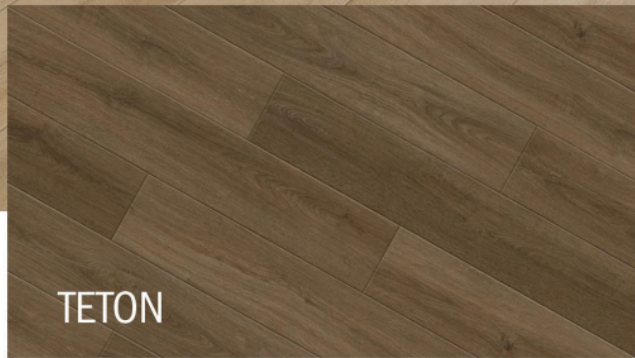


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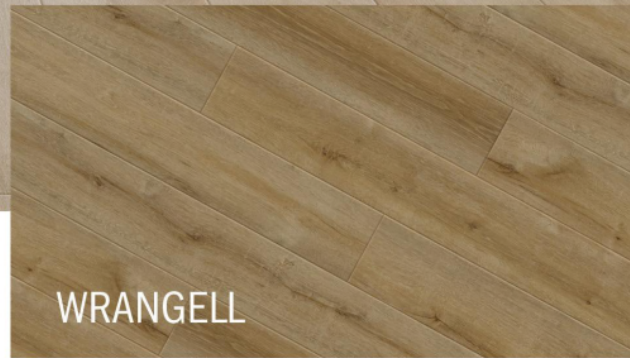
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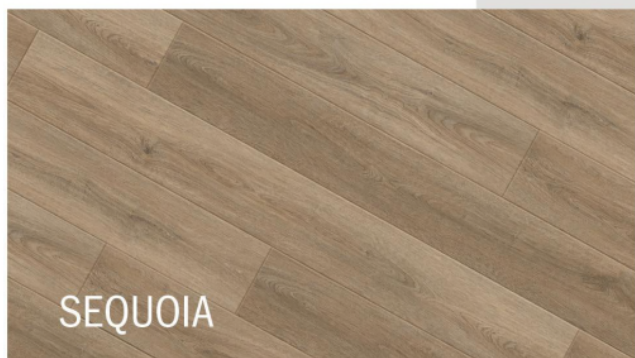
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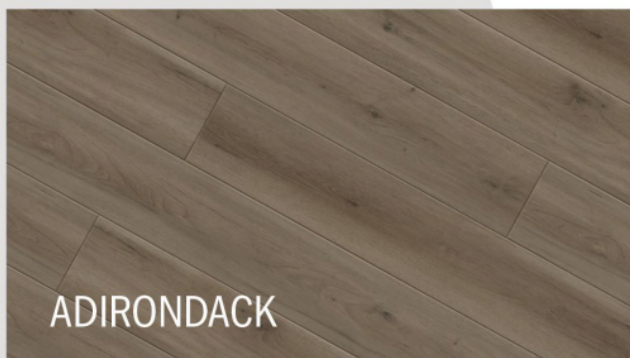
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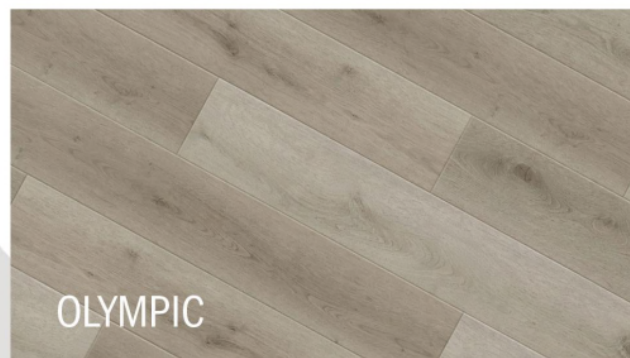
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New Year's resolutions for retail sales pros

By Pami Bhullar

Greetings and Happy New Year, friends. Over 25 years' tradition of New Year's resolutions is something I will not break, and it continues to be consistent with the new chapter in my professional life at The Dixie Group (TDG). Sharing resolutions is an expectation from most of you, so I will not disappoint you.

Following are my resolutions for retail professionals in 2024—independent of TDG.

1. Front load your sales/marketing efforts and projects. Being an election year (in so many countries), 2024 has three productive quarters. Advertising and social media will be expensive in the last few months before the election. Plan to conduct more promotions, direct mail events and clean up pipelines of current customers in the first three quarters. The possibility of media noise, distractions, negativity and confusion increases as we come closer to the election.

2. Turn the ordinary into extraordinary. Employ what I call the “Power of 1,” which essentially means doing just a little extra to make the ordinary extraordinary. That could be one more thing, one more call, one more minute, one more customer, one more presentation, etc.—you get the idea. Remember, 100% of the things that you don't do will not work.

3. Go back to basics. The last three years have been anything but normal. We are all longing for a new normal, which is another way of saying let's go back to basics. Look for ways to simplify buying and selling—that is what we all want. Make your presentations and processes as seamless as possible.

4. Use technology in selling. Consumers are increasingly utilizing technology (i.e., social media, internet research, etc.) to get more information on companies to do business with. Is your website reflective of your products, values and story? If you do not have a story to tell, all you have is a price to sell. If you can facilitate purchases so your customers can visualize your products

(i.e., room visualizers) in the comfort of their homes, rather than making five trips, they can decide in one trip. If you can send samples to their home or measure before they have to come to your showroom, you increase the likelihood of your success tenfold. Learn new ways to connect and build trust with your pre-sale communication.

5. Emphasize quality over quantity. We always knew it, but the meaning of “life is short” has taken on a whole new meaning in the past three years. We all want quality materials, craftsmanship and an enjoyable shopping experience. We all want to buy the best we can afford. Are you starting at the best? Here's an example: If you do not have a \$20 sq. ft. product in your showroom, you will never sell it. If you have it but never show it, you will never sell it. If you have it, show it but do not believe in it or know what benefits and value it creates for the customer, you will never sell it. Reduce clutter at the bottom while improving the top.

6. Focus on ‘real’ growth. Everyone is trying to reach out to more customers. Real growth is serving the customers you currently have so they might buy better products and services from you. You may find they are not only willing to pay you more but are also willing to promote you and become your ambassadors.

7. Leave no stone unturned. The New Year marks a second chance or an opportunity to improve what you always wanted to but did not get around to. Make a list of the top three to five things that you would have—or could have—done better. Pick the one that will create the most value for you, your family, your company, your world and focus on it. Write a clear description of it and put it on your work desk, by the bedside, on the mirror in the bathroom and practice it for 30 days.

8. Make 12 improvements over 12 months. Aristotle said: “We are what we repeatedly do; therefore, excellence is not an act but a habit.” Three simple words: repeat, improve and excel. It

could be a word, a technique, a tool or a process that you want to improve. Start on the first of each month and make a sincere effort for 30 days. The sum total of all the little improvements makes a huge difference. Anything we do can be done better.

9. Double down on positivity, please. Start your day by inducing a positive thought of the day. Dalai Lama said: “Just one small positive thought in the morning can change your whole day.” Do not get out of bed unless you have a positive thought. Try this: “My customers are going to love me. I am going to make that sale. I work with some amazing people. I am going to smile no matter what. I am going to focus on situations, not people. I am not going to worry who gets the credit, I am just going to do it.”

10. Make a lasting ‘last’ impression. People always ask me what impression is more important—the first or last. If I had to choose only one, I will always pick the last impression. Here is why: If my first impression is not good, I have 5-10 minutes or half an hour to recover. But if my last impression is bad, the customer is already gone. I cannot say, “Mrs. Jones, can you please come back, pretend we never met and let us start all over again.”

Bonus: Build and nurture a respectful, trustworthy relationship with your suppliers' representatives. Your reps can move mountains to make things happen for you. They are focused on your success because their success depends upon yours.

Feel free to share these resolutions with others (flooring or other retail pros) to make a difference in their lives. I appreciate your love, friendship and critique to make me a better person every day; that's my personal 2024 resolution. Let's all do our part to make this world, and the flooring industry, even better.

Pami Bhullar is VP of business development at The Dixie Group. He has been providing retailers with helpful insights for more than 40 years.



women of the flooring business



It's not just about business, it's personal, too

BY RANDI FULLER

Traditional business practices have often emphasized detachment and objectivity, with the focus on profit margins, market trends and bottom lines—often overlooking the human element. In the realm of business, the adage “It's not personal, it's just business” has long been a prevailing mindset. There is something about this mindset that has never sat well with me.

I often think about one of my favorite scenes in the movie

My ‘It's not business, it's personal’ philosophy has been both empowering and transformative.

“You've Got Mail.” Tom Hanks says to Meg Ryan, “It's not personal, it's business,” referring to his cut-throat business approach. She responds by saying to him: “What is that supposed to mean? All that means is that it wasn't personal to you. But it was personal to me.”

Wherever there are people involved, it's personal. I'm all about challenging conventional wisdom, so I prefer to lead my business with a flipped “It's not business, it's personal” philosophy, which has been both empowering and transformative. It means that in every interaction, transaction or endeavor, there are individuals with unique feelings, needs and perspectives.

As women in a male-dominated industry, we are the ideal leaders to forge ahead with this human-centered approach. To

that end, I've put together a few key concepts that have worked well as I have navigated this new paradigm:

Know yourself. If you don't know who you are and what you value, your strengths, weaknesses, goals and triggers, it will be very difficult for you to authentically get to know, set healthy boundaries and empathize with others.

Build authentic relationships. Companies that prioritize building relationships based on trust and empathy often find themselves with a loyal customer base and team members. This is what separates a good company from a great company because it creates a community.

Take a team-centric approach. Most companies typically take a “customer-centric” approach, but I knew I wanted to transform the old hierarchical business structure into a team-based culture that valued each individual's strengths and their personal growth in order to create a motivated and productive workforce. Riding the coattails of Stephen Covey's Inside-Out approach, my philosophy has become, “If my team is happy, then my customers will be happy.”

Lead with empathy. Adopting the “It's not business, it's personal” philosophy is not just a shift in mindset; it's a transformative approach that recognizes the value of human connections in every aspect of our lives, including business. This philosophy encourages us to embrace authenticity, nurture meaningful relationships and prioritize the well-being of our teams.



Randi Fuller, owner of Mesquite Tile and Flooring in Mesquite, Nev., brings a distinctive approach to the flooring industry by integrating evidence-based design psychology. She is passionate about cultivating spaces that not only captivate visually but also reflect the holistic principles of well-being.



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Cali takes an 'In-N-Out' approach to business

No. 1 goal: Make it simple, do it well

By Steven Feldman

ENCINITAS, CALIF.—Cali is coming into 2024 loaded for bear. The lifestyle brand continues to grow its portfolio of products as more retailers benefit from the company's unique omni-channel approach. The secret sauce combines a unique coastal style with a limited distribution strategy along with a focus on higher-end products to allow the retailer to make more money.

The brand has come a long way over the last five years. Once known as a company specializing in bamboo flooring, Cali expanded into niche categories like decking and outdoor rugs, but it hit another gear with its SPC, hardwood and laminate.

Doug Jackson, president and CEO, likens Cali's approach to a well-known hamburger chain that has developed a cult-like following. "The thing I want people to understand is the differenti-

ated way we go to market," he explained. "You've been to In-N-Out Burger, right? In-N-Out Burger is known for three or four things. They do it simple and they do it well and everybody loves it. In wood, there's

three or four things. In laminate, there's three or four things. In vinyl, there's three or four things. In decking, there's one or two things. In turf, there's three things. We get into something, we want to be good. We want to be thoughtful. We want to make sure that they could go from good to better to best."

In illustration, remaining true to its coastal brand proposition, Cali this year is introducing a higher-end wood collection called Cellar. The 12-SKU line comes on the heels of last year's intro Barrel, which combines current trends with classic European oak in random lengths. "We

believe there's a ton of opportunity for a premium brand, which Cali really

speaks to," said Alex Brodtkin, vice president of product and sourcing. "We are going to spend more time playing in the best category than chasing what everyone else is chasing after."

One advantage of playing at the high end, Brodtkin said, is that no matter the economic situation, premium products seem to be immune to a downturn. "That premium consumer is buying no matter what. They don't care if the economy's down."

Cellar is all about design and trend and color, Brodtkin said. "It's really much more about the super clean visual than anything else. It's just about being a leader in color and design. And the 8-inch width is a little different."

Jackson said he thinks there is space to go after some wood niches. "We are going to get after that wood business in typical Cali fashion."

What differentiates Cellar from some of the other wood lines out there? "First, it is AB grade, so you don't see all the knots and imperfections like you see in some woods," he explained. "Second, it's the color line. People buy color first, second and third."

To that end, last year Cali hired colorist Lisa Lux, who Jackson knew from his days at Tuflex. "Remember what Tuflex was always known for? Color and style. Between Mike [Belprez], (director, product management and innovation), Alex and Lisa, we have the A team. And if you look at why Cellar will sell, there's no color line in the industry that looks like it. And then you've got a limited distribution so you can show it at a good margin."

Retail price point for Cellar will be about \$12 a foot. It slots in just under Meritage, which sits atop Cali's wood portfolio at \$13.29 a foot. Under Cellar is Whiskey and Wine at \$8.99 per square foot and then the entry-level Barrel at \$6.49. "Meritage has always been a successful product, but it's been a lone wolf; you need to step the consumer there," said Bob Fish, vice president and general manager – retail.



Bob Fish, Cali's general manager and vice president-retail, referred to the new Mavericks laminate line as the 'Shaquille O'Neill' of laminate—a reference to the board's extremely long lengths.



Cali's new Cellar Hardwoods line focuses on higher-grade species and clear, clean visuals.

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Laminate

Cali is getting into the waterproof laminate game with the launch of Mavericks, its second laminate collection but it takes realism to a new level, Jackson said. Fish referred to this line as the Shaquille O'Neill of laminate since planks measure 7 feet by two inches. More importantly, they're said to offer incredibly realistic texture. "The whole industry has its mind wrapped around embossed in registering," Fish said. "When was the last time you saw a piece of wood with holes in it and knots with rough edges? They sand it, they smooth it. That's what this replicates. That's why it looks so much like real wood." Retail price point for Mavericks is \$5.99.

Jackson concluded that the one takeaway is that Cali is all about color and differentiation to the point where people don't feel the need to talk about price. "I used to pride myself in presenting a display to dealers and never once quoting a price. Because if I could walk you through the line and tell you why this makes sense and where it fits in your showroom, and you're like, 'I'll take it' and I never quoted you a price, then I did my job."



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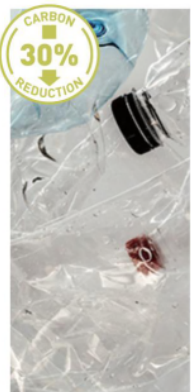
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Continued from page 1

Despite their due diligence, suppliers ran into an impenetrable force in U.S. Customs. “Once you get detained, the burden of proof is so high that you’ll never be able to get your goods cleared,” said David Sheehan, senior vice president, residential product, Mannington. “Our conclusion was you will never get [these products] released.”

While waiting for Customs to complete their inspections, manufacturers were forced to store their containers in a bonded warehouse at a rate of \$300 a day; that’s roughly \$9,000 a month x number of containers—all for a go-ahead that never came. “We got to a point where we looked at the daily expense for storage fees, legal fees and you reach a calculus where even if we get this released, it is untenable,” Sheehan said. “So, we executed return to sender and have redone the supply.”

At least six prominent suppliers were “exposed” in a study titled: “Built on Repression — PVC Building Materials’ Reliance on Labor and Environmental Abuses in the Uyghur

Region,” which was commissioned by Sheffield Hallam University. The so-called “Sheffield Report” listed the major companies that sourced product from Xinjiang Zhongtai Group, which was alleged to have shipped the luxury PVC-based flooring to U.S. brands.

The Sheffield report investigated the increased manufacturing of PVC in the Uyghur Region, the manufacturers’ use of state-sponsored labor transfers, the environmental damage this manufacturing was allegedly causing and the routes by which the resulting PVC-based products traveled through international markets.

“PVC flooring resins made in China are present in more than one-quarter of all flooring sold in the U.S.,” the Sheffield report concluded. “The XUAR produces the lion’s share of PVC resins used in that flooring. PVC made by Xinjiang Zhongtai Group is shipped directly to Vietnamese flooring manufacturer Jufeng New Materials, which then ships luxury PVC-based flooring to the top U.S. flooring brands.”

In September 2023, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) added Xinjiang



Suppliers were forced to store containers in bonded warehouses while awaiting clearance that never came.

Zhongtai Group to the UFLPA “Entity List” of companies blacklisted for their alleged involvement in forced labor.

With that it was game, set and match for U.S. companies with ties to Xinjiang Zhongtai Group. “The U.S. government actually used that Sheffield report to determine who the [suppliers] were,” Striegel said. “The problem was it was anything but

a complete list. It only identified the larger, middle-to-upper producers and left all the small-to-medium guys out of the equation. If you were on that Sheffield report, you got screwed. If not, you got a free pass. It was a half-baked approach.”

It did not help the cause that Customs agents operated as strictly an enforcement arm rather than as an agency that could help U.S. companies traverse through the gauntlet of regulations. “All we were asking was: ‘Help us navigate what you are looking for and be reasonable,’” Mannington’s Sheehan said.

ington sources from Vietnam, Thailand and India.

It is estimated that 12% to 15% of LVT (and related products) are made here in the U.S. today. Within five years, executives said, that number could be 20% as more companies add capacity domestically.

Incidences like UFLPA will only encourage suppliers to step up their onshoring efforts, according to Striegel. “Everyone is looking for exits out of China or for alternatives,” he explained. “Vietnam is in play, and there is an evolution out of India and certainly Mexico that is happening today. Out of our own backyard U.S. plants are exploding, and it’s wonderful. While it is painful what happened with UFLPA, it is forcing us to do something that will be a positive down the road.”

And yet, Striegel said he is still seeing what he called “a proliferation and oversaturation of [resilient vinyl], which is unlike anything I have seen in my 46 years in business. It has reached a point of insanity. There have been new LVT suppliers and brokers in my region [in Maryland] every two weeks for the last five months. I don’t know how that changes when this remains the fastest-growing floor covering category.”

Blessing in disguise?

If there was anything positive to emerge from UFLPA for flooring manufacturers, it’s that the experience taught them the importance of a diversified supply chain. As Sheehan observed, “You can’t have all or most of your eggs in a single basket. Thank God we have manufacturing capability in the U.S. We have gone ahead and onshored more stuff as a provisional risk mitigator. ‘Spread your supply chain out’ is the takeaway from this. It’s been a long ordeal, but we can see there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

In addition to the U.S., Man-

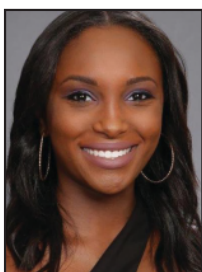
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High end keeps hope alive for residential market

By Ken Ryan

Following its COVID-19-induced spike in sales, the residential carpet market is down more than 20% from where it was just two years. Prospects for 2024 are muted, with the residential segment forecast to contract in the mid-single digits.

However, all is not lost in residential. In fact, the higher end of the market—from, say, \$14/sq. yd. to \$30/sq. yd. and above—continues to be an oasis for soft surfaces.

Observers agree this is an area that will continue to thrive, whether interest rates return to more typical levels or not. “I believe the high-end segment will continue to beat the market average, for a couple of reasons,” said TM Nuckols, president of the residential division, The Dixie Group. “First, the wealthy are less impacted by inflation and poor economic conditions. They will continue to spend money on things like home improvement when most consumers back away from non-essential purchases. Second, high-end carpet is frequently used in custom area rugs, which is a growing segment in the residential flooring market.”

Jason Surratt, president of Tarkett residential, agreed that the high end, especially patterned goods, should continue to see strong activity. “With consumers less frequently moving from their current home during this inflationary period, there will begin to be pent-up demand for residential replacement in re-

tail,” he said.

One factor sustaining high end’s momentum is the way carpet is used in the home. Most of the time carpet is reserved for the bedroom, common areas, basements and stairs. Executives agree this change presents an

little over 4 million units in 2024. That’s compared with an average of 6 million in 2021 during the pandemic housing boom and the 5.3 million average over the past 25 years. The dilemma mills face is that the housing market continues to experience a tug

to cut rates by 75 basis points during 2024, with the first cut in the second quarter. Despite the cuts, mortgage rates may still be too high to entice existing homeowners to put their property up for sale, analysts said.

The silver lining for mill ex-

Andolino, vice president, decorative division, TDG. “We are getting close to 50% wall-to-wall projects and 50% fabricated area rug projects. The beauty of fabricating broadloom into an area rug is that we can give the consumer exactly what they want in size to the inch, edge finishings and even applied cushions.”

Mills are targeting the affluent consumer by offering sophisticated colors, differentiated texture and styling and, of course, luxurious softness. As Jonathan Cohen, CEO of Stanton, explained, “We will continue to invest in high-style, innovative products. High-style, high-quality, quick-ship rugs in both standard and custom sizes and finishes will continue to be important as well.”

Jamie Welborn, senior vice president of product management, soft surface for Mohawk, said the industry will see “an opportunity in trade up with patterns and colorations. Consumers are willing to spend more on a differentiated carpet.”

With young home shoppers itching to get into the market, there is hope that 2024 will be the year when pent-up demand finally comes to fruition. The good news is that home-buying affordability, which hit the worst level in decades this fall, is improving. According to the real-estate brokerage Redfin, the typical housing payment for a buyer purchasing a median-priced home with a 20% down payment was \$2,503 in the four weeks ended Dec. 10, the lowest level since April 2023.



Karastan's new Modern Plaid is designed to meld radiance and refinement.



Tarkett Home's recent launch of Cloud 9 specifically targets the high-end market with offerings like Anthropology.



Shaw Floors developed a range of high-end offerings under the umbrella of the 3Cs concept: Controlled, Color, Character. Shown is Canvas Comfort.

opportunity to sell higher-end, premium fabrics specifically designed for these areas.

Homeowners staying put

Home resales, which account for the bulk of U.S. housing transactions, were expected to average a

of war between buyers who are priced out due to high mortgage rates (albeit lowering of late) and owners who are locked into their existing mortgages and are not incentivized to move.

Help may be on the way as The Federal Reserve is expected

executives is that the homeowners who are staying put often have the resources to spend on their homes, whether it is carpet for the bedroom or an area rug. “We recognize that we live in a changing world for the luxury broadloom industry,” said Len

Recycling hikes

Continued from page 1

California program has achieved remarkable results in terms of carpet collection and recycling; the assessment increase is necessary to continue the progress and to meet the challenging goals for the program that have been set by CalRecycle.”

The program attained a record 33.9% recycling rate in 2022 and typically recycles approximately 79% of carpet collected.

Carpet retailers are tasked with collecting the increases at the point of purchase. The mills are responsible for advising retailers on which products qualify in terms of post-consumer content. CARE will continue to supply POP material as well as training support materials.

The California carpet stewardship legislation (AB 2398, 1159 and 729) is designed to find ways to incentivize the growth of carpet reclamation and recycling and yet still allow the market to work. The law (AB 2398) generates funding to meet its stated goals through the assessment on all carpet sold in California. AB2398 was signed into law in 2010. The monies collected support CARE’s efforts.

Retailers comment

California retailers are no strangers to taxes, leading some to express ambivalence toward the increase. “Since we have many recycling fees in California, our customers are not surprised when one of them increases,” Janice Clifton, owner of Napa-based Abbey Carpets Unlim-

ited, told FCNews. “I also think since most carpet is now sold by the square foot it does not seem to be as much per unit for the consumer. The CARE recycling fee is listed as a separate item on our invoices, so it is easy to explain to the customers.”

Anaheim-based Sterling Carpet & Flooring also adds the increase on a separate line item, like sales tax. “We don’t put any signage in the showroom, just pamphlets that the state gives us,” said Dan Mandel, co-owner.

Others were not as understanding of the increased fee. “The assessment started at a nickel; soon it will be close to \$1. Next thing you know California will outlaw carpet by 2035—just like gas-powered cars and leaf blowers,” said Phil Meyer, owner of Carpet One Floor & Home,



Concord, Calif. “California never introduced a tax they didn’t like.”

Meyer said he uses RFMS software to update the changes, and posts the state letter near the sales kiosk, adjacent to state-supplied educational brochures.

While California is the only state to have an EPR, or Extended Producer Responsibility program, there are other states with active legislation that have either

come up for vote or were postponed at the last minute.

Some floor covering dealers are concerned the policy could spread to their state. “State legislation regarding recycling needs to come to a halt,” said Kevin Rose, owner of Carpetland USA, Rockford, Ill. “We all need to support lower prices as we fight for our share of disposable income.”

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Is it all waterproof?

Flooring retailers reveal how many water-resistant flooring lines are enough

By Megan Salzano-Birch

When it comes to “waterproof” flooring—or water resistant, as most flooring retailers will attest—how do you know how much is enough? The waterproof tagline still draws consumers in, so much so that even flooring categories outside of rigid core have begun donning the moniker, meaning it remains marketed and on showroom floors en masse. However, how do flooring retailers know how much is enough? We tapped several retailers who shared their strategies for success.



“We don’t market waterproof. It’s a result more than an intention. We focus on partnering with vendors that match our core values, and those vendors typically have every product category that we’re looking for. We saw very convincing data that showed less is more and did a showroom remodel and threw out 20-plus displays. It focused more on our target market and had less of a selection, but we curated our vendors and our displays based upon sales data and our core values. If a vendor did not match our core values, we did not use them no matter what product they offered.”

ROD WOODS
Patina Studios
York, Neb.



“At this particular moment, we have partnerships with 10 different suppliers. There is not a ‘magic formula’ on the number of different suppliers we have. But if changes need to be made, it is based on a proven track record of sales and what we receive from that supplier in representation and service. We continue to analyze through a process and have the ability to turn on a dime if need be.”

DOUG SCHUITEMA
DeGraaf Interiors
Grand Rapids, Mich.



“We sell eight brands. We only sell products that we have good representation for and service. I don’t think there’s a magic number, but with these brands each salesperson has their favorites. You know the saying: ‘Most people only sell their favorites.’”

DEBORAH DUTTON CYPERT
Interior Vision Flooring & Design
Soquel, Calif.



“We carry several lines, but our go to is the COREtec brand. It is the original with the largest variety of colors, textures, widths and thicknesses. Each line has their unique niche, you just need to find the right balance to fulfill your customers’ needs. Our strategy is to do business with fewer suppliers to be more important to each. If you spread your business out too much, you will become less relevant to your supplier and not stay competitive.”

BRUCE ODETTE
Carpet Exchange
Colorado



“We have about 12-15 companies that we carry. We’re super selective. Waterproof is a slippery slope. There used to be a carpet that they called ‘trackless.’ You weren’t supposed to be able to leave tracks. But just because it tracked less didn’t mean it was trackless. We feel the same way with waterproof. We also continuously bring in new product and remove old product, we call it a thinning.”

DEBY WINTER
Carpet & Tile Warehouse
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Engineered to endure

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DIMENSION

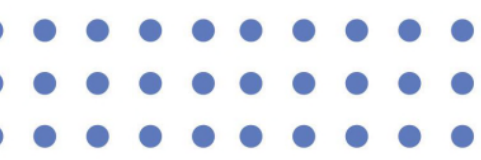
High resolution finish for softness you can see

The high resolution finish of PCHD allows you to see and feel every strand of fiber for never-before-seen color clarity in soft surface.

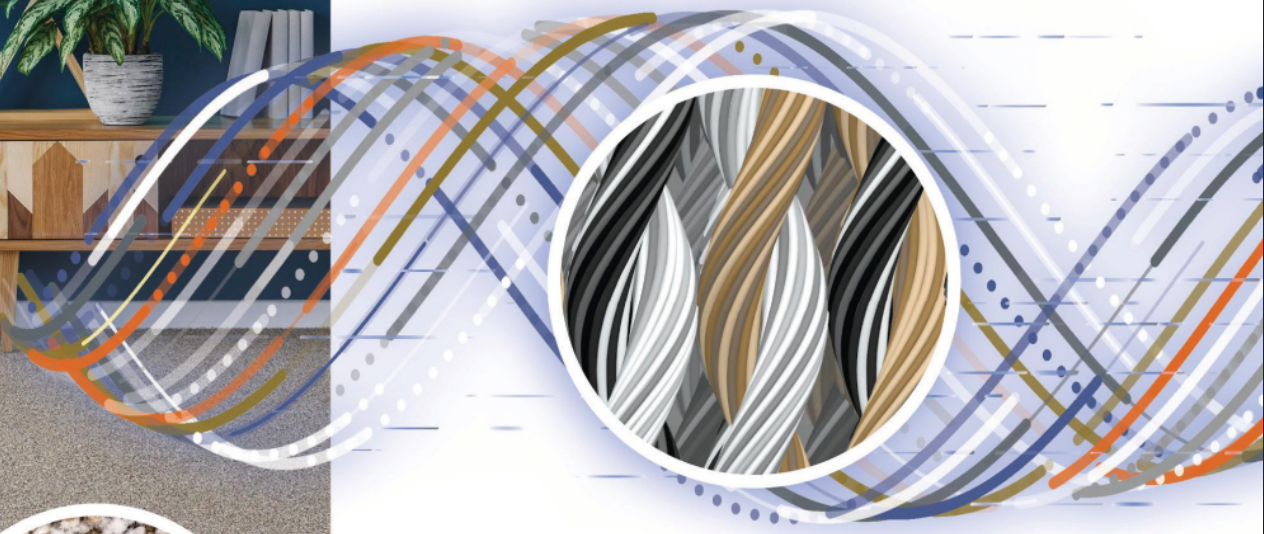
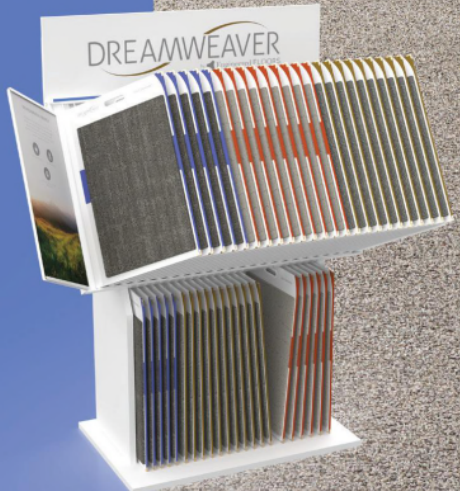
DESIGN

Color affinity supports self-selection

The multicolor makeup of PCHD allows every carpet to pair perfectly with surrounding surfaces and colors with ease, empowering and inspiring consumers to feel confident in their own selections.



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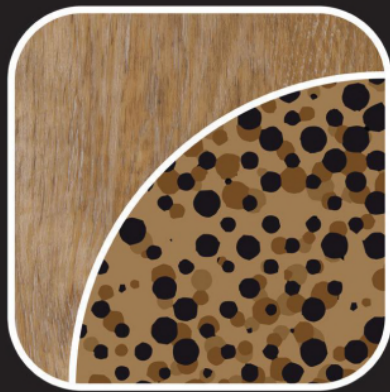
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DIMENSION

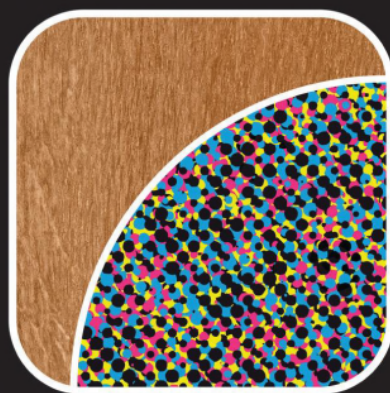
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DESIGN

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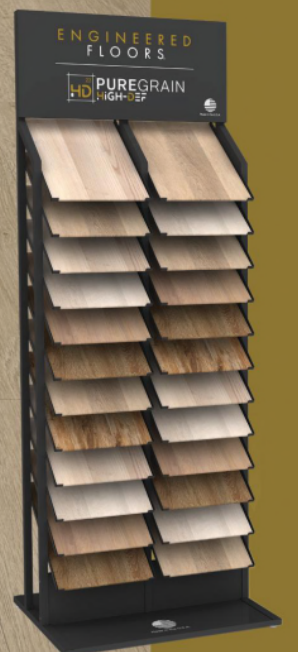
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IFC's new resilient brand, Canopy, will feature a 25-SKU WPC lineup.

IFC: A family affair with promise

By Megan Salzano-Birch

There are few names more well-known within the flooring industry than that of Dossche. Piet Dossche has achieved much-earned success within the industry, touting several unique innovations—even kicking off what is now the WPC segment of the resilient category back in 2012. But if you thought his reign had ended, you'd be wrong. Dossche is back in the game and not only with a new retail brand and product line but with his two sons, too.

International Flooring Company (IFC) is a new resilient flooring supplier spearheaded by Julian Dossche as president/CEO; William Dossche as executive vice president; and Piet Dossche as chairman of 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 boot.

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."

The go-to-market strategy will indeed feature heavy reliance on digital marketing to ensnare the consumer and direct her toward the brand's retail partners. "If we only focus on the retailer and filling that retail space, that's not going to be a success story for

tomorrow," Julian Dossche explained. "The new model is the consumer is our common customer. Us, as the manufacturer, you as the retailer—we go in this together. We go after that consumer together, and we make sure that consumer looks at us together in a new light."

Piet Dossche agreed, noting the old ways of doing business are long gone. "If you are a retailer right now and you have that premier retail space, if you would still take in a display from a mill that doesn't help you to capture that customer, I think you're wasting your time."

So how will the new company accomplish such lofty goals? One way is to partner with a powerhouse technology brand to help streamline the shopping experience. "Broadloom is our technology partner [and that's] how we're going to capture the consumer right at the beginning and guide her all the way through the process and end up with a win-win for all—a win-win for the retailer, win-win for us and a win-win for the consumer," Piet

Dossche told *FCNews*.

New products, too

Now just because IFC is planning to go to market differently than most doesn't mean it's resting on its laurels when it comes to product development. In fact, the company is certain it will be providing the best WPC flooring available on the market today. The best includes a 25-SKU, WPC-focused lineup with the potential for 45%-50% margins, according to Julian Dossche.

But what's truly exciting is the exclusivity. "We're going to have selective territory exclusivity," he explained. "Not only to make it worthwhile for the retailer, to give them some protection against price competition, but because the days of just cramming displays into the retail stores for the sake of capturing that retail space are gone. We are not going to play that game. Selective placement with protective territories will enable the dealer, in his or her area, to get the full margin that they're looking for."

lisbiz strategies

If you put customers first, you'll never go wrong

Several recent high-profile news stories involving retailers and service providers got me thinking about the importance of delivering top-notch customer service in an era where consumers are more closely watching their dollars.

Take Southwest Airlines, for example. The company has long been known for its amazing customer service and out-of-the-box thinking when delivering memorable experiences to consumers. Unfortunately, the company fell short of those high expectations when it was plagued by massive delays and flight cancellations during the busy 2022 holiday season. After investigating the cause of the delays to determine culpability, the U.S. Department of Transportation's recently imposed a \$140 million penalty on Southwest Airlines for multiple consumer protection law violations. This penalty, unprecedented in scale, highlights the importance of customer rights.

Another incident involved the recent reconstruction along the New York State Thruway, where new restaurants are replacing older ones. Among the new ones is Chick-fil-A, which is not only known for its tasty fried chicken sandwiches but also for closing on Sundays. This caused some discontent. So much so that several New York State lawmakers are looking to enact legislation requiring restaurants at rest stops along the state's 500-mile Thruway, including Chick-fil-A, to stay open seven days a week.

All this got me thinking: Do businesses genuinely care about their customers? Moreover, do they truly value their clientele? In the floor covering industry, the importance of providing attentive and reliable customer service cannot be overstated.

Following are some take-aways that can be applied to the floor covering retail industry.

Exceed expectations. I recall a case involving a problem with a flooring installation scheduled over Christmas. In the end, the installers on the job improvised and later compensated the customer with a thoughtful



BY LISBETH CALANDRINO

gesture—the flooring store sent the customer a centerpiece for the holiday along with a delivery from Santa Claus. As it turns out, this wasn't the flooring store's error; it was the realtor's fault. The flooring store contacted the realtor, who said they were willing to pay for the re-installation. Such actions foster customer loyalty.

Always go the extra mile.

I'm sure most people are familiar with the term, "under-promise but over-deliver." For example, imagine the smile on the

Customers don't care if it's the installer's mistake or a manufacturer defect—they just want the problem corrected in a timely manner.

customer's face when the job is completed ahead of schedule.

Stay top of mind. Don't make the mistake of ignoring the customer after the initial job is done. A good way to stay top of mind and generate repeat/referral business is offering post-installation check-ups or providing complimentary cleaning services after a year.

Resolve problems swiftly. Even the best retailers know that sooner or later you're bound to screw up. It's not the end of the world—nobody's perfect. However, it is crucial to address any problems or challenges quickly and efficiently. And whatever you do, avoid the "blame game." Customers don't care if it's the installer's mistake or a manufacturer defect—they just want the problem corrected in a timely manner.

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

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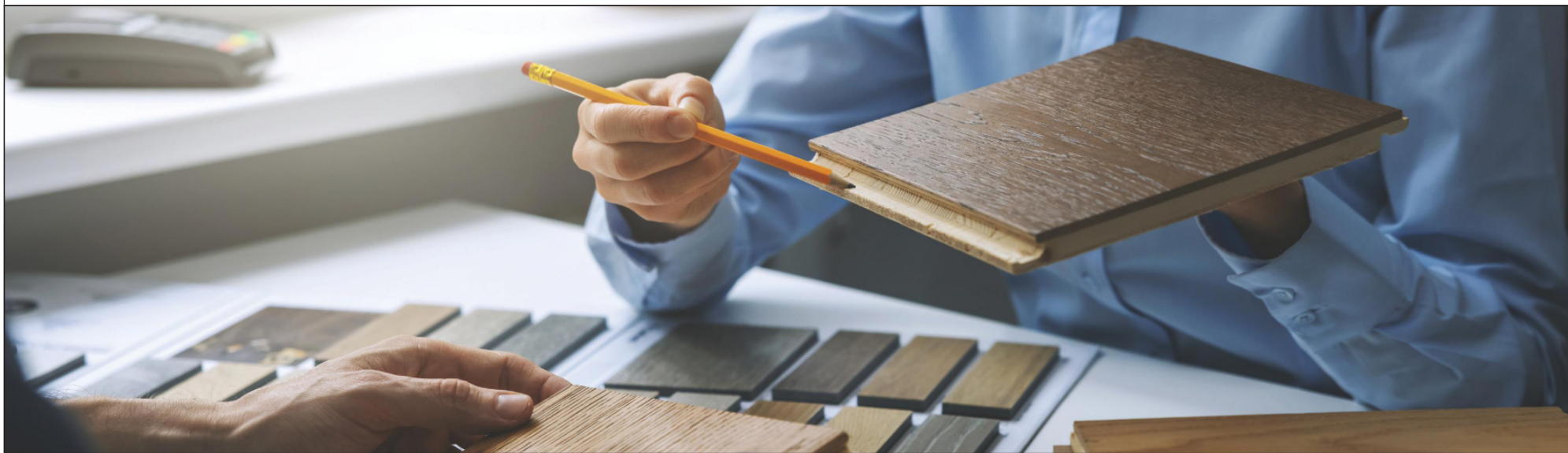
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Anatomy of a winning supplier

Top traits to look for in a reliable vendor partner

By Reginald Tucker

DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

The diverse supply of hardwood flooring materials gleaned from around the world is a big part of the category's allure. From European French oak to Canadian maple to tropical species gleaned from South America—all the way to domestic favorites like oak and hickory—there's no shortage of visuals and product characteristics to suit virtually any design need. But if there's anything the industry learned from the pandemic, there's no substitute for stateside supply. That's where companies like AHF Products, which operates 12 manufacturing facilities in the U.S., says it has the edge. "We are committed to delivering the best products to our customers, which means continual investment in U.S. manufacturing," said Brian Carson, president and CEO of AHF Products.

ABILITY TO MANAGE CHANGING MARKET DYNAMICS

It's easy to manage manufacturing operations when things run smoothly. But when it comes to all the nuances involved in maintaining a hardwood flooring production operation, a lot of things have to go right in order to achieve success on a consistent basis. Those suppliers that have the ability to master the juggling act stand the best chance for long-term success and, more importantly, value to their retail partners. "We were able to overcome almost all of the supply chain and raw material challenges we experienced in 2021 and 2022, which improved our service rates and inventory levels," said David Moore, senior product director, Mohawk. "We plan to continue leveraging our product portfolio and pricing structure to support our retailer partners."

UP TO DATE ON THE STYLE TRENDS

The culling, sourcing and complex nature of hardwood flooring production make it a challenging category to manage ahead of changing style trends. It's well known that there are delays between the time a product is sourced, dried, milled, stained and finished; that means suppliers have to hit it just right in terms of anticipating what colors, designs, species, patterns and formats are going to be hot. Hence the importance of partnering with a supplier that has a finger on the pulse of both existing and emerging trends. "We've focused much of our attention on building a hardwood product portfolio that's aesthetically appealing to consumers," said Kyle McAllister, director of hardwood, Shaw Floors. "We've revamped our hardwood lines for 2024 to reflect market trends."

CONSISTENT SUPPLY

There are many complexities involved in sourcing and handling natural materials such as wood. "There is a large amount of forecasting that has to be done to make sure you get it right on the supply side, and we try to get our partners to get in line with that," said Wade Bondrowski, director of U.S. sales, Mercier Wood Flooring. "With popular species like white oak and red oak, you're looking at several weeks before you can actually ship it into a box by the time it's kiln dried, milled, finished and put on a truck. It's not like you're sitting on all this raw material. If your supply isn't correct at that time, you're looking at a six-week turnaround time. A retailer or distributor needs a supplier who can effectively manage that process."

KNOW-HOW AND EXPERIENCE

When vetting supplier partners, retailers and distributors need to align with suppliers known for their quality and reliability. A prime example is Boa-Franc, maker of the Mirage brand of hardwood floors—a name synonymous with quality. "We have been setting the pace for high-quality produced hardwood floors since the inception of the company in 1983," said Brad Williams, vice president of sales and marketing. "Yes, we have the finest equipment and quality control processes; anyone with capital can do that, though. We try to buy the best lumber we can from reliable and responsible suppliers—others can do that also. The difference, though, is the people we have and their know-how. It's the culture within the company that makes the difference."



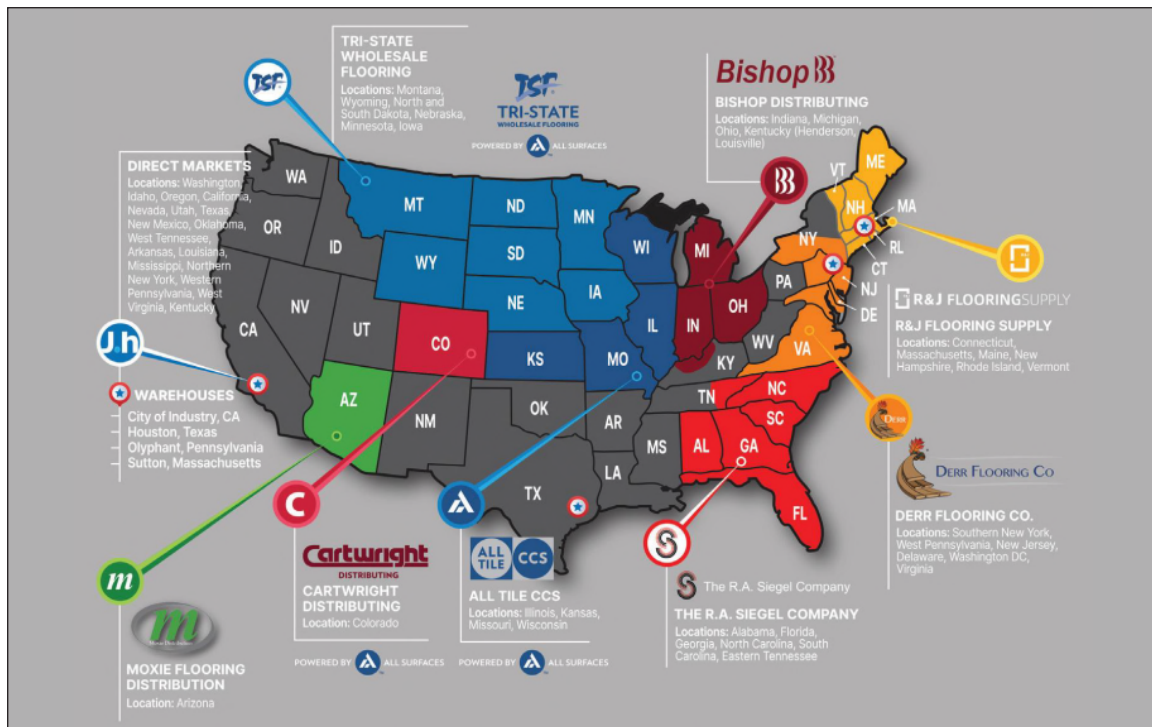
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Full speed ahead for Johnson following distribution shuffle

By Reginald Tucker

The new year marks a new beginning for Johnson Hardwood Floors. With the recent completion of the realignment of its distribution network, the company can focus more fully on its go-to-market strategy with a more robust distribution network.

“The new alignment will allow us to better service our existing customers,” Billy Ko, Johnson CEO, told *FCNews*. “And by going direct in certain markets, that will help us improve our overall inventory management.”

Johnson Hardwood’s revamped distribution strategy—which began in earnest last fall following the mutual parting of ways with E.J. Welch and continued through to the end of 2023—entails the following moves:

The R.A. Siegel Company now represents Johnson Hardwood in the following territories: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and eastern portions of Tennessee. Clint Haselhorst, vice president of sales and marketing, R.A. Siegel, is already seeing the benefits of the partnership. “We have been very pleased with our recent launch of Johnson Hardwood products. We typically look for products that are different and unique as well as something that is not going to overlap with our current portfolio.”

Johnson’s on-trend product offerings, Haselhorst noted, are right in line with those of R.A. Siegel’s customers. “Many times consumers want to upgrade their floors but aren’t ready to change out traditional stained cabinets that feature warmer tones and

need something to compliment that look,” he explained. “Johnson even offers some SPC products that coordinate with the same visual in engineered wood, which makes it perfect to use in a kitchen or bath. Dealers are searching for a way to upgrade consumers out of entry-level SPC and into something thicker with a stronger locking system.”

More importantly, Johnson has a history of standing behind their products—another positive for R.A. Siegel. “Having large amounts of inventory available quickly has been a real plus as a distributor,” Haselhorst noted. “We have been very pleased working with their team.”

Many of these sentiments are shared by other Johnson distributor partners like All Surfaces—the vaunted Midwest flooring wholesaler that is now part of the larger national INA consortium. Headquartered in Minneapolis, All Surfaces is the combination of market-leading distributors, including All Tile and Carpet Cushions & Supplies, Blakely Products Co., Cartwright Distributing, Tri-State Wholesale Flooring and Walcro. All totaled, All Surfaces operates 50 distribution locations across 16 states from Denver to Detroit.

“All Surfaces has enjoyed a long and prosperous relationship with Johnson Hardwood that started 20 years ago at our Tri-State Wholesale Flooring brand, based in Sioux Falls, S.D.,” said Keith Anderson, chief commercial officer. “We are proud to expand our partnership strategically within our footprint. The team at Johnson shares our passion for innovation, service and expertise, and we are grateful for the

opportunity to represent them throughout the majority of our trading geography.”

All Surfaces will represent Johnson’s comprehensive range of products. “This integration closely aligns with our overall vision: to offer a comprehensive line of products across our footprint allowing for stronger inventory position, logistic advantages and, ultimately, a better service experience for our customers,” Anderson added.

The last pieces of the go-to-market puzzle for Johnson include the signing of Bishop Distributing, which was tapped this past fall to handle the supplier’s products in Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Louisville, Ky. At the same time, Johnson has established direct-to-retail operations in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and New Mexico. Additionally, Johnson will continue to maintain its direct presence in Kentucky—with the exception of Louisville and Henderson, alongside Western Tennessee.

To further enhance customer service levels, Johnson Hardwood announced the opening of a new, modernized office, showroom and distribution center in Houston. The new direct territories will be mainly serviced by the Houston branch, and Johnson will have backup inventories on the East and West coasts to pull from as needed, Ko added. The facility is scheduled to start operations by the end of March.

“Having Houston up and running will help us have a central distribution hub, streamline operations, serve as the primary warehouse and reduce lead times for our distributors,” Ko stated.

marketing mastery

Skydiving lessons for surviving a slowdown

(Part 3 in a series)



JIM AUGUSTUS ARMSTRONG

In skydiving, you want to prepare for emergencies long before you ever climb aboard the airplane. The same principle holds true with your flooring business. As I mentioned in the previous installments, it’s not a matter of if we’ll hit economic turbulence; it’s a matter of when. With that in mind, I’m going to unpack specific strategies you should deploy right now to ensure your survival when the market takes a nosedive.

system. That one hour of training becomes the most profitable hour of your week.

Past client marketing

An effective, proven way to communicate with past clients is to apply the 90/10 formula: Make your blogs 90% fun or informative, with the remaining 10% being about your flooring store, your products and special offers. This enables you to stay in front of your list week after week and have them happy to hear from you—something that’s not possible if you’re constantly spamming them with content that’s 100% advertising pitches.

Here’s a question I ask dealers in my trainings: who

There are three ways to guarantee you reach everyone in your database: email, text and direct mail.

owns the contacts on your Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok and other social media accounts? Many dealers think they own the contacts. They don’t. The social media company does. And over time these companies have made it more expensive and difficult to directly reach those contacts. The only contacts you own are the ones in your own database or your own files. No one can take those from you. And there are only three ways to guarantee that you reach everyone in your database: email, text and direct mail—not social media. I help the dealers I work with to use all three of these methods.

In the next installment, I’ll cover more practical strategies you should deploy immediately to survive a market downturn.

Selling system

Maximizing your closed sales is always important, but when times are tough it’s critical that you make every walk-in or phone call count by having a selling system in place. A selling system is a step-by-step process that walks cold prospects from shopper to buyer, creates differentiation, helps you command higher prices and increases your closed sales ratio.

Recently, I spoke with a dealer who is spending \$300K annually in advertising, but their closed sale ratio is only around 30% of all walk-ins. This is the national average, and it means the average dealer is throwing away 70% of their marketing dollars. This is dismal. This dealer had no selling system in place. I told him that if he merely increased his closed sales ratio to 40% he would increase his revenue by a third without spending another dime in advertising, and that a selling system would help him accomplish this.

Sales training

It’s not enough to have a selling system. You’ve got to train your team on how to use it. Weekly sales team trainings will help ensure that your team masters the system. I recommend holding weekly sales team trainings. Again, if you merely increase your closed sales from 30% of walk-ins to 40%, you’ve given yourself a massive revenue increase. I’ve helped dealers get to 60% to 70% close ratios by training their team on a selling

Jim 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 information, visit FlooringSuccessSystems.com.

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Retailers ride the resurgence

By Reginald Tucker

Much has been made of how laminate manufacturers have capitalized on the “comeback” the category has experienced over the past three years, but it might be the specialty floor covering retailer that stands to benefit the most. While there has always been a place for the value-based product on retailer showroom floors, it has increasingly become a more viable alternative for consumers in the face of challenges with certain rigid core and SPC imports. The

segment has also witnessed a wave of innovations in areas such as visual realism, dent resistance, noise reduction and, of course, water resistance—all of which provide trade-up opportunities for floor covering retailers.

“Laminate is most certainly a hot category right now and we’ve been well positioned to take market share,” said Ted Rocha, executive vice president, SLCC Flooring, which also offers rigid core resilient flooring products. “No matter where I travel around the

country, I continue to hear about the migration back to laminate. I credit the fact that laminates have caught up to the resilient category with the waterproof/water-resistant story. Also, the visuals have become so sophisticated and realistic, which is most meaningful to today’s consumer.”

Following are reports from specialty retailers who have benefitted from the category’s not-so-surprising resurgence over the past few years.



The resilient flooring category has seen high, double-digit growth rates over the past five to six years, largely due to increased consumption of LVT/SPC products. The market share those sub-categories have seized from competing hard surfaces is well documented. But in some markets retailers have seen a shift. “We’re actually doing very well with laminates right now,” said Deb DeGraaf, co-owner of DeGraaf Interiors, Grand Rapids, Mich. “It’s more durable against scratching than LVP every day of the week. You tell it to somebody who has a dog running around the house and she says, ‘Oh, you better show me laminate then.’”

At Independent Carpet One Floor & Home, Westland, Mich., the renewed interest in the laminate category is palpable. “The resurgence of laminate is great,” said Cathy Buchanan, co-owner and showroom manager. “It’s a more scratch-resistant, water-resistant product at a fabulous price to our customers.”

In particular, Buchanan cited increased sales of Mohawk- and Mannington-branded products. “Their visuals are amazing, and we trust them to provide a quality floor for our customers,” she said. “Our customers love the solid feeling underfoot and the quieter aspect that laminate provides in their home.”



High-volume retailers are seeing an uptick in laminate sales amid supply constraints related to alternative options. “We’re doing exceptionally well with laminate right now,” said David Chambers, director of flooring, Nebraska Furniture Mart. “For those retailers that gave up on that category when the big box stores wanted to take it over, shame on them. That’s a great little business.”

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Long known for their resistance to dents, the latest laminate flooring products have also made strides in areas dominated by rigid core, LVT and the like. “Waterproof laminates are among the leaders in our stores,” said Typhannie Watson, owner of Carpeting by Mike, Somerset, Wis. “The category has really made strides in the past few years.”



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The new equipment Wellmade has installed at its Cartersville, Ga., plant gives the company the ability to run wider films while leveraging sophisticated EIR technology.

Wellmade expands capabilities

By Reginald Tucker

Nearly two years after breaking ground on its sprawling, state-of-the-art rigid core manufacturing facility in Cartersville, Ga., Wellmade has officially launched the second phase of its plant expansion. The producer of high-quality hard surface flooring has added new capabilities, capital equipment and automation to better service its growing OEM customers base.

“The plant was originally built to house enough equipment to be able to produce about 300 million square feet per year—so it’s a very, very big facility,” said Dick Quinlan, senior VP sales and marketing, Wellmade. “Phase one, which was completed in February of 2022, started with eight extrusion lines, which, at full capacity, can produce about 80 to 100 million square feet per year. We went through all of the issues and challenges of starting a new plant—getting all the equipment and training people—and all of that was done in the middle of the pandemic. There were some startup challenges, but nothing that was insurmountable. We had the advantage of having George Chen who has designed more SPC plants than probably anyone in the world in the plant the whole time.”

Up to now, according to Quinlan, Wellmade had been producing at a rate of about 300 to 350 truckloads a month, which translates to anywhere from 6 million to 8 million feet per month. But given the spikes in demand the company has experienced in recent months, it knew it was going to need more capacity to feed that demand.

Hence this next stage (Phase 2) of the plant expansion. Wellmade is already in the midst of adding new equipment and technologies to churn out more square feet per month. “The step we’re taking entails bringing in the next round of machinery, including eight more extruders,”

Quinlan stated. “That means we’re essentially doubling the number of extruders we have. Over time we will have about 21 extruders in the plant, which will push us to the 200-million-square-foot annual mark.”

Those numbers are nothing to scoff at. In fact, according to Wellmade, the increased production would put the company on an elevated level. By Quinlan’s count—even before the new equipment is added—Wellmade currently produces roughly 50% of all the SPC made in the United States. This achievement is especially critical during a time when the industry at large is facing so many challenges with imported SPC and other rigid core flooring products.

“We’re investing in growing our business in the U.S. because we anticipate really strong tailwinds with higher freight rates and some of the things that were going on a year and a half ago that are still impacting the industry,” Quinlan explained. “Yes, some of those issues have gone away, but there have been new ones that continue to create strains on the global market—global tensions between China and Taiwan; Panama Canal issues; the Uyghur stoppages, etc. All this has impacted our decision to continue to make investments in the United States as opposed to somewhere else.”

Increased capacity—although significant—is only one aspect of Wellmade’s plant upgrades. The next iteration of extruders, according to Quinlan, will also have the ability to run more sophisticated embossed-in-register (EIR) technology. At the same time, Wellmade is close to launching a new bevel profile called True Edge Bevel—an innovation that does not require actual painting of the bevel on the production line. “It’s designed to create a look that is more realistic than painted bevels,” Quinlan explained. “That’s another thing we’ll be showing at Surfaces to get feedback from customers.

We think this is a really good opportunity to create some new designs that more closely resemble a traditional wood floor.”

Emphasis on automation

Another focal point of the updates to Wellmade’s Cartersville plant is its use of automation. Much like its manufacturing operations in China, where very few hands touch the material as it’s going through the plant, the U.S. facility will make use of the latest technology to streamline production.

“The areas where there’s usually a lot of touch in overseas plants are areas where packing or multiple different points where things are loaded and unloaded from the line,” Quinlan explained. “Our production operations are extremely efficient, all the way from extruder to finish line to milling and packing. Basically, we load the product at the front end of the line and nobody touches it until a pallet is lifted off the end of the line—all packaged and wrapped and ready to ship.”

But perhaps the most impressive aspect of the latest plant updates is Wellmade now has the ability to run much wider films—all at faster rates—through the production lines. That gives the company the capability to meet customer demands for wider/longer boards. “Basically, if you run film that’s a 1300 format, you’re going to produce more product off that same production run, so you get an extra 25% of production in the same line,” Quinlan explained. “The other thing we really like about the wider films is it gives us the ability to continue to expand the width of the products we sell because the width of the product is dictated by the size of the film. With the 1300-grade film, we can make a product that’s 7.5 inches wide or 9.5 inches wide and make it even wider. The plant can virtually do anything that we would like it to do in terms of style, design or lengths.”

financial

Business classifications have tax repercussions

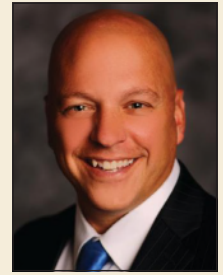
This time of year can be very stressful—especially for small business owners and retailers like yourselves who are likely preparing for tax season. Many business owners may be on edge when considering the possibility of footing a large tax bill. When starting your small business, your choice of business structure plays a vital role in not only minimizing taxes but also reducing personal liability.

The most common and simple type of business structure is a sole proprietorship. A key advantage to operating as a sole proprietorship is simplicity. Within this business structure, there is no distinction between the business and the individual who owns it, leaving the owner entitled to all profits.

Along with this, however, your business assets and liabilities are not separated from personal ones, leaving the business owner personally held liable for the debts and obligations of the business. The owner will report all income and expenses on their personal tax return (Form 1040) using a Schedule C and pay taxes on any profit.

Another business structure is a partnership, which is categorized by three common types of classifications: general partnership, limited partnership and limited liability partnership. In the first classification, partners share liabilities and responsibilities equally. By comparison, in a limited partnership (LP), there is typically a general partner and a limited partner. The general partner would assume ownership of business operations and have unlimited liability. The limited partner acts as a silent partner by investing capital into the business while not being involved in day-to-day operations with limited liability.

In a limited liability partnership (LLP), all partners assume limited personal liability. This means that a partner cannot be liable for the wrongdoings of another partner. All partners are typically involved in the management of the company and tend to have more flexi-



ROMAN BASI

bility in day-to-day operations. A partnership will file a Form 1065 and each partner will receive a K-1 to report on their tax returns.

A limited liability company (LLC) is a hybrid business structure that limits the personal liabilities of owners. Note: LLCs are formed under state law and regulations that may vary from state to state.

Incorporation strategies

There are basically two options when incorporating a business: a “C” corporation or an “S” corporation. The former offers

Choosing the correct business structure that fits your long-term goals, ownership, hiring plans and legal risk is one of the most important steps in owning a business.

the strongest protection to its owners from personal liability. Conversely, S corporations are pass-through entities just like a partnership; however, the IRS has imposed strict standards for companies looking to qualify for S corporation status. For example, an S corporation can only have 100 shareholders or fewer, and they must be U.S. citizens. S corporations file Form 1120S and issue K-1s to shareholders to report their share of profits on their personal return.

Choosing the correct business structure that fits your long-term goals, ownership, hiring plans and legal risk is one of the most important steps in owning a business.

Roman Basi is an attorney and CPA with the firm Basi, Basi & Associates at the Center for Financial, Legal & Tax Planning.

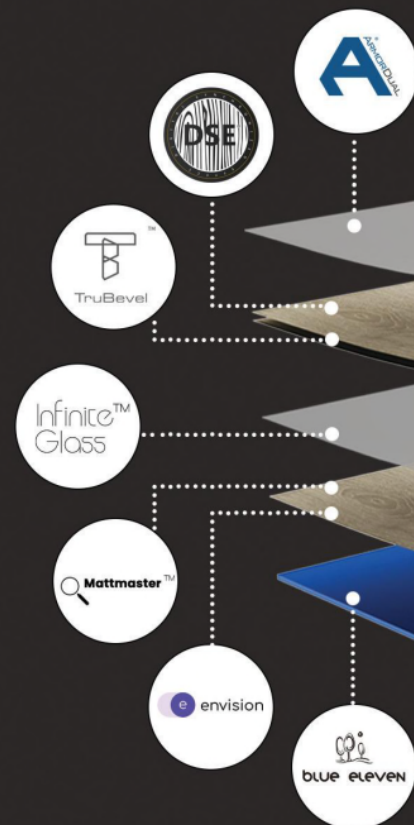
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NATURAL STONE 101

Understanding the basics
to help solidify the sale

By Megan Salzano-Birch

Natural stone can be a hard product category for some retailers to get into. Not only does it require more knowledge on the part of the retail sales associate, but it also means successfully sharing that information with the consumer in a way that doesn't turn them away from the category.

The product is high-end in nature, due to several factors. One, for example, is its truly unique look, and that's not just from stone type to stone type but from installation to installation, derived from the stones inherently irreplicable features—unlike look-alike products in adjacent categories. While this is no doubt a point in the category's favor, it can also come across as too “unpredictable” for consumers who are unfamiliar with natural stone. However, this is where advanced product knowledge on the part of the RSA comes in, to assuage any misconceptions or worries for the consumer.

In addition, natural stone can clad many surfaces within the home, much like its porcelain/ceramic brethren; however, where and how natural stone is installed within (and without) the home is a question many retailers need to have an answer for before a consumer walks into the showroom.

What's more, just like any product category, trends in natural stone come and go—albeit much less frequently than others—so a steady handle on the current trending looks and colors is imperative for retail sales associates.

Successfully selling natural stone products has some major advantages, too, including higher profit margins and ticket sales for the retail owner. What's more, high-end customers are often repeat customers—as are most satisfied clients—and can serve as a good pool for repeat business and even referrals to other high-end shoppers.

To successfully add natural stone to your product lineup, natural stone suppliers say it's important to understand the basics:



Know the product and its place

“Retailers should be versed on where natural stone products can be installed and used as not all are designed for each project space. Lead times, maintenance, job lots from the quarrying should be comfortable for the retailer to walk someone through. There is a skill set in understanding and then successfully selling natural stone. Many retailers steer away from natural stone, so if a retailer can illustrate how and where natural stone works, it can be a fantastic addition to their product portfolio.”

Patrick Warren

vice president of residential sales,
dealer and showrooms

Dal-Tile



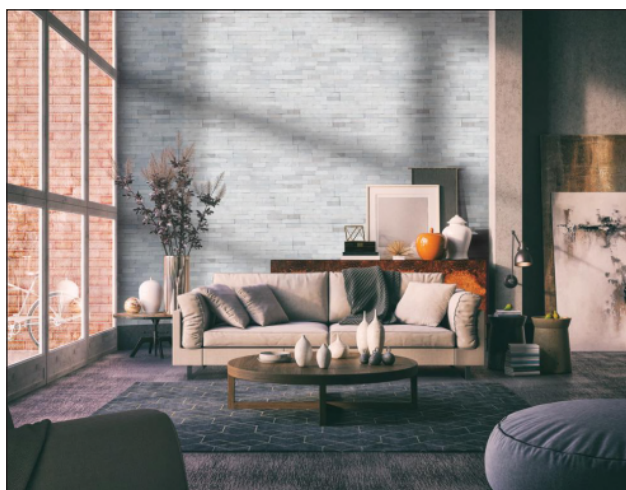
Keep up with the trends

“It's beneficial for the retailer to be knowledgeable about current style and color trends. Understanding how to use natural stone tile to recreate these designs, patterns, textures and colors adds to this advantage. Natural stone is also extraordinarily beautiful and unique in pattern and color variation. Its timeless nature makes it versatile and compatible with various design styles, and its enduring qualities are often seen as an investment that can pay off when it comes to resale value.”

Mike Weaver

vice president of
dealer trade sales

Emser Tile



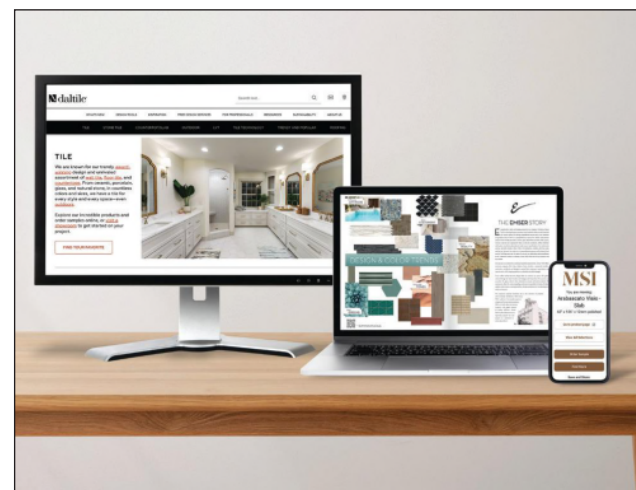
Understand the advantages for you, the retailer

“There are many surveys that show natural stone is what consumers ultimately want on their floors and counters. It's the best way to increase overall resale value. Also, natural stone is classic by definition. It's been around for millions of years. It will always be in trend. Ultimately, this is a product that is not price sensitive but rather service and design sensitive. Retailers have a big advantage in these two arenas, which gives them a big advantage in the natural stone category.”

Raj Shah

co-CEO

MSI



Utilize your resources

Daltile: Daltile's experts in the natural stone business are available to its customers. It also has information, design and styling options and recommendations on daltile.com.

Emser: Emser offers onsite and digital services for customers. It offers a variety of sample types and sizes. Many retailers particularly like the series boards, which include room scenes and alternative sizes and trim also available.

MSI: The MSI website and salespeople are the experts in the industry. Also, it has numerous visualization tools that can help retailers close the sale. Finally, its inventory is the highest in the industry.

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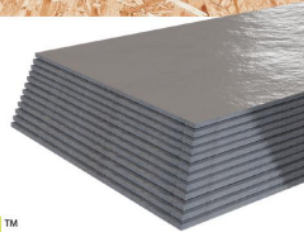
Sometimes you just need a little "lift". The latest product from MP Global Products can provide the lift you need . . . introducing "QuietBoard". A product that was designed as a subfloor assist when replacing an old floor covering such as laminate or wood floors with one of the thinner vinyl planks on the market. QuietBoard not only works as a "booster" to lift the vinyl flooring and close the gap to match existing base trim, but also absorbs impact energy to quiet sound and floor to ceiling noise, inhibiting sound transmission into the room below. This is especially important in the case of multi-family housing such as apartments or condominiums.

Sound attenuation is our expertise. QuietBoard and many of our underlayment products perform exceptionally well when tested for the IIC (Impact Insulation Class) and STC (Sound Transmission Class). This acoustic performance enhances the lifestyle in your home. The IIC and STC achieved by QuietBoard will meet or exceed to requirements of many HOAs and Condo Associations.

The lightweight construction helps make installation a breeze. QuietBoard weighs approximately 1/2 lb per square foot allowing you to handle more square footage than wood sheeting, therefore cutting down the number of trips moving product into the job site. QuietBoard cuts with a utility knife thus eliminating the need to set up a saw and skipping the mess and cleanup of sawdust.

The 6mm thickness is dense enough to pass the castor chair test, a test that is designed to assess the durability of a floor covering, its joints and underlay.

QuietBoard can be floated, or glued under many floor coverings including vinyl planks (even with pad attached!), laminate, floating or glue-down engineered wood, bamboo, cork, residential and commercial carpet, and carpet tiles. This density is extremely important as it provides the vertical support that your flooring needs. Easy to install sheets are available in 2' x 3' or 4' x 6' sizes.



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THE GREAT REVEAL

By Ken Ryan

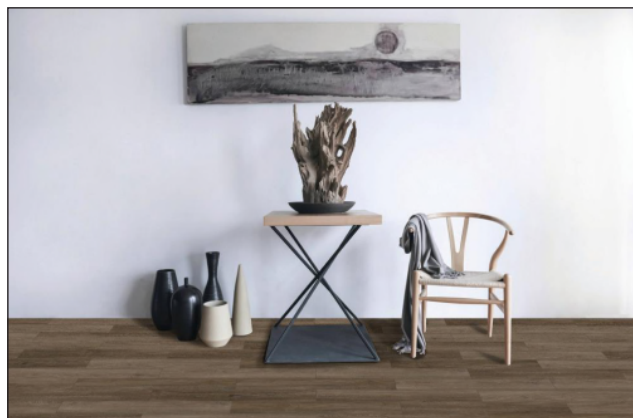
Consumer sentiment was up double digits in December, the stock market is trending higher and inflation is finally calming down ahead of potential rate cuts in 2024.

This promising start comes at an opportune time for the flooring industry as it heads into the winter markets. In preparation for the big shows flooring suppliers are readying new launches that span all product categories—as well as new twists on waterproof laminate, hybrid hardwood and, of course, SPC.

To help the industry get ready for 2024, FCNews is publishing its fourth annual The Great Reveal—a platform to provide the industry a sneak peek at the new products coming down the pike.

Following is a snapshot of what's rolling out for the new selling season. More extensive product details are featured on pages 50-64.

A promising 2024 bodes well for winter intros



Benchwick: 3D Printing Ecosystem

The 3D Printing Ecosystem leverages Blue11, a high-density core made from 80% reclaimed ocean plastic. The core technology features Envision AI, which designs intricate wood and tile patterns; DSE, which adds authentic textures; and TruBevel, which aims to perfect the edges. In addition, Infinite Glass protects against UV rays; ArmorDual offers antimicrobial protection; and MattMaster ensures a durable, cured finish.



BHW: Summit

Summit features a high-resolution, embossed visual to help buyers make a bold statement. The construction consists of BHW's patented foamed luxury SPC core combined with an attached pad, making it very comfortable underfoot. A unique pressed bevel along the edges of each plank gives the appearance of a hand-crafted custom hardwood floor.



Mavericks

Named for California's iconic surf spot, famous for its massive waves, Mavericks' large-sized planks are the longest in Cali's waterproof lineup. Boasting a state-of-the-art luxury laminate design, planks are designed to offer steadfast resilience, authentic hardwood elegance and a natural matte finish to deliver design-forward, low-maintenance flooring.



HF Design: AquaProof

AquaProof is billed as the next generation of waterproof flooring, constructed with innovative core technology and high-definition EIR texture to achieve the artistry of natural fine wood. Fit for high-traffic residential and commercial spaces with many unique styles, it is designed to help consumers find the perfect style to complement their new décor.



Lux: Terra Nova, Mesa Villa

Lux Flooring is adding a waterproof laminate that will be showcased at Surfaces. The line includes formats of 7 x 48 (Terra Nova, shown) and 9 x 60 (Mesa Villa). The AC5 planks boast 12mm overall thickness with painted bevel and pad attached and a Uniclic system for faster installation. The products are backed by a 15-year commercial and lifetime residential warranty.



MP Global: QuietBoard

Designed as a subfloor assist when replacing a thicker flooring with a thinner vinyl plank, QuietBoard works as a "booster" to lift the vinyl flooring and close the gap to match existing transitions. What's more, it is designed to quiet sound and floor-to-ceiling noise—especially important in multi-family housing. It's lightweight, easy to handle and cuts with a utility knife.



Novalis: Reverie

The all-new Reverie collection features waterproof chevron and herringbone designs in a SPC format, complete with enhanced scratch-, stain- and scuff-resistant coating. Chevron styles are installed at a classic 60% angle, creating “a designer look with impeccable durability.”



Nox: Sustainable LVT

Nox is introducing what it calls sustainable LVT flooring. Made with up to 90% of its key raw materials converted into carbon-reducing raw materials from recycled resources, such as used cooking oil and PET bottles, Nox LVT is 100% recyclable—and its raw materials are ISCC PLUS certified.



Provenza: Vitali Elite

Provenza’s new Vitali Elite collection is an ultra-wide, long luxury European hardwood plank featuring a light wire-brushed, multi-layered stain with color variation—in a range of contemporary colors designed for a clean, modern interior visual.



RIVA: Tierra

Tierra by Riva Spain is billed as a market-disrupting luxury wood flooring collection crafted exclusively in Europe and curated to deliver world-class design, expert craftsmanship and remarkable value. Tierra features artisanal coloration, cold-pressed with zero VOC constitution, and features a robust top layer of live-sawn European white oak and fixed lengths of 6 to 8 feet.



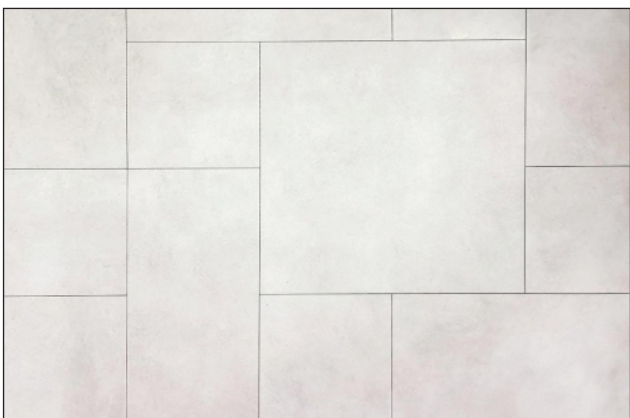
Southwind: Authentic Prime

One of the many new offerings Southwind is showcasing at Surfaces, Authentic Prime is a 12mm WPC measuring 9 x 60 with a 20-mil wear layer and 2mm IXPE attached underlayment. The product also features an embossed-in-register texture and diamondized finish with a painted bevel and Uniclic locking system. Authentic Prime carries a lifetime residential warranty and 10-year commercial warranty.



Taylor: Gravity

Taylor Gravity is a unique, anti-skid substrate coating designed to control lateral movement of loose lay LVT 5mm or thicker and most carpet tile without bonding them to the substrate. It allows for easy repair or replacement of existing flooring while providing moisture protection for concrete substrates with 90% RH.



Unilin: FlinTile

FlinTile is said to create a 100% waterproof floor in three easy steps: Click, grout, clean. The easy installation results in what is said to be perfect grouting lines without spacers, even on top of existing floors. Plus, FlinTile uses real grout and enables the installation of different panel formats such as square tiles in checkerboard patterns. The panels are clicked into each other and then grouted, allowing for a faster installation, with the drying time reduced to a few hours.



Urbanfloor: Timbertop

Urbanfloor first made a splash in 2018 with its breakthrough Timbertop line—an upper-end hardwood floor collection featuring extra-long lengths, wide boards and a distinctive coloration process that yields unique, eye-catching visuals. Urbanfloor introduces the latest additions to its signature Lifestyle collection. This range showcases SKUs boasting a width of 15.75 inches and a length spanning 13 feet.



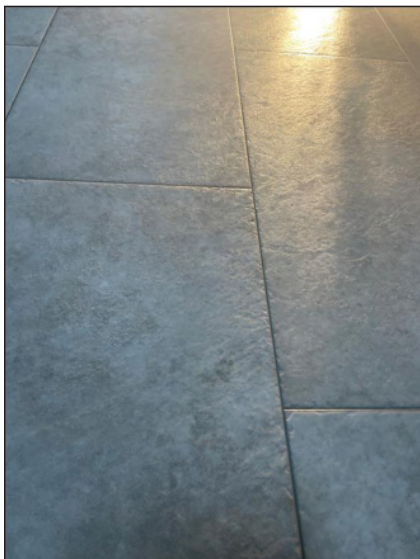
Wellmade: HDPC/SPC Premium Vinyl Plank

Wellmade continues to expand U.S. production as Phase II of the Cartersville, Ga., plant is completed. Look for a host of product innovations for 2024, including enhanced EIR production and TrueEdge bevel technology. Each is designed to bring the ultimate in realism to HDPC/SPC rigid core vinyl plank. With its waterproof performance and commercially rated wear layer, HDPC/SPC vinyl plank features low-luster antimicrobial finishes, attached IXPE pad and locking system.

Mannington®

Fresco

Each 12 x 24 Adura LVT tile showcases a distinctive limestone visual with raw imperfections, light veining and soft calming color variation. Mannington's Tumbled-Edge technology combines with NatureForm Glaze finish in a light, airy color palette.

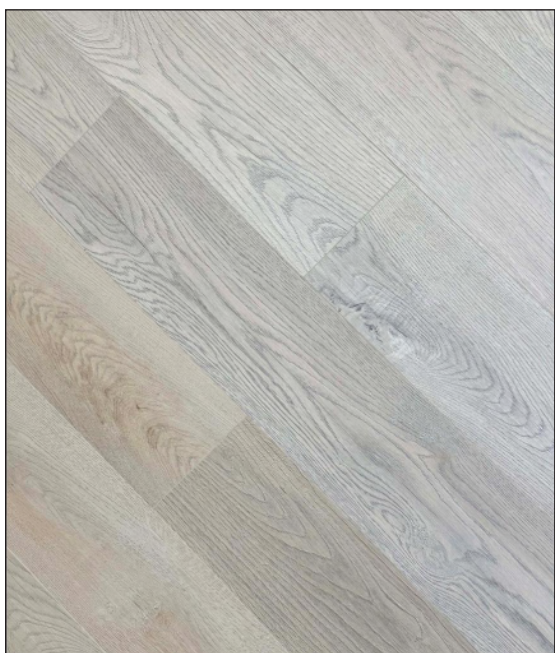


MEANINGFUL INNOVATION

Founded in 1915 by John Campbell, Mannington Mills is still privately held, and after more than 108 years it continues to pursue its commitment to quality, customer satisfaction and the environment through innovative product design and marketing, state-of-the-art process and industry-leading design.

Bespoke

Bespoke is a wire-brushed, lightly distressed European white oak-look with EIR and features 12 individual plank designs, which aims to create true realism. Bespoke is designed to be light and airy and on trend with the top-selling hardwood stain colors. As with all Restoration Collection patterns, Bespoke features Mannington's SpillShield Plus waterproof technology.



Mesh and Aura

Intentionally varied, Mesh from Phenix features an abstract grid design with a hand-drawn, artisan touch. Its curated palette provides warm neutrals and nods to today's most popular color accents. These shades are paired with a coordinating tonal texture—Aura—designed to allow the consumer an effortless transition between pattern and texture in her space.



Preservation

Capturing the features of hickory, Preservation is designed to provide a pastoral statement. Each 7 x 48 LVP of Preservation combines distinctive graining, realistic knot holes and impactful spalting with Mannington's exclusive, award-winning CraftedEdge technology.



Monogram

Monogram has been designed using a natural fuming process that creates variation and enhances the natural tannins within the wood grain. Monogram is designed to showcase the natural beauty of wood with the on-trend aesthetic of European white oak. Featuring planks up to 86 inches long and a width of 8.6 inches.



Madras

By combining a striking, abstract grid design with soft variations of color, Madras from Phenix is designed to deliver a vibrant, yet sophisticated look. Offered in a range of modern earth tones, Madras aims to add an expertly textured foundation to a room with its varied, non-directional patterning—a foundation to a space that feels personal and unique.



Something new is on the floor.

Mannington | PHENIX

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EcoDense USA

Launching at Surfaces, Eternity Floors presents what the company bills as a true waterproof hybrid. Eternity EcoDense is based on resilient and laminate flooring technology, with zero-added formaldehyde, a high-density core and is made in the U.S. The eco-hybrid line is designed to offer the best of both worlds while giving flooring dealers a rigid core product they can sell at higher margins.

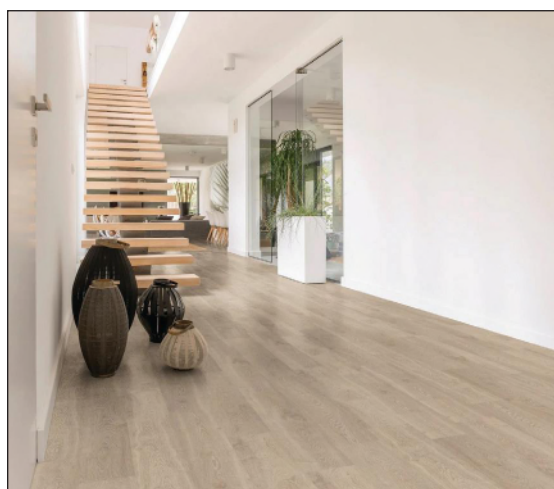


Proof XL

Proof XL offers a bevy of benefits: 12mm thickness, 9 x 72 plank size, waterproof performance, AC4EVERPLUS scratch resistance and TruEmbossed wood textures with ultra-low sheen. Eternity will showcase 12 new colors in the Proof XL line at Surfaces. Another product, Proof, comes in 4- and 5-foot-long planks.

WHERE QUALITY, AFFORDABILITY MAKE THEIR MARK

Eternity Floors aims to provide an unrivaled and enriching experience for all its customers by constantly scouring the globe for new trends, unique colors and innovative designs and products. Moreover, Eternity Floors prides itself on quality and affordability—two distinguishing traits that help set it apart from others in the business while earning a stellar reputation within the industry.

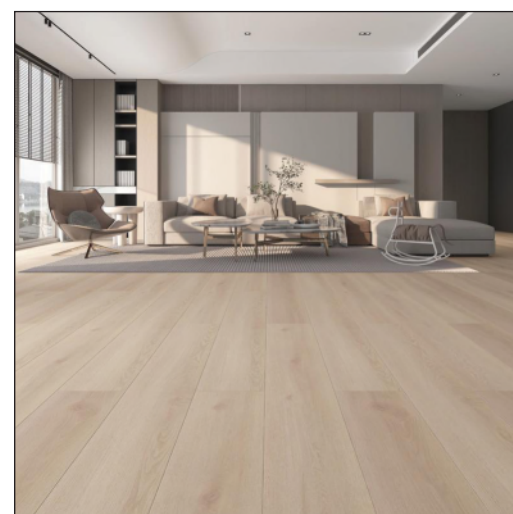
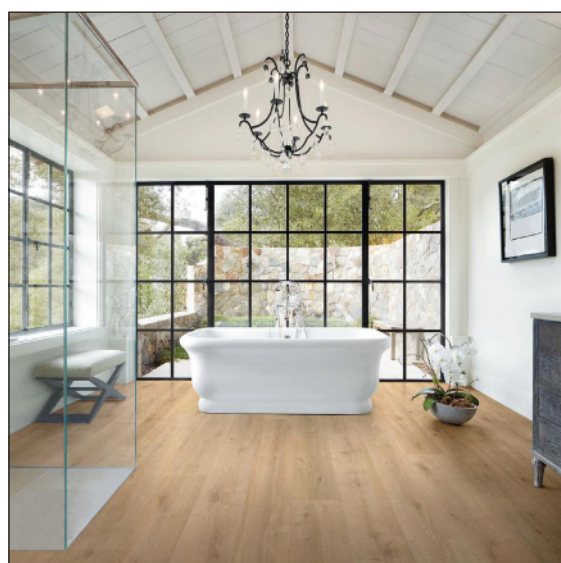


AquaFi USA

Eternity Floors recently launched a made-in-USA waterproof laminate line called AquaFi. This exclusive line consists of 10mm and 12mm collections with acoustical pad attached, designed for a more seamless installation. AquaFi, which is GreenGuard Gold Certified, also includes AC4EVERPLUSAC4 scratch resistance and a lifetime residential warranty.

Sequoia XL

Eternity's crème de la crème, the Sequoia XL is a TruAC6, 70-inch laminate boasting 3D RealFeel technology and 1-24 digital print pattern repeats. Sequoia XL is made in Spain.



Hyperion XXL

Hyperion XXL waterproof laminate is standing tall in specialty flooring retail stores since its launch. This distinctive line features 7 1/2-foot, 5-foot and 2 1/2-foot random length planks, overall solid thickness of 12mm, 9-inch width, AC4EVERPLUS scratch resistance, TruEmbossed wood textures and ultra-low sheen.



Skyscape XXL

New for 2024 is Skyscape XXL waterproof performance laminate flooring. Skyscape XXL's planks are nearly 8 feet long with a 12mm thickness, 9-inch planks, AC4EVERPLUS scratch resistance and TruEmbossed wood grain textures engineered with ultra-low sheen. Eternity will be showcasing the new Skyscape XXL line at Surfaces.

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SolidTech Premier with Signature HDX

SolidTech Premier with Signature HDX is billed as “the next diamond” of the industry and aims to capture the look of natural wood with artistic precision, scanning, cataloging and preserving the detail and variety common to each wood species. To explain this technology “The Next Diamond” campaign compares Signature HDX to man-made diamonds. Now Signature HDX aims to bring diamond-level clarity to SolidTech Premier.



PureTech

Made in the USA, PureTech is a PVC-free product made from recycled and renewable materials developed to help retailers reach eco-conscious consumers. PureTech is made from 70% total recycled content. Its organic core contains 80% renewable, plant-based material. Tagged as Renewable Polymer Core, or RPC, PureTech also provides performance benefits. PureTech features WetProtect, offering a lifetime surface and subfloor waterproof warranty. It is also backed by a no-hassle pet scratch warranty.

QUALITY, INNOVATION PERSONIFIED

Ever since Mohawk rolled out its first carpets in 1878, the company has aimed to build quality into every flooring product it makes. Mohawk continues that tradition today with product innovation in all flooring categories, award-winning design and a team dedicated to outstanding service. The company’s new product launches along with updates to its digital programs are designed to help position and prepare retailers for success in 2024 and beyond.

PETPremier

Mohawk is unleashing an innovation in soft solution-dyed PET carpet. PETPremier is pet-friendly, stylish and sustainable carpet for millennial homeowners seeking value and performance. Featuring an inherently stain-resistant fiber backed by a lifetime All Pet Protection & Warranty, PETPremier carpets are designed to maintain their beauty for years to come. Additionally, with vibrant, fade-resistant colors and luxurious fine denier softness, PETPremier aims to ensure comfort without compromising style. PETPremier also helps divert waste from landfills. It is sustainably made in the USA with post-consumer recycled bottles through an efficient water and energy manufacturing process.



SmartStrand

After going toe to toe with Blake, the 4,000-pound rhino from the Rhinory, a 55-acre winery and rhino preservation, SmartStrand has proven once again that it is strong enough for all walks of life. To reiterate the brand’s cleanability and durability capabilities, Mohawk is updating its life-sized marketing campaign and SmartStrand Color Wall in 2024. The SmartStrand Color Wall update kits will include two patterns that pull from the line’s 15 best-selling color options and a multi-color update available in 40- and 55-ounce SmartStrand Silk options to help get even more shoppers back to carpet.

RevWood

Mohawk is refreshing its popular RevWood line to represent recent product enhancements and evolving market demands. RevWood's new promise, "The beauty of wood without compromise," combines the two most important purchase drivers—beauty and performance—and draws greater attention to the advancements achieved through the launches of Signature Technology and WetProtect. Additionally, as the first wood flooring to attain NALFA's Platinum Level of LF-02 Sustainability Certification, RevWood provides a carbon-negative, planet-friendly option for consumers who want sustainable features.



Performance Accessories

Performance Accessories offers a total system of flooring solutions—including trims and transitions, stair solutions, adhesives, underlayments and cleaners—designed to complement and complete any flooring solution, including all Mohawk wood, laminate and vinyl products (along with Karastan, Pergo and competitive brands). Performance Accessories is enhancing its portfolio with new innovations and upgrading its digital experience in 2024.

Edge

Mohawk is optimizing its Edge partner program to give specialty retail partners the upgraded tools needed to grow their customer base, provide a seamless shopping experience and increase revenue. Retail partners can win in their markets through Edge Omnify Websites, Edge Local Advertising and Edge Stores. According to Mohawk, participation in these programs is easy with access to co-op marketing funds that stretch marketing investments further.



EverStrand

To help retailers target style-driven and eco-conscious consumers, Mohawk is adding 11 new styles to its EverStrand line and launching a brand-new marketing campaign. "A Step in the Right Direction" highlights EverStrand's key selling points. In addition to being inherently stain resistant and offering a style-forward choice, every square foot of EverStrand is said to help reduce plastic pollution and make the planet a better place.

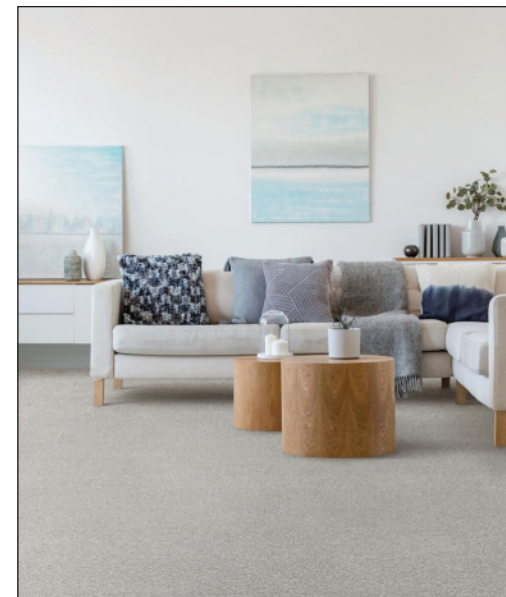


Engineered FLOORS®



PureGrain - Atmosphere

PureGrain Direct Digital Print is a digital LVT made in the U.S. In fact, the entire manufacturing process is completed under one roof at Engineered Floors' manufacturing plant in Dalton. The technology uses digital emboss technology to create high-resolution designs directly on a high-density core.



PureColor HiGH-DEF - Lucky Penny

Among Engineered Floors' newest offerings is its PureColor HiGH-DEF series Lucky Penny I/II/III. The PureColor HiGH-DEF series features enhanced depth, dimension, durability and design. Manufactured with enhanced twist and texture, this collection of products is built to perform while maintaining its softness with simple, yet sophisticated colorations, exceptional value and variety.

TACKLING TECH TO PROVIDE FULL-SERVICE SOLUTIONS

Engineered Floors may not be the oldest flooring manufacturer around, but it has quickly established itself as among the best. That's due in part to EF's new equipment and advanced technology that allows the mill to bring clean, fresh products to the market across both soft and hard surface categories.



Pentz (Stenciled)

Stenciled Tile features a stamped concrete visual in a patterned loop construction available in nine colorways. Built with EF's proprietary Apex SDP (Solution-Dyed Polyester) fiber and designed for the commercial market, Stenciled Tile offers advanced performance and exceptional durability.



twistX (Hitari)

Hitari features a basketweave pattern offset by neutral tones. twistX carpet technology uses a twist multiplier to deliver durability and natural striations in the form of a synthetic fiber. The proprietary manufacturing process is said to provide a plusher, more comfortable underfoot with exceptional durability. twistX consists of 50% higher bundle sizes, allowing each square of carpet more yarn and higher density.



PureGrain - Nurture

PureGrain allows for realistic wood visuals and feel while offering 35 unique planks—said to be 5x that of traditional film LVT products. The technology uses digital emboss technology to create high-resolution designs directly on a high-density core.

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Pet Perfect Sincere Focus

Sincere Focus carpet, part of the Pet Perfect flooring collection, features light, organic hues that are crafted to evoke the textures of a walk through the forest. It's designed to help customers save time and money on installation while retaining all the style they love from patterned carpet.



Simply the Best Values Clever Art

Designed with a versatile tonal color palette, Clever Art complements an existing aesthetic while concealing traffic and soiling. Part of the Simply the Best Values collection, Clever Art combines the unique beauty of patterned carpet with the practicality and value of Shaw's new "No Pattern Match Required" for easier sales estimation and installation.

INNOVATING THROUGH SERVICE, STYLE

Shaw's commitment to providing the best service in the industry has guided the company throughout its 50-plus-year legacy. From the associates designing and creating a vast portfolio of cutting-edge products to the sales representatives and drivers sharing the products in stores—Shaw's entire team aims to provide the best solutions, style/design, innovations and more to the retail community to help them grow their businesses to new heights.



Anderson Tuftex Transcendence

Transcendence takes its inspiration from heirloom hardwood, warm tones and unique grain patterns, which accentuate this hickory product. Brushed with stains that react with the tannins of the wood, these planks aim to capture the vintage essence of treasured hardwood.



Pet Perfect Mineral Core

PAW-some Mineral Core is the newest "worry-free" flooring addition in the extensive Pet Perfect collection. Featuring wide planks and natural wood aesthetic, PAW-some looks to deliver proven durability while combining style and resilience for a flooring solution that stands the test of time with charm and convenience.



Philadelphia Commercial Quietude

Quietude's premium walnut and white oak visuals are designed as a solution for spaces that need to mitigate sound transfer through the floor without the need for additional underlayment. The integrated pad's advanced sound-mitigation properties help Quietude achieve a IIC rating of 59, just shy of carpet tile's 61 rating.

Anderson Tuftex Discover

Inspired by the aerial views of urban Mediterranean landscapes, Discover's organic pattern is available in an array of colors. This product is made from 100% post-consumer recycled content, providing a unique look designed to be both visually appealing and sustainable.



**COREtec Tile
Classic Travertine**

This COREtec Tile style is designed to be sophisticated and time-honored. And thanks to an extra-tough SPC core, it is jam-packed with durability and chip-and-crack resistance.



**COREtec Tile
Bianco Marble**

Tying into modern trends of white chocolate minimalism and surrealism, this style is designed to offer elegance, sophistication, warmth and comfort—and the comfort story continues all the way down to the “cushy” WPC construction.



**Originals Classics
Rogers Hickory**

Designed to encapsulate the current design trend of restoring traditional hand-crafted gems, this new COREtec Originals style looks to embrace the charms of the past and fuse them with a modern, natural look. Available in a popular 7 x 48 platform.

**COREtec Tile
Cremello Travertine
(Mineral Core)**

With its scratch-resistant and PVC-free tiles, this luxe and high-style COREtec Tile color is designed to perform as well as it looks. Even more than other COREtec Tile colors, this style gives flooring retailers the opportunity to offer customers the premium look of traditional tile without the typical hassle.



**Originals Premium
Tranquil Oak**

COREtec's Soft Step underlayment aims to silence crowds—and homes—with its sound abatement and “sock-like warmth” underfoot. To keep up with the hype, the brand is introducing nine new styles, including Tranquil Oak.

**Originals Enhanced
Farington Oak**

This new COREtec Originals Enhanced style recreates vintage flooring designs with a modern twist. The authentic oak visual is featured in a 12mm, 7 x 60 plank that offers comfort, warmth and quiet.



STANTON

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Nuvo

The Nuvo decorative laminate collection aims to redefine elegance and sophistication in interior spaces. NuvoLux and NuvoMax are designed to project timeless elegance inspired by the grandeur of natural woods and materials. The designs are carefully curated, designed with innovative textures, authentic colors and high-end finishes. The collection boasts 24 colors covering everything from coastal lights to rich, traditional earth tones.



INSPIRED INNOVATION IN EVERY STEP

As a leader in style and design for soft surface for more than 40 years, Stanton has a reputation for pushing the design boundaries and leading through innovation and service. Its mission has remained the same since being founded in 1980: To offer its customers the best in quality products, customer service, innovative technology and the best people throughout every facet of the organization. The company continues that mission into hard surface, where it is making a statement through color, design and pattern.



Fort William

Fort William is a specialty flatweave statement design that looks to embody the artistic and tailored approach that Crescent is known for. This large-scale plaid has rich colorations and intricate designer detail that are designed to be exciting, fresh and high style. The New Zealand wool offers high-quality material and craftsmanship.

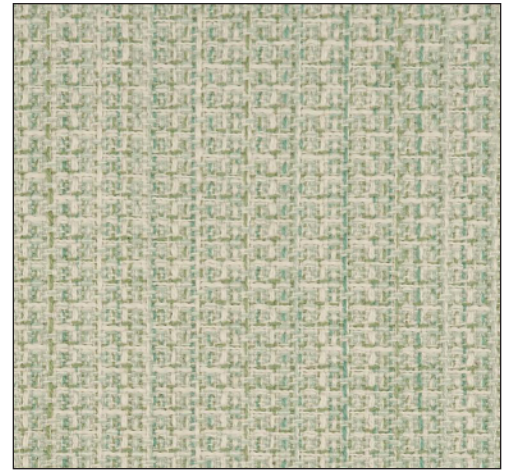
Melati

Intricate, defined texture with a modern interpretation on tradition defines Melati. The hand-spun dyed wool fiber is woven to create this high-style flatweave. The rib effect is designed to add depth and dimension to the unique on-grid plaid design resulting in a pattern that is dynamic and stylish while also being very usable and foundational.



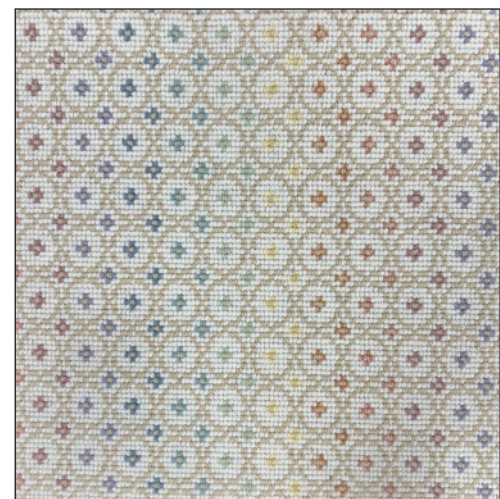
Rosecore: Barcelona Bliss

Barcelona Bliss is a machine-woven crosshatch flatweave. The upholstery fabric-like texture aims to give this style dimension and visual interest. The slub yarn effect is designed to add character and another level of sophistication with threads that are thicker in various places. Offered in a range of bright, fresh colors, Barcelona Bliss takes its inspiration from beautiful destinations and nature's color palette.



Wisteria Cottage

Wisteria Cottage is a premium hand-loomed carpet with soft tonal colorations. The vertical strié effect softens the lofty rib texture running perpendicular across the width. The combination of artistry is designed to accentuate the texture and add character and whimsy.



Jacqueline

Jacqueline is a vibrant, multi-colored wire wilton that takes center stage in Stanton's Hollywood collection. It offers a fresh interpretation of a traditional geometric with a whimsical, modern twist.

STANTON

Astro in Autumn



Silver Charm

Tarnished Copper

Mocha

Ocean

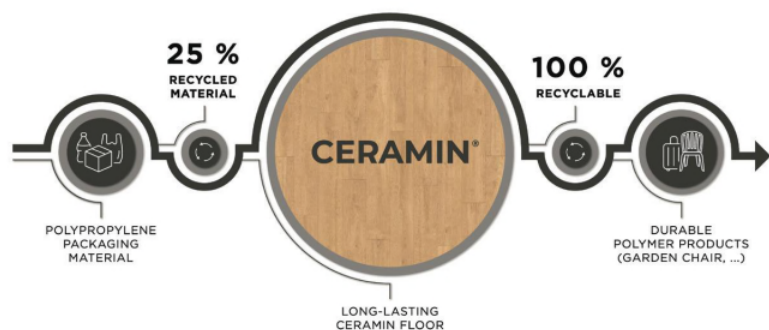
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Inhaus®



Icon

Icon is the highest-performing collection in the Ceramin family of products. Boasting a larger format (8 x 60), it features high-definition décors with 24 unique planks, an AC5 (class 33) wear layer and the Megaloc angle-drop locking system.

Ceramin

The Ceramin technology has been specifically developed to create high-performing floors that are said to be good for the user and the environment. They do not contain toxins or PVC, are made with post-consumer recycled content and are 100% recyclable. All of this while enhancing performance qualities such as durability, impermeability and dimensional stability in extreme temperatures.

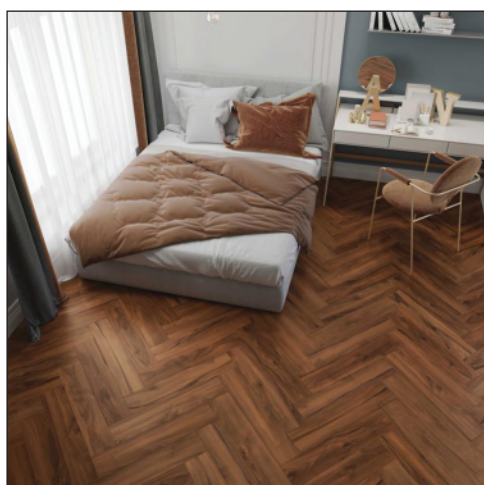
BRINGING ECO-VINYL FLOORING TO MARKET

Made using Ceramin, a proprietary manufacturing technology, Inhaus is delivering what it calls a new generation of health-conscious eco-vinyl. By using this unique production process, Inhaus can create beautiful, high-performing products that are 100% waterproof and sustainable.



Gallery

With a classic format (8 x 51), the Gallery collection offers a more traditional option in the Ceramin family of products. Décors feature high-definition visual with 18 unique planks, an AC4 (class 32) and an angle-angle locking system.



Manor

The Manor collection is the newest introduction into the Lamdura laminate product family. Its unique design features a compatible locking system that enables planks to be installed in any order into a herringbone pattern with only one plank—making for an easy installation. Décors have 30 unique planks using a combination of high-definition digital printing and embossed-in-register textures, designed for an ultra-authentic look and feel.

Landmark

Landmark is a mainstay in the Lamdura laminate product family. This year it will be refreshed with seven new, on-trend, high-definition designs and two new EIR textures. Landmark is equipped with Megaloc Aquaprotect for a quick and easy water-resistant installation.



Visions

Visions is designed to offer exceptional value without sacrificing style, quality or performance. The collection will welcome three new contemporary colorways and one new wood-grain texture. Featuring high-definition décors, and Inhaus' patented Megaloc installation system.

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LANDMARK

/

MANOR

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VISIONS

Ventiques®



Forest

Linear, consecutive openings add to the appeal of this flush mount vent. Modern and straightforward in design, the Forest grill fits seamlessly with many stylish homes. Forest features a 1/2-inch thickness frame to accommodate most flooring thicknesses and is available in 2 1/2 x 12, 4 x 10, 4 x 12 and 4 x 14 sizes.



Avalanche

Strong and mighty not only describes the pattern on the grill but its aim in construction as well. Those who love wilderness and the beauty of nature will appreciate the product's unique design, which is made for a flush-mount, seamless finish.

FLUSH-MOUNT VENTS OFFER SOLUTIONS

Ventiques has strong values about the quality of its products and its approach to manufacturing. The company prides itself on being able to give customers the highest-quality product—the very same one it uses in its own homes. Ventiques' vents can be used with nearly any type of flooring material. All vents are flush mount, making them handicap accessible.

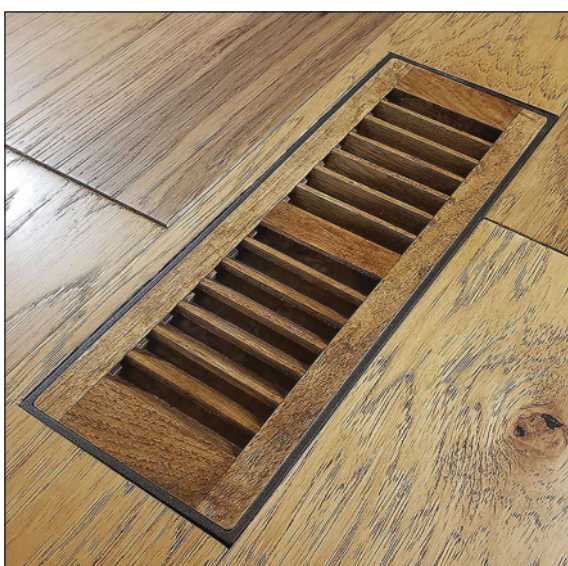


Breeze

Breeze has universal appeal that is designed to enhance all types of styles. This pattern can range from modern to traditional décor and comes with the frame and grill. The vent can be fastened, adhered or floated on the subfloor. Breeze-style vents are available with or without a built-in damper.

Tornado

The geometric layout and intricate pattern of this register aims to get noticed. The metal vents can be easily installed and fits with various flooring types—including intricate tile, laminate, hardwood, LVP and carpet. The design allows for a flush mount finish.



Wood vents

Ventiques offers wood vents to suit different needs and preferences—from flush-mount, wood vents (designed to be installed flush with the floor surface) to self-rimming wood vents. These vents feature a raised frame that sits atop the surface to provide easy installation and a stylish appearance.



Kanyon

The Kanyon metal series is an adjustable flush-mount floor vent. The overall assembly equals 7/16 inches and comes with three spacers—two 2mm spacers and one 3mm spacer—along with the Grille & Grille frame. Kanyon adjusts from 1/8-inch up to 1-inch thick.

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**Original Series - Forest
Midnight Black**



1/2" Frame thickness

**Kanyon Series - Forest
Midnight Black**



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Mike Kulseth
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