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state of the industry

Category booms as housing market expands

By Megan Salzano-Birch

The last two-plus years have been anything but ordinary, and while the industry did struggle early on in 2020 due to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has rebounded with a vengeance in 2021-22.

The resilient category in particular has reaped the benefits of exponentially growing demand for home renovation and building materials. It will come as no surprise that resilient—led mostly by the rigid core sub-segments—registered gains in 2020 while many other flooring categories did not. FCNews research showed the category generated \$6.589 billion in sales in 2020—an industry-leading 21.3% increase over 2019's \$5.433 billion.

2021 showed even more promise, according to suppliers. “From my perspective, the industry was up for the year,” said Adam Ward, vice president of product management. **Continued on page 64**



Consumers are gravitating toward wider/longer planks such as Mohawk's Pergo Extreme Brunette. This style features EIR technology, which creates an authentic visual.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: STANTON

Delivering on high style and design

Stanton Decorative Waterproof Flooring (DWF) entered the rigid core category in early 2020 as a natural evolution of the brand. In a category that has been flooded with options, Stanton DWF quickly defined its unique position as a leader in style and design.

Its signature black and white styles, for example, have quickly resonated with customers along with wood visuals that focus on clean, striking patterns, color and texture.

For many retailers, Stanton DWF has become a go-to resource in rigid core as it continues to develop offerings that help fill voids in the market.

Through extensive research and customer feedback, Stanton develops looks and styles that meet the needs of discerning customers. A case in point is its narrow-width planks (4 x 48), which

have quickly grown in popularity since its introduction. Consumers more than ever are gravitating toward traditional sizing offered in

a fresh, new color range, and Stanton is taking heed. For example, Stanton's longer, wider planks complement larger living spaces and open floor plans to keep pace with today's busy households.

In 2022, 24 new wood looks will be hitting the market, including a decorative herringbone pattern called Lennox Peak. With a total of 84 SKUs available this summer, Stanton DWF is clearly a contender in hard surface with the clear vision of maintaining its signature level of design that complements its soft surface offerings. Included in those offerings are SKUs from its Create A Rug program, which has become a more popular solution for homeowners looking to complement their hard surfaces.



Stanton DWF has become a go-to resource in the rigid core flooring category.

the basics

All about LVT, WPC, SPC

The category goes by many names: luxury vinyl plank (LVP), luxury vinyl flooring (LVF) and, historically, luxury vinyl tile (LVT). The common denominator is they all share some of the same performance and visual characteristics.

Arguably one of the more diverse flooring options available, LVP can take on several forms: stone (slate, travertine, marble, etc.) or, predominantly, wood. The ability to replicate real wood, ceramic or stone using advanced photographic technologies is LVT's foundation. One thing that distinguishes LVP from other types of vinyl flooring is the shape of



individual pieces. LVT products are usually square, ranging in size from 12 x 12 to 24 x 24, but are now available in 12 x 24 rectangular and even hexagonal shapes. Furthermore, because LVP often imitates wood, it comes in standard plank shapes such as 3 x 36, 4½ x 36 as well as an extra-long and wide format.

Within the broader LVT segment are sub-

categories such as WPC (waterproof core) and SPC (solid polymer core.) With WPC, suppliers can clearly mimic a wood floor with stunning realism and still create the thickness of a ½-inch plank without the common challenges of weight in shipping and handling associated with natural materials, proponents say. In addition, its features provide exceptional comfort, warmth underfoot and sound-dampening attributes.

SPC, by comparison, is an improved version of traditional vinyl flooring based on a rigid core platform. Generally stiffer and more dense than WPC flooring, SPC is often specified for applications that require greater resistance to foot traffic, indentation and abuse from everyday accidents and mishaps. While this core is harder and less likely to indent, it can be more brittle and susceptible to edge breakage.

Recent advancements in SPC technology include alternative cores such as magnesium oxide and other mineral-based materials. These new materials are touted as fireproof, dent-proof as well as waterproof. Unlike traditional WPC and SPC, magnesium oxide is not extruded but is created using a mold. These cores tend to be much more dense than WPC but weigh less than their SPC counterparts.

With all the different options available to the consumer, it's imperative that the flooring manufacturing community work together with its retail partners to educate customers on the finer points of differentiation.

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OVERVIEW

Knowledge to help retailers seal the deal

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

Every year since, *FCNews* has added to its Educational Guide franchise, publishing one for laminate flooring and then ceramic tile and resilient flooring while updating each every other year. We have also published several retailer-focused selling guides.

With that as the backdrop, we are rolling out our ninth LVT/P Selling Guide, which has been

expanded to include the latest iterations of WPC and SPC products. This supplement to *FCNews* covers all the basics and then some, with articles on selling, merchandising, marketing, trends, installation, maintenance and technology, to name a few, all written by professionals in their respective fields of expertise.

Aside from the pieces written by contributors and *FCNews* staff members, the sponsors of this guide were given the opportunity to submit some educational articles of their own, as well as information on their respective companies that retail sales associates might find helpful when presenting to the consumer. It's all about giving you the tools you need to expand your knowledge and close more sales.

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: CORETEC

This ‘true original’ continues to innovate

As true originals, COREtec celebrates the free thinkers, the disrupters and the doers. COREtec makes floors for those people because that is who COREtec is. It makes the kind of floors that everyone wants—easy to install, easy to clean and beautiful for a lifetime.

COREtec focuses on revolutionary ideas every single day. First, the brand revolutionized the flooring industry by inventing a whole category of rigid waterproof floors. Now, it is creating new innovations that continue to meet the needs of customers in an ever-changing world—to help specialty flooring retailers maintain

a competitive edge.

With hundreds of styles from which to choose, consumers are sure to find a floor as original as their unique self.

For 2022, the COREtec Plus HD Integrated Bevel collection of nine new colors draws inspiration from timeless wood accents and resilient innovations. The construction and visuals of these products create a realistic sense of touch and appearance, and the texture of the grains portrays movement and dimension. Natural and unenhanced colors give this flooring a sense of honesty and purpose that will echo throughout any space.



New for 2022 is Irene Walnut, COREtec Plus HD with integrated bevel.

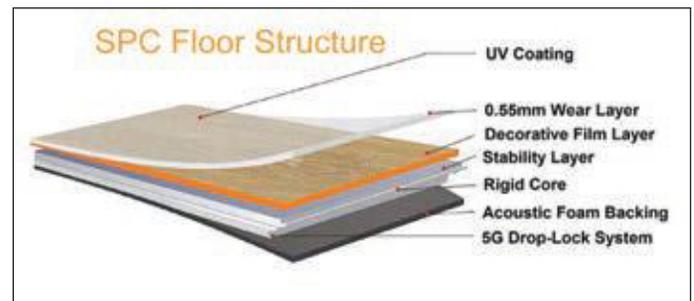
education

Rigid core fundamentals

What's in a name?

According to the Resilient Floor Covering Institute (RFCI), “SPC” refers to the class of rigid vinyl flooring products with a solid polymer core. That solid, waterproof core, experts say, won’t ripple, swell or peel no matter how much liquid it is subjected to.

This core is ultra-dense with no foaming agents such as those found in traditional WPC flooring. It provides slightly less resiliency



underfoot but is said to make the flooring extremely durable.

SPC features a stone- or hardwood-look printed vinyl layer, which continues to refine the subsegment’s style and design.

The dense, mineral-filled, extruded core of SPC provides superior indentation resistance and is best for high-traffic and commercial applications.

Competitive advantages

There are at least two reasons why rigid core has seen a surge in popularity among vendors, with new companies entering the market seemingly every month. For one, it is the fastest growing sub-segment of the fastest growing category. Retailers across the country are dedicating more showroom floor space to the category based on the growing demand. Second, the cost of entry is relatively minimal. Part of its rapid growth stems from the sub-segment’s versatility. Although SPC is suitable for any environment where you need a durable, waterproof floor, it is also ideal for settings such as commercial kitchens and bathrooms as well as grocery stores and other venues where spills occur. Unlike traditional vinyl that is flexible, manufacturers designed rigid core to be unbending. As such, it is ideal for both commercial and residential settings.

Growth potential

Experts say composite waterproof flooring, led by SPC, will be the high double-digit growth engine in hard surfaces over the next few years. Composite/SPC tiles as an alternative to ceramic tiles is the next big growth opportunity for a slew of reasons: SPC tiles are lighter and warmer than ceramic; they don’t break and are cheaper/easier to install (click); no grout is needed; they are easier to remove; and, thanks to an attached cork backing, are more comfortable to walk/stand on.

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the basics

Category finds a home in key end-use markets

By Ken Ryan

LVP, along with its WPC and rigid core sub-segments, has been growing at a double-digit rate for the past several years, during which time it has expanded its reach across all market segments.

Remodel

Among hard surfaces, hardwood flooring is the aspirational product of choice for most consumers. However, it's not at all uncommon for a consumer to walk into a flooring store, ask for hardwood flooring and leave with LVT/P, WPC. "LVT in particular is taking market share from other product



Enhancements in rigid core technologies are expanding the category's opportunities in the home. Pictured is COREtec Advanced + 7, which features a mineral-based core.

ect as it can replace traditional tile, carpet and wood areas."

Dealers point to the category's desirable design attributes. "People are buying it because of the way it looks," said Larry Noel, president, retail division,

for Rite Rug, Columbus, Ohio.

LVT is also a much more family-friendly product than some competing categories, proponents say.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MOHAWK

SolidTech's trade-up story

After a year of growth in the resilient market, Mohawk will be rounding out its SolidTech portfolio with new styles that feature innovative technologies, including enhanced realism and antimicrobial protection.

These additions to the SolidTech Plus tier provide RSAs with a distinct trade-up story by demonstrating clear differentiation while giving them the ability to create an improved experience for customers when shopping.

Mohawk, ever aware that homeowners desire different looks at

different price points, provides a clear trade-up story with SolidTech. Separated into three tiers—Essentials, Select and Plus—SolidTech products are an easy choice for customers looking for durable, waterproof wood-look and stone-look flooring. Featuring an assortment of domestically produced styles, SolidTech

categories," said Carlton Billingsley, owner of Floors and More, Benton, Ark. "This is also creating additional square feet in a proj-

Plus products also feature an innovative lacquer that provides the highest level of protection against stains and scratches along with easy click installation.

Within the SolidTech Plus tier, the Bedford collection features eight new styles with enhanced realism by virtue of RealPlank technology, Mohawk's innovative system that helps achieve a more authentic look and feel in LVT. Through natural edge finishes that create a realistic transition from plank to plank—

paired with authentic color variation and deep textures that follow nature's true-to-life patterns—RealPlank Technology compares favorably to genuine materials. SolidTech Plus also features Mohawk's new CleanProtect technology with built-in antimicrobial properties to protect the floor.



Mohawk's SolidTech Plus features authentic wood looks created through innovative RealPlank technology.

Builder

Increasingly, LVP is being used in new construction given the product's relative affordability and realistic looks of stone and wood. LVP is also easier underfoot than wood or ceramic, and individual tiles and planks that get damaged can be repaired easier. "Our homeowners love LVP because it gives them the look of real wood in a material that is even more durable than wood," said Clark Stewart, president of Eastwood Homes, Charlotte, N.C. "When installed correctly, LVP is impervious to water and holds up well to the wear and tear of real life."

Main Street

Main Street businesses—whether small retail shops, professional offices, restaurants or cafes—all have one thing in common: They need a durable, beautiful floor that's low maintenance.

"In Main Street LVT/WPC—with its durability and relative ease of maintenance—is quickly replacing VCT as a mainstay floor," said Mike Foulk, president of Foulk's Flooring America, Meadville, Pa. "The wood looks and tile looks give the designers added decorating possibilities. The ease of maintenance is a welcome feature for the end user."



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Learn more by contacting your sales representative or visiting [MohawkToday.com](https://www.MohawkToday.com)

selling

Simplify the process

By Irene Ross

Consumers today have many choices when it comes to floor covering. They also have options on where to shop. At the end of the day, many customers ultimately decide to work with the retailer who makes the buying process seamless, painless and efficient.

We all know that being a good salesperson requires the ability to identify and react to customer behavior, but everyone has different style, especially when it comes to flooring. Some start the pre-qualifying discussions right away, while others listen and observe. Some



focus on color and design, while others default to good/better/best comparisons.

Following are several tried-and-true selling techniques and best practices from successful flooring retailers.

Listen first, then speak

Marjorie Benson, president, Friendly Flooring in Port Charlotte, Fla., said when it comes to selling, it's better to learn what the customer is looking for prior to launching into a sales pitch. "Pay attention to what the customer is saying, learn about her needs and her goals. Customers already have an idea of what they want when they walk in, but it might not be what they need or it might be out of their budget, so gently guide them. Don't force it and don't try to sway

them to a particular product. Customers are good listeners, and they can tell if you're not being sincere or are operating without integrity."

Build a rapport

For Michele Batye, president and owner of Dave Griggs Flooring America, Columbia, Mo., the key to building relationships with customers lies in real communication. "Stay focused on the consumer and what she needs and wants, and then you make the rec-

ommendations. If the customer indicates she wants to keep looking at other stores, try to find out why. Is it online judgment? Price? Something else?"

Discern between 'needs' vs. 'wants'

"When it comes to style and design, people have a pretty good idea of what they want, but we need to realize there's a lot of information out there and it's not always totally accurate," said Maryanne Adams, president and CEO, Avalon Flooring, Cherry Hill, N.J.

lvp 101: education

What's waterproof about vinyl plank flooring?

BY AMY WATKINS

vice president of operations, Create Flooring

Create Flooring has had the opportunity to participate in several trade shows already this year, and during that time we have met with many people from the retail industry who, unfortunately, still do not have a firm grasp on what "waterproof" means relative to SPC/WPC/LVP.

The biggest misconception we have found is the belief that waterproof covers the top and bottom of the product. That is simply not the case. Most vinyl plank flooring is waterproof only from the top and is best suited with a waterproof membrane between the plank flooring and the subfloor.

Experts will tell you that moisture still must be addressed from all aspects and, yes, the flooring will cup if significant moisture is found underneath.

At Create Flooring, we recommend an inexpensive avenue of protection—which is to use a minimum thickness 6-mil plastic prior to the installation. If done correctly, this step will help allay your fears and allow for all parties to have peace of mind and be able to enjoy their vinyl plank flooring for years to come.



Articulating the waterproof aspects of vinyl plank to the customer is critical when selling SPC. Shown is Create's Triumph.

“For example, a product can be waterproof and still seep through the joints and affect the subfloor. The consumer needs to know both the pros and the cons of a product; sometimes they may end up deciding it’s not for them after all.”

Emphasize style and design attributes

Ryan Commerce, president of Pennsylvania-based Indoor City of Lancaster, encourages his RSAs to key in on the primary attributes that factor into the customer’s decision-making process. (Newsflash: It isn’t price.) “Our team always focuses on style and design first,” he explained. “I try to keep price out of the discussion as long as possible so I can observe people and see what they gravitate toward. People don’t buy flooring very often, so they may not have any idea what something costs. When we sit down to discuss needs, that’s when the budget comes up. If we have to, we’ll make adjustments and offer alternatives.”

Know your products

In today’s 24/7 internet culture, it’s easy to access so much information (and misinformation) online. That’s why it’s important for RSAs to stay abreast of all the flooring innovations and technologies hitting the market. By doing so, they will be better prepared when the customer picks up the phone or walks through the door. “I always try to stay on top of what’s happening with technology, trends and product innovations,” said Jason Potts, owner, RIC Flooring, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. “Deciding not to follow industry trends could be a crippling mistake if something comes out before you’re prepared. You can either be innovative yourself or watch others become successful because they are more agile than you are.”



Industry trends could be a crippling mistake if something comes out before you’re prepared. You can either be innovative yourself or watch others become successful because they are more agile than you are.”

Ask the right questions

For Deby Winter, co-owner of Carpet Tile & Warehouse, Vero Beach, Fla., the key to repeatable sales success is playing the role of detective. “The very first thing you should do is to find out what the customer already has on the floor. Ask questions such as ‘What do you like and dislike about it?’ and ‘Why are you making a change?’ The reasons for a change can be generated by wish (style and design), need (repair and/or replacement) or necessity (having to freshen up the house to get ready for sale). They’re all valid reasons but often require different results, and if you don’t get those answers, it’s impossible to direct them properly. Next, find out more about the home, such as the number of residents, how the room will be used and whether the house is a permanent or seasonal location.”

lvp 101: selling



Laid-back, beachy tones like Sandbar Oak from the Cali Vinyl Longboards collection capture the brand’s coastal style with curated color options.

Help your customer conquer ‘choice overload’

BY DOUG JACKSON
CEO, Cali

Several studies show that having too many options can paralyze decision making and even drive shoppers to make choices that are against their best interests.

Indeed, “choice overload” can cause actual cognitive impairment and added stress, especially when paired with the pressure of an expensive, high-stakes decision—like a new floor. It’s a common issue in most showrooms (and trade shows, for that matter), but there are ways RSAs can position customers to choose confidently.

Research also shows that entering the buying experience with a clear set of demands helps to smooth out the process. Help

your customer clarify those needs from the get-go. Does the new floor need to be waterproof, easy to clean, pet-friendly, etc.? Listen, work together to gather the responses and then present her with a narrowed set of options that will check all the boxes.

It also helps to feature stand-out collections and displays that relay a positive feeling rather than simply technical details. For example, the new joint Cali Longboards-Legends display aims for that exact goal by leaning into an aspirational, coastal theme complete with a life-size surfboard and paddle. It’s more experience than display and speaks to easy-going, easy-to-design-with styles as well as an overall more enjoyable new floor journey.

selling

Recommending the right construction

By FCNews staff

Given the rapid evolution of the resilient category, including new iterations across various subsegments, flooring dealers must stay informed on not only the types of products available but also their features and benefits. Whether it's WPC, SPC or traditional LVP products, RSAs must be ready and able to communicate the features and benefits of the different formats and constructions. All have different nuances that make one more appropriate than the other for different projects. Following are several approaches retailers can take when offering choices to the shopper.

First, choose the room

When helping a consumer find her ideal floor, experts say retail sales associates need to consider several factors, including the consumer's lifestyle and the room in which the flooring is being installed. For instance, areas with direct sunlight could benefit from an SPC product. That's according to George McMurtry, owner, America's Carpet Outlet, State College, Pa., who explained flooring near "a porch or deck entrance with a southern exposure,



FirmFit Downtown from CFL.

a wall with full length windows or in a home without UV protection in the windows is typically in direct sunlight. A WPC product could be more susceptible to movement caused by the direct sunlight than a product featuring an SPC core."

Inquire about her flooring needs

SPC can also be the ideal product for a consumer looking for a high-performing floor. "SPC is a home run for those wanting tough, dent-resistant hard surface, especially if they don't want to remove their existing ceramic or porcelain tile," said Marjorie Benson, president, Friendly Floors, Port Charlotte, Fla. "WPC is great for some of the older population where a bit softer, resilient floor is helpful for hips, ankles and knees."

For Cathy Buchanan, co-owner, Independent Carpet One, Westland, Mich., SPC is the go-to for three-season rooms. "A rigid core product would be the first direction shown to the consumer due to fade and ever-changing temperatures and the water aspect of this product," she

Continued on page 14

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: CFL

The sound choice in waterproof floors

Good flooring must be waterproof, durable, beautiful and easy to maintain. A lot of options are available in the market, but whether you're talking about laminate, wood, tiles or SPC, most still share the same downside to varying degrees: sound.

CFL brings you the sound choice in waterproof floors—NovoCore Q (NCQ), a patented engineered vinyl flooring that truly champions the quest for a quieter, high-performing hard surface.

Q stands for Quiet. Designed to absorb rather than transfer noise, NCQ is up to six times more quiet than a normal 4mm SPC

with 1mm cork, and up to three times more quiet than a 5.5mm WPC with 1mm cork, according to CFL. Each plank is made with multi-

ple distinct layers from different materials that each block specific frequencies of sound, thereby greatly improving acoustic performance. It can minimize the most common distracting sounds: clonking heels, bangs and thumps, barking dogs and the like.

CFL looks to drive flooring innovation not by simply making products but by providing solutions to challenges clients and consumers face. With this in mind, the company has worked hard to develop and patent technologies that allow it to offer value-added products such as NovoCore Q.



NovoCore Q, which stands out as a 'quieter,' high-performing floor, was designed to withstand the rigors of daily family activities in the home.



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selling

Continued from page 12
noted.

Buchanan said she also believes situations calling for rolling chairs and extreme traffic could benefit from SPC's performance attributes. "SPC is a sure bet due to its strength, flexibility in application, temperature allowance and price for budget."

While WPC and SPC flooring have become the go-to products for residential projects, they are also making their way into the commercial space. "I recommend LVT products in any situation where a customer may

be looking at hard surfaces, and more than ever in baths and wet areas," said Chris Kemp, owner, Kemp's Dalton West Flooring, with three locations in Georgia. "I like to use SPC in commercial areas."

Craig Phillips, president, Barrington Carpet, Akron, Ohio, has seen his custom builder, commercial and retail businesses all shift over to SPC products. "SPC offers many advantages over traditional LVT—no acclimation, better sound absorption, in addition to being more forgiving of imperfect subfloors. We have actually seen some of our



High-definition visuals in the latest designer colors from Wellmade are complemented with embossed textures and painted bevel edge treatments in its HDPC Pisa line.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: THE DIXIE GROUP

Building an innovative portfolio

The Dixie Group (TDG) has been hard at work building an innovative portfolio of hard surface offerings to set itself apart from the competition. For 2022, the introduction of Trucor Boardwalk SPC featuring a pillowed-edge profile and Trucor Prime Pinnacle WPC in an extra-long format are just the latest in unique feature offerings.

TDG is always looking to bring something new to market that hasn't been seen or done before. That vision is what led to the introduction of both the Boardwalk and Pinnacle collections. Innovations create excitement with sales reps, customers and, ultimately, the consumer. These days, consumers are looking for better goods, which translates to innovative, stylish and on-trend products.

Trucor Boardwalk SPC features pillowed-edge profile technology to bring a more realistic

look to the edge of the planks. "Our goal is to innovate and be different," said Jamann Stepp, vice president, hard surface.

The edges of each plank are rolled to create the pillowed-edge profile. It's not micro-bevel and it's not painted bevel, which has been very popular the last seven to eight years. It's a unique visual.

Trucor Prime Pinnacle, meanwhile, is pushing the envelope on size. The planks will be 12 inches wide x 90 inches long. "It's a game-changer in regard to look, style, design and size," Stepp said.

The Prime Pinnacle collection will fit nicely in large homes with big, open spaces as well as average-sized homes with open floor plans making the space look bigger. "You will not find this product in your local big box retailer," Stepp noted.

property accounts switch to SPC where their budget permits. The SPC products offer very realistic visuals and are built for today's active households."

Despite WPC and SPC's stronghold, traditional LVT is still being specified in various commercial projects. As Friendly Floors' Benson explained, "Glue-down LVT is better for commercial applications where chairs, carts, etc., may be rolling over them. In Florida, we have more concrete slabs in poor condition than not, so we prefer floating floors residentially."

Phillips said he sees LVT being installed mainly in property management projects. "It's aggressively priced but allows the property managers an opportunity to upgrade their common area flooring within the apartment to a better-looking, durable, easily repairable flooring."

Emphasize variety

While it is clear most dealers have their top product categories for different installation projects, many stress the fact they don't push the consumer to one specific product.

"Typically, for most homeowners we would not make any significant distinction among the different construction types of LVT," McMurtry of America's Carpet Outlet said. "In more residential environments, the final selection should be based on color, traffic and general appearance."

Tim Schoolfield, owner, Countryside Carpets Flooring America, O'Fallon, Mo., keeps it simple when offering various options to the customer. "I tell them to pick the look and feel they like," he said.



Trucor Boardwalk's pillowed edge profile technology brings a more realistic look to the edge of the planks.

BOARDWALK

COLLECTION



PILLOWED EDGE PROFILE



EMBOSSSED TEXTURE

I followed the boardwalk, and it led me home.

We dream in colors borrowed from the beach; the new TRUCOR® Boardwalk collection makes those dreams a reality! With 12 clean, coastal-inspired colors, the all-new Boardwalk collection can transform your home into the ultimate retreat.

In addition to the on-trend color palette, the Boardwalk collection features a new pillowed-edge rolled bevel and a driftwood-inspired embossed texture, creating a softer, more natural look to your durable, family-friendly, and waterproof SPC floors. #TrucorBoardwalk

merchandising

In-store, online tips to maximize category's potential

By Megan Salzano-Birch

The resilient category continues to boom, leading the industry as the No. 1 product sector in terms of growth. While the category's red-hot demand is a good thing for dealers, it also means hard decisions when it comes to onboarding product and merchandising that product. How many lines are enough? How many are too many? And what if it isn't enough? However, another major question dealers need to ask is once you've settled on the right lines, how do you successfully merchandise those lines both in store and online?

FCNews asked several resilient flooring suppliers to provide insights to successfully merchandise the category in a way that draws consumers in.

Ivp 101: selling

Set yourself apart with a customer-centric pitch

BY JULIE BETH FISHER

director of residential brand marketing, Shaw Floors

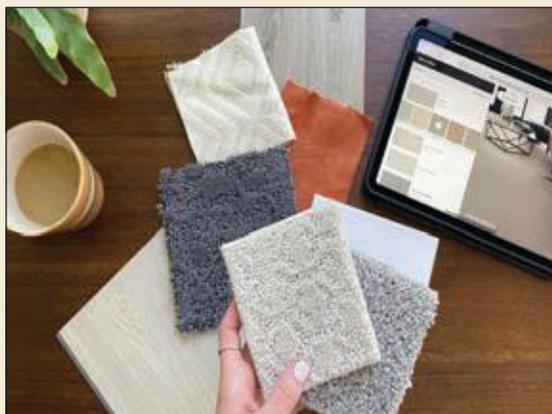
(First of two parts)

Sales is a relationship business, and specialty flooring retailers set themselves apart from their competition by their industry expertise and their ability to deliver world-class customer service—which includes managing homeowner expectations about the installation process. Let's face it: Updating flooring is messy, disruptive and

stressful for most homeowners. It's important to start by getting to know your customers and finding out what they're looking for. For instance, what do they need and expect from their new floor? Do they want to know how this floor will wear over time with kids and pets in the home, or are they more focused on aesthetics or installation? Do they ask for your opinion on color/species/pattern/texture or do they seem to know what they want already?

Without using industry jargon or rushing to product recommendations, ask some probing questions to get a read on how knowledgeable they seem. Be sure to listen carefully to how they respond. This helps you understand what motivates your customer, how confident they are and what stage they're at in their purchasing journey.

To learn about where your customer is in the sales funnel and how to manage their expectations through installation and after-care, read Part 2 of this article on page 54.



Shaw's Floorvana+ lets customers color match, view styles in the exact room/space and explore different installation patterns before they make a purchase.



Mohawk Pergo Extreme Inline Plank Holder.

IN-STORE MERCHANDISING

JULIE THOMAS

retail channel marketing manager
Karndean Designflooring

For consumers, flooring is both a visual and tactile shopping experience. We offer our retailers a showroom flooring program that gives an at-a-glance view of ways in which homeowners can personalize our products and to spark their interests and creativity. Our most prestigious group of retailers (designer showrooms) have a unique design table on which to demonstrate and compare different layouts and design capabilities.

DOUG JACKSON

president, Cali

Cali's displays are made to instantly communicate our brand and easy, coastal lifestyle to anyone who walks in the store. The new joint Longboards-Legends display does most of the work for you with its classic wooden surfboard and paddle, and on-trend colors. We provide retailers with all the tips, details and tools they need to help customers create the vision of a Cali floor in their home.

MAUD SWALENS

senior marketing manager
COREtec

Shoppers can get overwhelmed by the buying process. Dealers should favor displays that provide simple, clarifying messaging that helps consumers understand the benefits that resilient products offer. We are excited about COREtec's 2022 display for the product that started it all, COREtec Originals. This fixture focuses on key benefits, intentional messaging and simplifying the consumer experience.



SHAW COREtec display ENHANCED ANGLE.

JOEL TETREAU

vice president of marketing and product development, resilient Mohawk

At minimum, to represent the resilient category as a whole, a dealer would want to carry rigid, sheet and flex vinyl flooring; this would give them coverage of most flooring needs from a vinyl perspective. All products will deliver some great performance benefits, including waterproof, durability and scratch resistance—though not all products are equal across the competition. Starting in 2022, you'll start to see displays with upgraded messaging that more clearly and concisely allows RSAs to explain the trade up between the different collections (it's also easier for consumers to understand).



Karndean Floorstyle



Cali videos

DIGITAL TOOLS

MAUD SWALENS
COREtec

Providing inspiration with colorful imagery featuring different aesthetics on blogs, social media and newsletters allows dealers to convey visual stories to shoppers.

DOUG JACKSON
Cali

Flooring visualizer programs allow the customer to see a floor in her own space and play around with design. That provides a pretty informative and personalized experience—ideal when you're considering a major home purchase like new flooring.

JULIE THOMAS
Karndean

Social media is often the first place home-

owners will look to for design inspiration. Retailers can utilize social media to showcase local work they've done from both a design and installation perspective. Many of our customers have monitors in their showrooms where they can also display installed photos in-store.

JOEL TETREAU
Mohawk

We have great online tools such as Omnify, a service that provides the digital muscle to help reach consumers and promote dealers. Mohawk's Edge program provides dealer benefits that support and assist in the sell-through of specific products. Mohawk also provides advertising support with tools such as Neighborhood Ad Manager, a repository of content that dealers can use.

lvp 101: selling

Focus on benefits to bolster your selling story

BY **KURT DENMAN**

chief marketing officer, Congoleum

Understanding the benefits of SPC/rigid waterproof flooring is the first step in addressing the needs of your customers.

Here's what RSAs need to look for:

- An SPC construction offering best-in-class features; for example, a 6mm overall construction for excellent indentation resistance and dimensional stability.
- A thinner profile than WPC and laminates means less modification needed for baseboards, trim and doors.
- A commercially rated, 20-mil wear layer delivers outstanding long-term performance.
- Products with an attached, non-absorbent

- IXPE backing often delivers improved sound rating by suppressing sound transfer between floors and minimizing hollow/tapping sounds associated with floating installations.
- Tighter joints deliver true 100% waterproof performance that is suitable for any room and features an array of stunning wood and stone visuals.
- Look for SPC products that offer exact match trim for every design and includes transitions, reducers and stair treads that seamlessly match the floor design.
- Look for products that are FloorScore certified that address indoor air quality.



The Triversa Prime merchandising system presents the entire offering via a waterfall presentation.

merchandising

What's the magic number of brands you should carry?

By Ken Ryan

The waterproof craze that has spread throughout the flooring industry shows no signs of drying up as more SPC/rigid core suppliers enter the fray in hopes of seizing a market opportunity in this still red-hot segment.

With so many suppliers competing for share of the showroom, retailers often face the tough decision of how many lines to carry. Some say “less is more,” while others say: “the more the merrier.” Against a backdrop of product shortages and delays stemming from the supply chain crisis, dealers say they are more inclined to keep more lines lest they come up empty for customers.

“For me, it's not a question of how many is enough but how many should I show and how many can I support? I support seven different vendors that carry waterproof flooring, and I am important to all seven of those vendors, whereas most of my competitors show at least 15 different vendors and are not important to any of them. I try to support each vendor's strength and uniqueness and look for things that set them apart from one another; otherwise, you have a sea of waterproof flooring in your showroom that all looks the same and creates confusion for your customers.”

—Eric Mondragon
RC Willey Home Furnishings
Salt Lake City

“Currently, we carry about six to seven brands of waterproof flooring and within each of those brands are anywhere from two to six lines. Now more than any other time, the more options we have, the better. These days, not only do we have to focus on pleasing our customers with a nice variety of colors, specs and pricing, but product availability is also a huge factor. Unexpectedly, in 2022 product availability has become a selling feature for us. In many instances, it has become just as important as a customer's preferred color choice. Therefore, the more lines we have, the better our chances for having a waterproof option that fits each of these categories for our customers.”

Mindy Arnette, Brian's Flooring & Design
Birmingham, Ala.

“I can't say there is a specific number, but we are close to maxed out. At this point, when I consider a new line it has to fill a need of something we are missing: specific look, availability, pricing, etc. There needs to be a reason why it stands out from the crowd. We have larger showrooms, and we have approximately 30-35 displays per store that fall into that category. Each display has an average of two to three lines in it, so 75-125 lines.”

—Sam Locher
A.J. Rose Carpets & Flooring
Burlington, Mass.



Frazier's touts six competitive waterproof lines.

Continued on page 22

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: NOVALIS

Trendsetter in innovation, quality, sustainability

Novalis Innovative Flooring is known for its commitment to innovation, style, quality and sustainability. As one of the few companies to offer all luxury vinyl flooring constructions—rigid core, glue-down, loose lay and peel and stick—it takes enormous pride in its ability to provide a product for every project.

In a highly competitive and growing market, Novalis knows one of the best ways to stand out is to be a trendsetter. That's why its creative team of designers and marketers pull inspiration from a wide range of sources around the world, from modern architecture to Fashion Week runways.

On top of making a beautiful product, its commitment to quality keeps customers—

and even social media influencers—coming back for more.

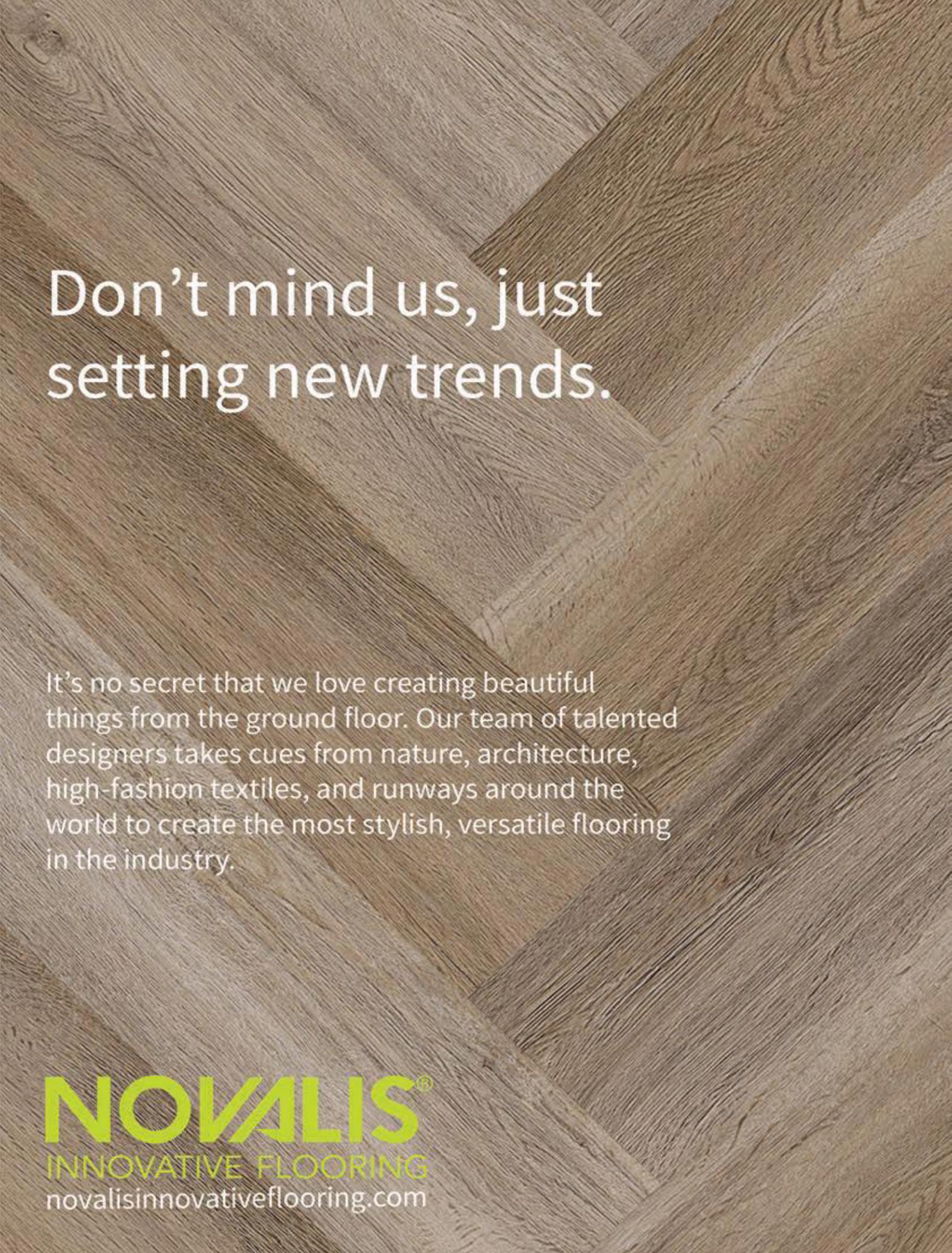
“Last year, we partnered with 22 social

media influencers across our brands. Seven of them loved their flooring so much that they approached us to work together again in 2022,” said Alyssa Cole, senior content marketing manager. “One influencer has installed our LVP in three homes over a three-year period. That kind of advocacy goes well beyond our initial digital campaign goals—that's about truly loving the product. It's organic and meaningful to their followers, turning many of them into happy customers, too.”

Since its start in the 1980s, Novalis' commitment to environmental responsibility has been unwavering. Today, sustainability continues to be a cornerstone of the business so customers can always feel good about bringing Novalis products into their homes.



NovaFloor's Barrell Oak Henley from the Maybree collection was installed and photographed by social media influencers Danielle and Michael Gutelli of Clark + Aldine.



Don't mind us, just
setting new trends.

It's no secret that we love creating beautiful things from the ground floor. Our team of talented designers takes cues from nature, architecture, high-fashion textiles, and runways around the world to create the most stylish, versatile flooring in the industry.

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: DEZIGN

Serving dealers with premium products

DeZign began operations in 2011 as a small distributor in Dalton offering container-only deals for larger volume flooring dealers in the U.S. In 2014, DeZign changed its business model to focus on providing specialty retailers with design-oriented products.

DeZign is now focused on "building better products" for its partners while putting a strong emphasis on design and service. Its products are produced by one of the largest vinyl resin producers and extrusion companies in the world. Through DeZign's partnership with its two key suppliers (including one in the U.S.), the company is able to provide fast lead times to its customers.

DeZign has three collections of SPC and one crossover collection

of traditional LVT. Its goal is to offer retail partners exclusive products not found in their market that will enable them to achieve better margins.

Collections include DeZign Value Core (7 x 48, 12-mil, 4.5mm thickness), DeZignCore Ultra (7 x 48 and 9 x 60 formats, EIR, 5.5mm thickness and 20-mil wear layer), and EnduraCore Long Plank (9 x 60 format, 28-mil wear layer, 7.5mm thickness, EIR). These collections allow the company's select dealer partners to fulfill the residential and commercial flooring needs of every customer. As a supplier, DeZign values its retail partners and vows to protect them through the company's Exclusive Dealer Program.



DeZign offers its retail partners exclusive products not found in their market. Shown is Spalted Maple.

lvp 101: basics



Lions Floor's SPC products aim to check several boxes, including performance and aesthetics. Shown here is Shoreline Décor from the Indoor Delight collection.

Understanding the ABCs of SPC

BY JERRY GUO
president, Lions Floor

SPC is the fastest-growing flooring product of the past decade. With an overwhelming supply and excess demand in the market, retail sales associates are fighting a fast-paced battle every day.

Thus, there are numerous facts about SPC that are usually overlooked by many RSAs. First, the product can be water damaged, and this is where the majority of claims arise. Caused by the moisture accumulated from the ground or within the concrete, the floor edges—where it is not covered by underlayment—can be impacted by the moisture content and result in "cupping." The thicker the flooring, the higher its moisture tolerance.

To resolve the potential issue, it is best to cover the sub-floor with a thin sheet of plastic or moisture barrier. This prevents the moisture from inter-

acting with the exposed edges and reduces the claim rate to a minimum.

Second, SPC can be scratched from heavy furniture and improper use. SPC products generally deliver very stable performance in most households; however, the surface is not bulletproof. Coated with a plastic-based wear layer, SPC products can show scratch marks produced by sharp edges and heavy applications. RSAs will need to educate the end users on this occurrence in order to manage the customer's expectations. Despite the aforementioned shortcomings, SPC still hits the sweet spot of application, cost efficiency and aesthetics. The sales pitch on SPC flooring can be made by emphasizing its inclusiveness of the essential features that most homeowners demand today.

DeZign[®]
It's In Our Name



Introducing Your Premium Flooring Source

DeZign is a family-owned designer and distributor of residential and commercial waterproof and hardwood exclusive premium floor covering products. From our offices and distribution centers in Georgia and Florida, we support clients in the Southeast region and beyond, reaching most areas of the entire continental USA. In addition, we service Canadian clients through our direct container and truckload programs.

For more information, find us on the web at: DeZignNA.com or contact us at **706.370.7673**

Continued from page 18

“The real question is: How many stable, consistent and otherwise competitive waterproof lines is enough? Even before the current supply chain issues, we had very few lines that could maintain stability, consistency and competitiveness in these important categories—spec-to-cost ratio; visuals and style, including width of selection; manufacturing quality and support. If we think of all flooring segments as having good, better and best classes of product, I want to see a minimum of two lines full of great/good product; four lines full of great/better product; and three lines full of great/best product. Given that best-case scenario, there might be some overlap, so I’m probably talking about a total of seven lines. But I’ll be honest with you, we don’t currently have seven lines of waterproof product that are stable, consistent and otherwise competitive; it’s more like six.”

—Kevin Frazier, Frazier’s Carpet One Floor & Home Knoxville, Tenn.

“We have waterproof backing for carpet, we have waterproof carpet pad and we can’t have enough waterproof LVP—or, should I say, the manufacturers can’t supply enough waterproof LVP. It is a fabulous residential market considering the fact that inflation is skyrocketing. That said, we carry eight lines of waterproof LVP with a multitude of SKUs. I believe we are on the verge of overwhelming the customer with the quantity of selections we currently have. I do not need anymore.”

—Kevin Rose
Carpetland USA
Rockford, Ill.



Some retailers believe less is more when it comes to luxury vinyl selections.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: JOHNSON HARDWOOD

Durability, aesthetics offer winning combination

With today’s consumers being more floor savvy, they expect more when it comes to durability and real wood visuals. So, when Johnson Hardwood introduced its 30-mil wear layer products it managed to kill two birds with one stone and really set Johnson Hardwood apart.

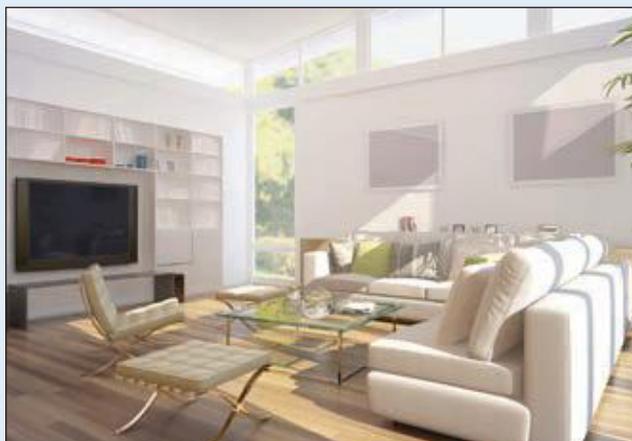
The thicker wear layer not only gives Johnson’s floors abrasion resistance, but it also allows for a deeper embossing—ultimately providing a more aesthetically pleasing real wood visual.

Another differentiator is Johnson owns its overseas factories, allowing it to adapt to mar-

ket changes and trends with new products. From the award-winning Public House series to the sleek and modern Skyview collection, Johnson Hardwood is sure to have the styles customers are looking for along with the added durability of the 30-mil wear layer and 30-year commercial warranty.

Royal Palace—brand new to the lineup—is inspired by Johnson’s highly successful Grand Chateau Hardwood collection. This series focuses on a modern look by simply relying on the natural aesthetics and visuals of Euro-

pean oak. The Royal Palace series is a 7.5mm-thick (6mm + 1.5mm IXPE) SPC with a thick, 30-mil, low-gloss wear layer. This thick wear layer allows for deeper EIR and, along with Johnson’s new eased bevel technology, equates to a more authentic real wood look and feel. Unilin angle-tap matched with Johnson’s WaterShield rigid core provides excellent moisture protection. The 7 x 60 series comes in eight clean/modern colors and four herringbone and matching planks (in a different profile) to meet the needs of today’s discerning consumers.



Johnson’s Royal Palace focuses on a modern look by relying on the natural aesthetics of European oak.

“Some people would say less is more and too many lines will confuse customers. We have several waterproof lines in our showroom. We pick a handful to stock and focus on; however, in the current environment it helps to be nimble in case one item gets back ordered or goes up in price too dramatically. This year we have seen a record number of back orders and price increases, and things don’t appear to be easing up. Right now, it seems to be about keeping products in stock at the right price; therefore, having a bigger selection has been helpful. Even though more choices can at times get overwhelming, our salespeople know our products so well that they are able to guide our customers through the selection process.”

—Susan Hadinger
Hadinger’s Flooring
Naples, Fla.

“Many retailers, myself included, end up with a considerable amount of product duplication—similar products, with similar visuals and similar price points. This product duplication can overwhelm customers and make an already confusing purchase even more stressful. I believe we would be doing our customers a favor if we avoided having multiple lines of product in our showrooms that were too similar to the products in the display right next to them. If you are like me, the main reason we haven’t eliminated all the product duplication in our showroom is because we value the relationship with the supplier of the duplicated product. So, you leave it on your showroom floor. In reality, we really should be focusing on what is best for our customers and our businesses.”

—Palmer Johnson
Johnson Floor & Home
Tulsa, Okla.

Lvp 101: selling

LVP gives retailers a story to tell

BY ABIGAIL **KOVACEVICH**

communication specialist, Flooring Lines

Choosing floors is no easy task. The selling process takes time and careful consideration, especially given the array of options from which to choose these days.

For homeowners, it's natural to think about the costs and different scenarios when putting down a new floor. You want to choose floors that not only look beautiful and go with the décor of your home, but are also durable and resistant to accidents and wear.

This is where LVP comes in. LVP floors (SPC/rigid core) provide an attractive product for busy homeowners, which is one reason why flooring retailers are so drawn to it. Widely praised for its water and damage re-

sistance, LVP can be installed in virtually any room in the house, even wet areas. Beyond that, LVP floors are stylish and—in some cases—very affordable, two more compelling selling points for retailers.

Studies have shown that LVP's durability often clinches the deal for consumers who rightfully are concerned about the long-term wear and tear of their floors, especially when pets are involved. One such LVP that fits the bill as durable, stylish and affordable is the Christina Collection, featuring a 20-mil wear layer and 6.5mm thickness. When looking for the ultimate flooring solution for your customer, look no further than Christina.



The Christina Collection is suitable for any room in the house, even wet areas.

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR:
UNILIN TECHNOLOGIES

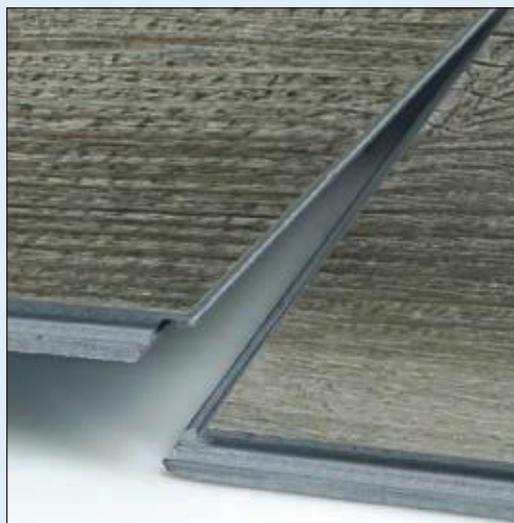
Faster, stronger locking systems

The right click system can make all the difference—not only for consumers and installers but also for retailers, distributors and manufacturers. Consumers want a floor that lasts; conversely, a locking system that cannot handle the daily wear and tear of an active household can diminish the lifespan of a floor by many years. A deficient locking system can be the cause of unwanted gaps, height differences and horrible installation experiences.

All these issues can lead to costly product returns, which eat away at the bottom line of retailers. To alleviate these challenges, Unilin Technologies strives to develop durable products with installation flexibility that have been tested to withstand extensive usage. Both its angle locking system Uniclic and fold-down locking system Unidrop are designed to last.

The Uniclic system is still an industry favorite after many years of service. By achieving the highest tolerances during production as well as improved click performance, this technology is a rewarding choice for users for its durability.

The Unidrop system is easy and intuitive to install by fold-down and de-install by angling up—without causing damage. The Unidrop profile features a flexible lower lip that eliminates height differences while improving overall strength.



Unidrop offers easy installation and a locking system with enhanced properties.

merchandising



At Sterling Carpets based in Anaheim, Calif., much of the emphasis is placed on the luxury vinyl/WPC/SPC offerings. Here, customers can choose from an ample product selection.

Retailers share their ideas on how to showcase WPC

By Ken Ryan

Chances are many consumers who ultimately purchased an LVT or WPC/rigid core product for their homes probably initially came in asking for laminate or hardwood, dealers say. Once customers see the product and hear about its benefits, they are

usually sold. And as luxury waterproof vinyl increasingly takes over, dealers are actively and creatively using their showroom space to display these products.

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

“We merchandise LVT right in the front of the stores and have 12-13 display floors laid down. WPC/LVP has become our largest hard surface category in the last few years, and it continues to grow.”

—Dan Mandel, Sterling Carpets, Anaheim, Calif.

“We place the LVP displays next to the wood displays. Making the jump from a low-end wood product to a high-end LVT/P is usually enough of a price difference to close the sale.”

—Anthony Palandro, Palandro Flooring, Philadelphia

“We merchandise our go-to products with large panels in a custom display. We also categorize the samples in a good/better/best grouping.”

—Bruce Odette, Carpet Exchange, Denver, Colo.

“There’s no better way to show LVP than to have it installed on our showroom floor. When we take customers to that section, the unmatched colors and styling usually sells itself.”

—Steve Lipp, Carpet One, Fort Wayne, Ind.

“We don’t want to box in our customers behind towering product displays. We want them to be able to see where all of the product categories are within the showroom.”

—Stephen Eckard, Eckard’s Home Improvement, St. Joseph, Mo.

SIMPLE INSTALLATION, INGENIOUS ENGINEERING

Still the most reliable click system in the world

Uniclic was the first one-piece locking profile to be introduced to the market and has since become the industry's favorite thanks to its unmatched production efficiency and technical performance.

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Lvp 101: merchandising



A well-designed display works in harmony with the online presence. Shown is NovoCore Q display.

Functional display systems make the difference

BY JEROME NURENBERG
marketing director, CFL Flooring

The consumer's buying journey starts with online research. Most of the time, they already know what they want before stepping into your store. With almost everything available online, your store must offer a unique experience—something your customer will not get from their screens.

Merchandise displays should be the final accord to this journey. A well-designed display works in harmony with the online presence, accurately illustrates the design and gives an impression of credibility to a brand.

Hearing is believing

We've seen the most common torture tests for flooring: spilling water, dragging office chairs and leaving the planks under the sun—most of which cannot be done at your store. Luckily, it's a different story for testing sound. NCO's acoustic performance, for example, is extremely easy to demonstrate; just drop a marble or a golf ball and you hear the difference instantly.

CFL's standard displays come with a built-in sound test sample with competing waterproof products side by side for demonstration purposes.

marketing

Retailers share tried-and-true tips for success

By Ken Ryan

Luxury vinyl flooring continues to post double-digit percentage gains each year, and not even the presence of new suppliers has watered down the category. If anything, it has given flooring retailers more options for their customers.

That begs the question: What are some of the most effective ways to sell and merchandise LVP, SPC and WPC flooring these days? Several dealers weighed in with their tried-and-true tips.



Customers get to see a range of patterns on the floor at Carpet World in Bismarck, N.D.

1 SELL BASED ON NEEDS

Luxury vinyl flooring is a great product with a rich benefits package and is still selling like crazy. Therefore, there is no need to overhype it, retailers said. "Be transparent about what the product can and cannot do to meet the client's expectations," explained Don Lovato, president of CarpetSourceUSA.com, Albuquerque, N.M. Instead, he takes a consultative approach by recommending products based on the customers' needs. "We don't sell a big/tall client SPC, for example, as it tends to be so rigid that when a significant person with a large foot walks on it, it sounds very loud. In that case, WPC would be more appropriate."

2 ENCOURAGE CUSTOMERS TO TOUCH AND FEEL

Flooring is a tactile product; people want to touch and feel it before making a final purchasing decision. What better way to do that, retailers said, than to walk all over it? "We install on the floor the LVP that we stock," said Penny Carnino, COO of Tulsa, Okla.-based Grigsby's Carpet Tile & Flooring. "It really helps the consumer know what it is going to look like and, of course, then it really helps move the items we stock in that category."

At Carpet World Bismarck, N.D., Jon Dauenhauer, co-owner, employs merchandisers to help tell the story. "We use display floors to sell our in-stock products and explain the differences between them," he explained. "We also make sure to set expectations of performance and explain what 'waterproof' really means to the consumer."



All vinyl products stocked at 3 Kings Flooring are displayed on the floor.

3 NARROW YOUR PRODUCT SELECTION

While some retailers believe a wide product offering is the way to go when merchandising LVP/SPC, it's best to not go overboard. "Customers often feel overwhelmed when looking for an LVP," said John Bretzloff, manager of Barefoot Flooring, Castle Hayne, N.C. "We try to narrow the scope within their parameters that might affect what they should be considering—i.e., area of home, pets, children, sandy soil, amount of natural light, desired width of plank, subfloor type. This commonly puts them at ease and simplifies the selling process, leading to a higher closing rate."

4 MERCHANDISE CREATIVELY

LVP may be selling like hot cakes but the product doesn't sell itself. That's where effective displays and merchandising come in. "We prefer stackers over wing racks," said Jeremy Wirges, co-owner, 3 Kings Flooring, Fort Wayne, Ind. "All the products we stock we put down as display floors as well as use these customized displays."

Bruce Odette, president/owner of Carpet Exchange in Denver, said he has had success with a two-pronged approach. "We merchandise our go-to products with large panels in a custom display. The other strategy is to categorize the samples in a good/better/best grouping. This allows you the opportunity to upgrade your customers and maximize the gross profit dollars on each sale."

5 ENSURE THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Flooring dealers are finding success promoting their more expensive goods despite record inflation. As Matt Wein, manager of Marshall Carpet One Floor & Home in Mansfield, Ohio, explained, "We promote the higher-end, more realistic-looking LVT. This separates us from the competition, which focuses on price-driven LVT."

Then there's Anaheim, Calif.-based Sterling Carpet & Flooring, which stocks roughly 35 SKUs and prices them very aggressively. "In order to compete with the Floor & Decors of the world we make less margin but work on higher turns for this type of product," said Dan Mandel, co-owner. "We have had great success with our inventory of resilient flooring, mostly in better end goods."

Lvp 101: selling



RSAs want to sell products that stand apart from the competition. Shown is Trucor Pinnacle from TDG.

Difference-making products to meet consumer needs

BY JAMANN STEPP

vice president, hard surfaces, The Dixie Group

Today's consumer wants an easy-to-install, easy-to-maintain, waterproof resilient floor that delivers what she demands most.

For RSAs looking to boost their sales in the industry's fastest growing category, focusing on brands that can deliver on these demands is key. Specifically, sales professionals need a product that is different—one they can get excited about.

Trucor's introductions of Boardwalk and Pinnacle Prime, for example, both offer key fea-

tures the consumer demands while giving the RSA something exciting and new to talk about.

After all, selling on price in today's market is no easy task for the RSA, nor does it achieve the desired results, including higher margins.

Fortunately, RSAs can boost margins by offering differentiated products that won't be found in big-box stores—products that meet the needs of today's discerning consumer. The flooring industry is blessed to have many of these standouts.

marketing

WPC vs. SPC: It's all a matter of preference

By Megan Salzano-Birch

Not only does the resilient flooring category continue to take market share from most other flooring categories, it is still reporting growth despite challenging times. As part of that growth, the category has splintered into various subsegments, each touting its own value to the end user. As such, flooring dealers have had to stay educated on each subsegment's features and benefits and where each will thrive once installed in the home. Two such subsegments—and those most competitive with one another—are WPC and SPC.

Differentiating factors

While WPC has been in the market longer than its sister subsegment, SPC has proven itself valuable in the field. For a retail operation and its RSAs to remain valuable to their consumers, they must find a way to recommend the best match, and experts say qualifying the sale is the key. "Selecting the 'best' rigid core product comes down to preference, application and expectation of the consumer or end user," explained Jon England, formerly director of



The choice between an SPC floor vs. a WPC product often boils down to the requirements of the space. WPC is said to offer more comfort than SPC.

resilient category management, Shaw Floors, and now vice president, enterprise sundries. "Both WPC and SPC offer solutions for the consumer; some overlap and other benefits are specific to a particular construction."

SPC touts added performance

For example, SPC is geared toward high traffic and resists extreme temperature fluctuations (once installed), England said, making it great for commercial settings and three-season homes in addition to residential applications.

WPC, on the other hand, is softer, warmer and quieter underfoot and offers ample performance for most residential settings, even active households with kids and pets, he added.

WPC puts premium on comfort

When it comes to WPC, there are several features that draw consumers in—the aforementioned attributes being high on the list. "The biggest difference in WPC vs. rigid core is the added comfort and quietness you get with WPC," said Steve Weisberg, president of Crest Flooring, Allentown, Pa.

Bruce Odette, owner, Carpet Exchange, Colorado, agreed, adding that WPC's comfort-first characteristics can be marketed as an added value for an upgraded price point. "The foam injections in the core offer a softer walk and more apparent value because of the thickness, and more insulation keeps your floors warmer," he explained. "The WPC construction has always appealed to me and our customers for many reasons. We sell it as an upgrade to the rigid products."

Experts agreed WPC is also a good product to have in a retailer's flooring arsenal because

Continued on page 31

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: CALI

Standing out in a sea of sameness

Cali's displays are designed to instantly communicate its brand as well as the easy, coastal lifestyle to anyone who walks in your store. The new joint Cali Vinyl Longboards-Legends display does most of the work for you with its eye-catching surfboard and paddle and on-trend, curated colors.

But grabbing their attention is just the start.

To fully support the shopping experience, Cali provides retailers with all the tips, details and tools they need to help customers create the vision of a Cali floor in their home. Marketing assets include professional photos, how-to videos, product descriptions, spec sheets and social media content—all of which can be used in-store or online. A responsive team of reps is also on hand to answer questions and keep you well supplied with product and sample chips.

Cali's new and improved tool is its online flooring visualizer, which allows the customer to see a floor in her own space and play around with different designs. The visualizer is easy to use—simply snap a photo on your phone and select the Cali floor to try out in your space. The customer can also send a photo to your store and together you can go through the color options. The process is easy, instantly informative and delivers a personalized experience for the consumer.



Using the new Cali visualizer tool, customers can instantly see what styles would look like in their homes. Shown is Diamondhead from the new Legends collection.



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lvp 101: education

Segment offers consumers a bevy of solutions

BY TIM **HINER**

senior director, product development,
product management, Tarkett

LVT is a lower cost, low maintenance option to true wood or stone flooring. Its ease of installation has also led to an increased presence in the market, where even some handy homeowners can install these floors themselves.

LVT is suitable for kitchens, bathrooms and mudrooms—but why stop there? Advancements in design and technology have allowed LVT to be used in more areas of the home than ever before. And with its easy click installation, LVT can be installed above, below or on-grade over a variety of subfloors.

RSAs should know there are two main types of LVT: Traditional flex LVT and rigid core. Traditional flex LVTs were the first vinyl planks on the market. Like its name suggests, it is flexible, light-weight and easy to maneuver. Rigid core is regarded as an improved version of LVT—thicker and able to overcome minor subfloor imperfections while still providing comfort.

As consumers, we often approach a purchase with certain ideas in mind—“Only wood will do;” “Laminate is easier to look after,” etc. However, when you consider the extraordinary range of finishes and styles with LVT, you’ll soon realize that this category of flooring has it all.



Rigid core is regarded as an improved version of LVT—thicker and able to overcome minor subfloor imperfections. Shown is Tarkett’s NuGen.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: DREAM WEAVER

Delivering the best of both worlds in hard surface flooring

Ensignium, an SPC floor, is a clear standout in the LVT marketplace, thanks to best-in-class manufacturing that makes Ensignium truly unique.

Recent 3D printing technology advancements allow Dream Weaver by Engineered Floors to take high-definition scans of real wood planks and deliver a replicated product with over 30 unique individual prints.

The result: 75 to 100 square feet before a plank will repeat. This not only delivers a more natural look, but also allows for a faster, easier installation.

The company’s Evertuff coating also aids in the natural appearance of Ensignium by leaving a much more muted finish on the surface of the floor when compared to the glossy finishes of traditional wear layers. What’s more, Evertuff is AC4 rated and suitable for both residential and commercial flooring applications.

Once installed, the customer can rest easy knowing her floor is scratch resistant at a commercial level, but also waterproof. Ensignium delivers the best of both worlds in hard surface flooring—a real wood aesthetic combined with extra durability.



Ensignium offers a real wood aesthetic with added durability.

marketing

Continued from page 28

it helps round out the consumer's options. "Providing the right floor for the purpose intended is paramount," Crest Flooring's Weisberg said. "Glue down, rigid core or WPC—it's the flooring professionals' job to write the right Rx for the job at hand. A consumer doesn't know which construction is best for them so they pick the visual they like and then we—as flooring professionals—will advise them on which weel feel is best suited for their needs."

Despite competition from its sister subsegment, WPC remains a major player for many dealers. "We've always done well with WPC," said Chris Cosentino, president of Hadinger Flooring, Naples, Fla. "We embraced the product early and our people had great success with it. We will continue to support this category as long as the product looks great and the customers want it."

So, where does WPC thrive once installed? According to retailers and suppliers alike, WPC thrives anywhere comfort is needed including second floor spaces, bedrooms and family rooms, in addition to other areas where hard surface is wanted.

SPC equals durability

For some suppliers and retailers alike, SPC is everything its WPC sister subsegment is and more. "SPC fills a lot of gaps in comparison to its predecessor," said Adam Ward, vice president, resilient, Mohawk. "The most notable is around residual indentation. If you think about consumers' lifestyles and how those have changed because of COVID-19, more people are spending more time at home. Their floors are getting a lot more use, so they have to be more resilient, and an SPC helps deliver on that."

Carol Kentis, vice president of operations, Republic Floors, agreed, noting the importance of SPC's waterproof story as part of that durability. "SPC is truly waterproof, which is what allows it to be in the laundry room, bathroom, kitchen, etc. SPC is leading the market because of that durability."

For retailers like Kevin Frazier, Frazier's Carpet One Floor & Home, Knoxville, Tenn., SPC flourishes especially in kitchens, bathrooms, home offices and basements. "SPC thrives everywhere, above and beyond WPC," he said. "If you add on top of the visuals the fact that it does everything as well as WPC, and resists indentation better, then you have a foolproof recipe for SPC thriving everywhere better than WPC."

SPC primed for commercial use

While SPC is driving some of the residential market, suppliers also noted its move into commercial spaces as well. "SPC began as primarily a residential option, to be used in any room of the home," explained Jeremy Kleinberg, senior product manager, Armstrong Flooring. "While it's still quite popular and useful in those applications, SPC is making inroads to commercial applications thanks to its superior indent resistance and the acoustic benefits."



Floorté by Shaw Floors is built to endure—all styles are 100% waterproof and designed to stand up to active households.

Ivp 101: marketing

A picture is worth a thousand words

BY STEVE WAGNER

director of marketing, Wellmade Performance Flooring

Let's face it. Professionally staged room scene photography sells flooring, period. And why not? Fashion-conscious consumers identify with trending home décor that is both easy to imagine and visually stimulating. As retailers, you support and align with popular brands. In return, most manufacturers maintain a substantial library of lifestyle photography designed to promote sales of their latest products. Be sure your showroom and marketing efforts fully utilize these effective visual sales tools.

Behind the scenes. Room scene photography can vary substantially, from smaller vignettes occupying 50 square feet to full-scale production sets with 400 square feet or more. Regardless of the room size, quality room scenes are typically driven by a team of creative professionals, including set designers, interior designers, lighting specialists and photographers. Design briefs and sketches are produced outlining décor preferences and color schemes prior to building sets and photographing rooms. Final images are designed to capture the latest designer trends while highlighting the unique character of each flooring product.

In-store marketing. As a retailer, high-quality room scene photography provides a host of marketing opportunities. Some tips: Use framed posters or window dressings. Enhance sales flyers, special promotions, advertising and brochures. Get creative and be sure to "tag" brand and product names on photography to drive sales of featured products. In the end, a picture is worth a thousand words, thereby stimulating the consumer's imagination and promoting more flooring sales.



High-quality room scene photography provides a host of marketing opportunities for retailers. Shown is Helix, an HDPC/SPC from Wellmade.

trends

Latest intros boast high style, functionality

By Megan Salzano-Birch

When it comes to the resilient category, it was clear at Surfaces 2022 that it's no longer about getting products to market first in an effort to be seen in a crowded category. This year's suppliers rolled out high-tech, style-focused products that each captivated attendees on their own distinct merit. Following is an overview of some of the emerging trends:

New formats better mimic wood

Cali Floors unveiled its new Legends line,

which features lightweight planks that are a full half-inch thick for a highly authentic wood look. The company also showcased its Longboards, which offers longer/wider planks in styles that are easy to maintain and design with.

In SPC, Shaw's Floorté brand unveiled its Paragon Plus Natural Bevel—SPC planks featuring an innovative bevel and natural color lines. Unique visuals include European oak, ash, chestnut and butternut. Planks measure 7 x 48 and are available in 10 colors.

COREtec celebrated its 10-year anniversary



Karndean's new 12-mil chevron pattern

and unveiled several new innovations, including its new Direct Digital Design Technology. The technology is used for the brand's SPC and said to capture more of the natural character of wood by producing an organic and varied flooring visual with an expansive pattern repeat of over 200 square feet—an increase of 114%. The technology's target launch is late 2022 or early 2023.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: ETERNITY

True craftsmanship in every intro

For years, Eternity Floors has impressed specialty flooring dealers with its high-performance laminate products. Now the company is demonstrating its craftsmanship and manufacturing prowess across a range of other hard surface categories, including rigid core SPC, WPC and LVT.

The latest example of this focus is an extensive rigid core selection called Ecoessent

Aqua-Resilience SPC. These floors are engineered with a 22-mil wear layer and enhanced with a ceramic micro-bead finish to achieve optimal scratch and dent resistance. Featuring Digitalism 20/20 technology, Ecoessent Rigid Core SPC is made with exclusive digitally enhanced designs and are GreenGuard Gold certified.

Meanwhile, the Prominence and Stellar series offer several features and benefits, including a 22-mil wear layer enhanced with a ceramic micro-bead finish; extra-long and wide painted bevel planks; TruEmbossed deep natural wood grain textures and a pre-attached 1.5mm XPE acoustical pad for fast and easy installation.

Other noteworthy SPC collections from Eternity include: Megacore XPC, Grand Heritage XPE, Provincial XPE, Advantage Series (Nordic Collection), Sentinel Series (Avant XPE, Paramount and Valiant), Signature Series (Sterling, Meridian, Atelier, Spectrum) and Paladin SPC.

What's more, the collections feature enhanced digital printing technology for added visual realism and textural feel.



Eternity's Ecoessent Aqua-Resilience SPC is enhanced with a ceramic micro-bead finish for improved scratch and dent resistance.

Play on patterns

Karndean showcased new looks and products across its three resilient constructions—glue-down, rigid core and loose lay. The showstopper, however, was its chevron pattern. Available in 12-mil, the product is offered in both a glue-down and rigid core construction. "I'm really, really excited and impressed about the potential of what our new Chevron design has the opportunity to do for specialty flooring retailers," said Jenne Ross, director of marketing.

Region-specific rollouts

Lions Floor, a fairly new entrant to the SPC field, broadened its offering with 36 new SKUs. "This year, we are doing a few special things for our SPC rigid core offerings," said Jerry Guo, president. "We have launched 36 new colors—14 of which will be for the West Coast; 16 for the Texas market; and the last six are exclusive, patented designs—no one will be able to carry them. This will give our dealers a competitive edge."

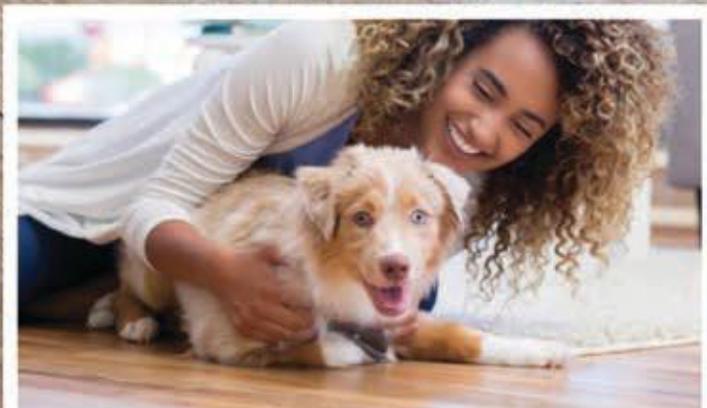
New takes on ceramic visuals

Wellmade unveiled its new HDPC vinyl tile at the show, which features an innovative grouted ceramic look in a 12 x 24 format and

Continued on page 34



INCORE
ECO-ENGINEERED COMPOSITE



INCORE Eco-Engineered Composite Special Features:

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Ecoessent INCORE Eco-Engineered Composite is produced with a Revolutionary Aqua Fiber Core engineered and tested to withstand everyday household spills left for up to 72 hours. With its AC4EVERPLUS Superior Scratch Resistant Surface and innovative Enhanced *MoistureBlock* Backing, INCORE is 100% Wet Mop Friendly and can be installed Above, On and Below Grade including in Kitchens and Bathrooms.

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eternity

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: CONGOLEUM

Rigid waterproof products for any job

Congoleum offers two collections of rigid waterproof flooring. From new construction and residential remodel to multi-family and Main Street commercial, Congoleum has the right product for every job.

Triversa Prime is a premium 100% waterproof, floating floor designed for residential and light commercial installations. It is 100% waterproof and constructed on a phthalate-free, SPC core that provides strength, durability and extreme indentation resistance. Triversa Prime features the patented SmartLock Clic installation system for fast and easy installation, combined with an IXPE backing for sound reduction to ensure quiet comfort. The 20-mil, urethane-finished wear layer stands up to heavy foot traffic, spills and normal pet activity. With wide bevels and color-infused edges on select designs,

Triversa Prime wood and tile looks are authentic and on-trend, making the ideal foundation for a beautifully decorated room. What's more, the collection is backed by a lifetime residential warranty.

ArmorCore Plank Pro, a sturdy, 100% waterproof SPC rigid core line, is engineered specifically for the builder and property management markets. The product's 4.5mm core is protected by a 12-mil wear layer, features micro-beveled edges and includes a 1mm foam pad for sound mitigation. The patented SmartLock Clic floating system ensures fast and reliable installations. Competitively priced and available in a collection of essential designs that include 7 x 48 wood planks and 12 x 24 tiles, this product is ideal for builder and multi-family projects.



Triversa Prime is 100% waterproof and constructed on a phthalate-free, SPC core.

Continued from page 32

various colors. “Vinyl tile is one of this category’s best opportunities,” said Steve Wagner, director of marketing, Wellmade. “It’s the next obvious evolution. It’s an emerging category in vinyl—the last frontier.”

Clean looks

Novalis’ NovaFloor brand highlighted Dansbee, a new vinyl line within NovaFloor’s resilient portfolio. “Dansbee captures that need for the lighter, brighter, cleaner look that everybody is going for right now,” explained Kimberly Hill, director of marketing and creative design.



T.M. Nuckols next to the 8-foot Pinnacle

Vivid realism

Within Mohawk’s SolidTech Plus tier, the Bedford collection features eight new styles with RealPlank Technology—Mohawk’s innovative realism technology system that helps achieve the most authentic look and feel in LVT. SolidTech Plus also features Mohawk’s new CleanProtect technology with built-in Activeguard antimicrobial technology that makes cleaning the invisible surface of the floors effortless. Pergo Extreme’s new Ultra tier includes 10 new styles, including wider/longer planks. Pergo Extreme is created with an innovative layered system and a rigid SPC core that makes it 100% dent-proof, pet-proof, kid-proof and waterproof.

Enhanced surface textures

CFL, via its FirmFit brand, showcased its Intown and Downtown SPC collections. Both lines feature embossed, synchronized surfaces and enhanced bevels, which allow for an authentic hardwood look and feel. The company’s NovoCore Q is a waterproof, multi-layered, engineered vinyl flooring that aims to solve the acoustical challenges associated with other vinyl flooring options.

Wider/longer looks reign supreme

From dabbling in hard surfaces a few years ago, The Dixie Group has turned into a full-service supplier. At Surfaces the company launched Trucor Pinnacle, a WPC plank measuring 12 inches wide x 94 inches long.

Alternative cores

Inhaus put the spotlight on its Sono Eclipse and Elandura non-PVC rigid core offerings based on its signature Ceramin powder technology. “Sono Eclipse represents the latest technology where we take the finish, which is cured with lacquer UV rays, then we cure it underneath,” explained Derek Welbourn, CEO.

AirStep®



Triversa® Prime



ArmorCore® Plank



ArmorCore® Sheet



ArmorCore® Plank Pro



Congoleum

FLOORING

From new construction and residential remodel to multi-family and main street commercial, we've got the right product for every job.

DESIGN, QUALITY and **INNOVATION** are at the heart of everything we do. Which is why Congoleum has been the first choice in flooring for more than a century.

Trendspotting

As more and more consumers continue to value their home space as a safe place to work, rest, learn and live, design has come to the forefront of flooring product development. No longer are consumers happy to live on the resilient flooring of yesteryear. High style and nuanced design are taking center stage and suppliers are taking aim at satisfying that demand. From warm and cozy wood looks to highly stylized stone and cement looks, LVP, WPC and SPC introductions are striving for natural elegance and eye-catching personalization all while realistically capturing the natural elements they're meant to emulate. Following is a sample of the latest designs from some of today's top suppliers.

Wellmade HDPC Vinyl Tile



Lions Floor Lone Star Spirit XL - Ballroom Rodeo

NovaFloor Dansbee



Lvp 101: selling

Trend 'floor-ward' looks for 2022

BY KIMBERLY HILL

Director of marketing and creative design, Novalis

With the arrival of spring, many consumers are ready for a fresh start and are preparing for a flooring upgrade. Since color and style are typically first priorities when considering flooring options, RSAs can focus on these four trends to help customers find the perfect look for their home.

Biophilia: Biophilic interior design is all about creating spaces that make us feel more connected to nature. It initially gained traction at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 as many consumers were finding ways to cope with being indoors. It continues to trend today and uses natural lighting, organic textures, earthy palettes, and clean, eco-friendly products.



NovaFloor's Tumbled Stone Oyster vinyl flooring from the Serenbe collection is a natural fit for the biophilic design trend.

Commitment issues: For years, gray and "greige" have stolen the spotlight in home décor and flooring. While grays will remain a popular choice, they are losing steam as warmer, lighter tones like blonde, taupe and honey continue to rise.

Feeling Moody: Scandinavian style is still chic, but high-contrast spaces are having a big moment. Dramatic, bold and inky hues give homes a luxe feel and add an element of drama. Neutral and earthy palettes are dominating this moody trend, including deep bronzes, browns and charcoals.

Modern Brown: Blonde is the shining star of wood tones right now, but the modern brown is making an impact, too. Think rich coffees, creamy caramels and warm honey tones when referencing this trend. While still very modern, these new tones offer a warmth and coziness that blonde and gray hues cannot achieve.



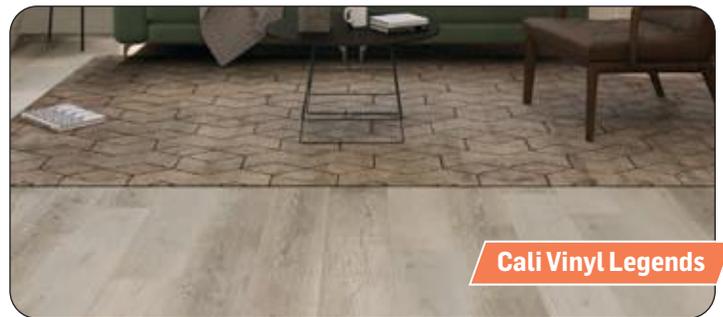
Mohawk's SolidTech Plus



Floorté Pro Paragon Natural Bevel



Korlok Select Braemar Oak



Cali Vinyl Legends

lvp 101: design trends

Design + waterproof = a one-two punch

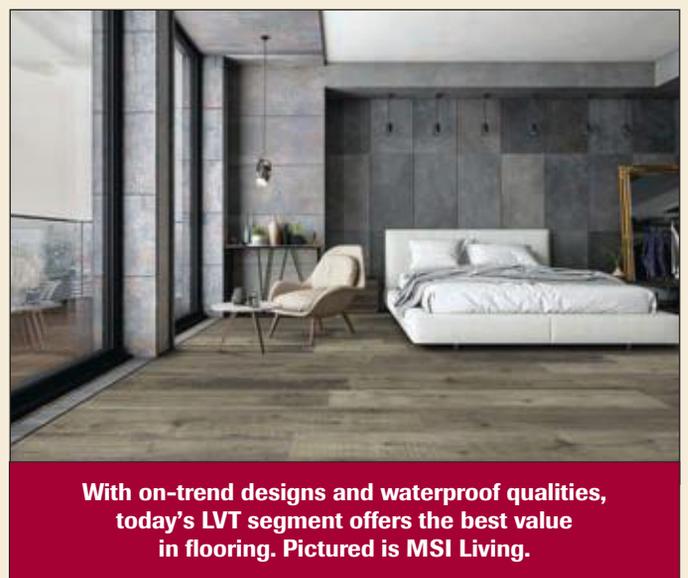
BY ALAN SMITH

director of LVT product development, MSI

In this highly competitive market, it is essential for RSAs to grasp every floor element to convey the correct information to the consumer. Manufacturers can do their part through consumer research to determine what consumers want and deliver a winning product to retailers.

Research has found that design and color are at the top of the list. There's a reason for that: flooring is a fashion product and can make a home more aesthetically pleasing. The stylish looks found in, for example, engineered hardwood, porcelain tile and stone resonate with consumers as adding value to the home. Those design/color features coupled with waterproof functionality—a key performance metric—provide the consumer with a winning combination of attributes.

These days, virtually every LVT supplier offers some variation of waterproof. Some go the extra mile to include the backing. In the case of MSI, its IXPE backings are closed-cell, which means they will not take on water—making the entire floor waterproof, backing included. With on-trend designs and waterproof qualities, today's LVT segment offers the best value in the flooring category,



With on-trend designs and waterproof qualities, today's LVT segment offers the best value in flooring. Pictured is MSI Living.

and the consumers love it. To keep pace with this seemingly insatiable appetite, it will be incumbent upon manufacturers to continually improve and add updated designs.

innovation

Wood/rigid hybrids continue to make their mark

By Reginald Tucker

The beauty of real hardwood married with the performance of rigid core technology. That's what the latest innovation in flooring is offering consumers in an age where waterproof is king. Suppliers are employing innovative manufacturing processes to offer consumers the best of both worlds. Following is an overview of some of the latest wood-rigid core hybrid products currently available:

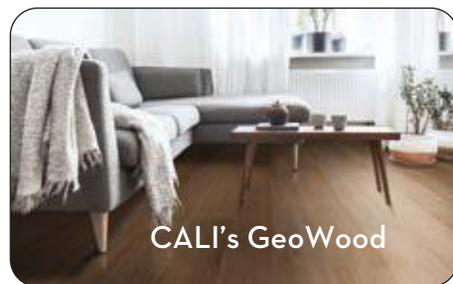
Cali Brands—GeoWood

Originally launched in the spring of 2018 with a real bamboo wear layer atop a waterproof limestone composite core, GeoWood from Cali Brands has expanded to include a real European oak wear layer. This technological breakthrough yields rock solid hardwood flooring with exceptional AquaDefy water resistance and a rapid click-lock installation system.

"This launch marks Cali's first venture into oak hardwood," said Doug Jackson, Cali presi-

dent and CEO. "We're going beyond bamboo but remain committed to delivering the smartest and most sustainable options on the market. Our product design team went the distance to create flooring that is sourced, cut, and stained to perfection but still makes for an easy and economical installation."

The expanded GeoWood product range



A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: SHAW FLOORS

Whatever the need, there's a Floorté for that

Since 1967, Shaw Floors has been designed with your customers in mind—all of them. Help your customers find the products they want and get back to the life they love. With Shaw Floors, it's as easy as that. The company supports all products, channels, price points, lifestyles and design tastes/preferences—all under one roof.

Shaw's 2022 trend and color forecast, told through a lens of Renewal, is a study on how consumers live differently and choose to make their home a reflection of self. Bringing new focus to current lifestyles, Shaw offers insights on what "home" is today—and what it can become.

New in 2022, Paragon Natural Bevel brings focus to the tradition of home. These Floorté Pro series styles speak to comfort and warmth with a simple and natural color line in four unique visual of-



Shaw continues to build on its portfolio of SPC collections. New offerings for 2022 include Paragon Natural Bevel in Edgemont, shown here.

ferings: European oak, ash, chestnut and butternut. Paragon Natural Bevel has something for everyone, with looks that fit within a range of styles and generations of consumers.

features a 1.2mm thick beauty layer of genuine European white oak in newly expanded 74 ¹³/₁₆-inch-long x 7 ¹⁵/₃₂-inch-wide planks. Premium slicing, wire-brushing, and reactive staining brings out the wood's natural character, highlighting its knots, rays, and bold oak grain. The line also features GeoCore technology for added dimensional stability, resulting in less expansion and contraction, and as little as 24 hours of acclimation required before laying down planks. The new oak styles also boast Companion Core technology, wherein the GeoCore spine is color coordinated to complement the wood on the surface.

COREtec Wood

COREtec Wood features a real wood veneer over an innovative mineral core to create a carefree floor with truly authentic wood grains, tones and appeal. COREtec Wood's revolutionary rigid mineral core is completely waterproof and more rigid than traditional engineered hardwood HDF and ply cores. Boasting extreme indentation resistance and dimensional stability, the core consists of a mined mineral that forms a solid panel and is free of PVC and plasticizers. A natural cork underlayment provides comfort underfoot.

Raintree

American OEM, newly acquired by AHF Products, offers Raintree, a wood-rigid hybrid that

Continued on page 40

BEAUTY MEETS BEAST-MODE.



Paragon Natural Bevel combines durability and design and gives floors a more natural and authentic look. Suitable for any space or style, Paragon Natural Bevel has something for everyone.

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR:
KARNDEAN DESIGNFLOORING

Spanning the globe in search of design-focused flooring

After spending nearly half a century crafting luxury vinyl, Karndean Designflooring has earned an impeccable reputation for original product visuals, earning retailers higher margins and low callback/claims rates.

Karndean's design team travels the world in search of intriguing and expressive natural forms to develop original designs across glue-down, loose lay and rigid core formats—from entry level to premium price points. The company's manufacturing process ensures less pattern repeats for a truly authentic selection of planks and tiles that also reflect the characteristics true to the natural materials that inspired the visual.

Aside from the product visual itself, each construction provides a level of designability that gives homeowners complete input over the final look and layout of their floors. From adding design strips

between planks to creating a grouted wood look or utilizing multi-directional loose lay planks to incorporate a chevron pattern, or choosing one of Karndean's rigid core tiles with color-coordinated InteGrout, design is at the forefront of every Karndean product.

Even the Karndean shopping experience puts design first. The company recommends RSAs start a consultation by discussing how the flooring will function in the home. Sketch the space, identify entry points and ask how the customer walks through the room. All this is important because it tells you how to lay the flooring in the space. Not only does this inform the directional layout of the floor, but also the construction of Karndean product.

From product visuals to design customization, there is a dependable Karndean floor for every customer.



Korlok Select Brunella Marble with InteGrout

Continued from page 38

offers proven protection against moisture, scratches and indentation while offering the same beauty, authenticity and value-adding elements that make real hardwood the No. 1 flooring choice for today's consumers.

Raintree's proprietary Ninja Pet Guard finish seals the wood's pores, making them impervious to moisture. Plus, the finish is infused with aluminum oxide to provide scratch and wear resistance. The Ninja H2O Core reinforces the wood for indentation resistance. From spills to heels, the Ninja H2O Core is 100% waterproof and indentation resistant for high-traffic applications



Shaw Floors

Shaw Floors, maker of the Floorté resilient line, now offers retailers Floorté Hardwood, an innovative product combining the attributes of SPC flooring with the classic character and feel that can only come from genuine

hardwood. Floorté Hardwood utilizes a waterproof SPC core to give consumers the stability, strength and protection they expect from the Floorté PRO collection with the added beauty of a hardwood veneer on top. "We're proud to drive this uncharted advancement of the category," said Herb Upton, Shaw Industries' vice president of hard surface. "Floorté Hardwood is a true innovation, engineered to give consumers their most desired flooring, hardwood, with the durability, waterproof protection and ease-of installation they need. And the design techniques used on the hardwood veneer make this product one of the most beautiful I think we've ever had."



Wellmade HDPC Waterproof Flooring

Wellmade's HDPC Waterproof Hardwood Flooring has a proven track record of success among retailers and distributors nationwide. Wellmade's innovative waterproof process begins with its patented HDPC (high-density plastic composite) core. Its closed cell construction is extremely dense, eliminating air pockets and the potential for moisture absorption. Next the hardwood wear layer is bonded directly to the HDPC core and completely sealed using Wellmade's HardMax® finish system. Topical moisture and household stains are sealed out from above while the HDPC core blocks out moisture penetration from below.

HDPC Waterproof Hardwood Flooring provides consumers with superior dent resistance and overall durability. In fact, the product is twice as hard as solid oak flooring. HDPC is also tolerant to temperature fluctuations and remains stable in the most demanding environments.



Karndean
Designflooring

SEE FLOORING
differently

Karndean is invested in providing high-quality products that you can stake your reputation upon. With three well-stocked distribution centers strategically located across the country, our inventory support and partnership will get you through this unpredictable time.

See for yourself at www.karndean.com/newproducts.

construction

Core variations give consumers endless options

By Megan Salzano-Birch

While many of today's waterproof rigid core products feature similar constructions, they are not all created equal. In a move to differentiate themselves from competitors while leveraging proprietary manufacturing techniques, suppliers are tweaking their respective core recipes.

Following is an overview of some of the various core technologies currently available.

Cali Floors

The advancements in Cali's SPC core, featured in its new Builder's Choice XL flooring, hold direct, real-world benefits for the consumer at home. Superior indentation resistance helps planks withstand things like pet claws, falling objects and heavy furniture.

The core makes planks extra stable and resistant to changes in home temperature and humidity. This makes the flooring suitable for every room in every season and climate. It also means planks can be installed right out of the box without any acclimation wait time. The specialized core also strengthens the click-lock milling system and makes it more precise for faster, easier installations.

CFL

CFL prides itself on its commitment to inno-



Novocore Q features easy-to-install click technology and boasts fashionable designs suitable for all rooms.

vation, reliability and flexibility. Novocore Q is designed to continue that trend. The line consists of multiple distinct layers of different materials. The different layers are a mixture of highly customized blended polymers and highly specific extruded layers. Each is engineered to block specific frequencies for a greatly improved acoustic performance, which adds to the waterproof advantages. It is designed to be three-times quieter than WPC and six-times quieter than SPC.

It is also 100% waterproof and stable to heat and sunlight; resistant to impacts and heavy static loads; and the rigid core minimizes telegraphing of small subfloor imperfections with minimum subfloor preparation needed. The line also features easy-to-install click technology and boasts fashionable designs suitable for all rooms.

COREtec

COREtec Advanced+ features a recent breakthrough in core technology, which resulted in a mineral core that offers a 100% waterproof, kid-proof and pet-proof floor designed not to swell, cup or crack when exposed to water. Low-luster visuals and enhanced scratch performance make this the highest-performing COREtec floor yet, boasting a 15-year residential scratch warranty.

The line also features expanded design possibilities with fewer pattern repeats and a sophisticated color palette. The wider



COREtec Advanced+ features an advanced mineral core that renders the product 100% waterproof.

COREtec Advanced+ is 9 inches wide x up to 86 inches long and features mixed lengths for design versatility.

Continued on page 44

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: CREATE

Sourcing from Vietnam pays dividends

With all the stop-and-go of production and container shipping out of China, which worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, Create Flooring has maintained a strong inventory position throughout. Why? Because of a strategy move to source more SPC products from Vietnam.

In fact, the company's latest offerings are two lines out of Vietnam—the Jayden and Triumph collections. Jayden (4.5mm thickness and 12-mil wear layer) and Triumph (5.5mm thickness and 20-mil wear layer) are each available in four simple, yet universal, color palettes. Pricing on these two styles continues to remain lower than Chinese-produced materials, in large part because Vietnam is not affected by tariffs the way China continues to be.

Another highlight to the Jayden and Triumph collections is the Unilin click locking system, which continues to be a favorite locking system for industry suppliers.

Jayden and Triumph are the latest examples of how Create Flooring offers its customers forward-looking technology and exquisite workmanship.



Create's Jayden is a new SPC line from Vietnam.



What's your situation?



createflooring.com

- WATER-RESISTANT SPC
- WATER-RESISTANT & SCRATCH-PROOF LAMINATE
- WATERPROOF WOOD

construction

Continued from page 42



Create's MSPC core is designed to be fireproof, waterproof and offers improved sound-absorption qualities.

Create

Create's Maritime collection features the company's magnesium stone polymer core (MSPC), which adds a great foundation to an already popular flooring category. Thanks to

the strength and stability of the MSPC, Create can offer a product that can be placed in areas where temperatures are warmer without the threat of the movement experienced from some traditional SPC products. The MSPC is fireproof, waterproof and offers improved sound-absorption qualities. Aside from these features and benefits, the product is also environmentally friendly, making MSPC an easy choice for the consumer.

Engineered Floors

EF's Pietra floating tile floor features an SPC (stone plastic composite) core, which provides a balance of dimensional stability, indentation resistance, waterproof performance and sufficient rigidity for easy floating instal-

lations. SPC is more dimensionally stable than WPC (wood plastic composite) and provides a higher overall value, according to the company.

A grout line is embedded in the core, so, unlike regular tile floors, there is no need for grout. An easy floating floor installation allows for the product to be installed quickly, inexpensively and, most importantly, it can be uninstalled easily when fashions change. The stone look of Pietra lends itself well in areas that might be exposed to water such as kitchens and bathrooms. The waterproof attributes of the SPC core make this a standout product in such instances.



Sono Eclipse is completely waterproof and is a health-conscious product made without the use of phthalates, plasticizers, chlorine or other additives.

Ivp 101: underlayment

Accessories add value to the sale

BY JACK **BOESCH**

director of marketing, MP Global Products

Flooring manufacturers are adding all the bells and whistles to the newest flooring planks. Worried about spills on top of your floor? It's not a problem with the click systems that are waterproof or water resistant at the joints. Need an underlayment? Not really with the attached backing on many flooring planks.

They've thought of everything to help flooring planks sell themselves. However, what about the great margins and great commissions you used to earn on the accompanying accessories you used to sell?

Keep in mind that although that new flooring plank is designed to be watertight from above, there still could be an issue with

moisture from below. You still need to ask a few questions of Ms. Consumer about where her new flooring will be installed. If the customer is putting the flooring in a basement or on-grade slab in areas where water tables are high, moisture emissions from the concrete could still wreak havoc with that overlying floor—and those emissions could also push up alkalinity that may damage the floor as well. She may need an underlayment to help inhibit harmful moisture emissions.

In addition, that attached back plank may not be suitable for use in high-rise apartments or condominiums that require specific acoustic ratings in order to minimize the transfer of noise into the living space below.

You may still need to upgrade the sale to an underlayment to meet those sound requirements. If the new flooring you sell is replacing an existing floor covering, what does that subfloor look like? Is there any residue from adhesives or is the surface of the subfloor rough? A good underlayment can help smooth out those subfloor imperfections and cover up the old subfloor "sins."

Asking a few qualifying questions can still mean more to the bottom line of the sale.



A good underlayment can help smooth out those subfloor imperfections and cover up the old subfloor sins.

Inhaus

Sono Eclipse is the next-level rendition of Inhaus' Sono collection. Eclipse is a PVC-free flooring product made in Germany. It features an original and patented production process. It is completely waterproof and is a health-conscious product made without the use of phthalates, plasticizers, chlorine or other additives. The core of the product is made solely with polypropylene (PP) and mineral powder.

In addition, Sono Eclipse is made up of 26 designs. The product visuals are made with high-definition digital printing and have 18 unique planks or 51 square feet of unique material for every design. The Eclipse surface is produced with a PP film for dent and chip resistance and then finished with an industrial acrylic lacquer that is digitally applied in a process known as Digital Lacquer Embossing (DLE). The DLE process creates an embossed-in-register surface as standard on all 26 SKUs.

Lions Floor

The Natural Essence collection's rigid SPC core ensures extensive durability and reliable



The Natural Essence collection's rigid SPC core ensures extensive durability and reliable stableness.

stableness. It passes various U.S. certified test standards for heat resistance, dimension stability, click strength and squareness. With delivered results, it is said to be favored by many installers and industry experts.

The collection itself merges durability and design. It features intricate hardwood aesthetics and the authentic finishing touch of natu-

ral wood—rich, distinct colors and textures with the latest registered embossing technology. The new virgin white underlayment offers the latest in durability and functionality. It is also GreenGuard certified.

Mohawk

A dense, fiberglass SPC core construction allows SolidTech Plus to resist damage, dents and impact while maintaining dimensional stability under heat and extreme temperature changes. SolidTech Plus also features Uniclic edge technology that ensures faster acclimation and installation.

Made in the USA, SolidTech Plus is designed for any room, any style and any consumer. Optimal for wet areas, such as basements and bathrooms, SolidTech Plus is created with waterproof technology to withstand spills and pet accidents. Featuring Mohawk's EasyClean technology for enhanced stain and soil protection, SolidTech Plus ensures easy cleanup for everyday accidents with

an added protection from the company's proprietary All Pet Plus Protection, covering all pets, all accidents, all the time with an added scratch protection.



A dense, fiberglass SPC core construction allows SolidTech Plus to resist damage, dents and impact.

Shaw floors

Prodigy and Prodigy MXL from the Floorté Elite Series by Shaw Floors feature a PVC-free

Continued on page 46

lvp 101: construction

ABA construction/EIR technology change the game

BY ART LAYTON

director of specialty products, Axiscor

SPC is the next generation of core for LVP/T. The extreme density and stability of the SPC core make it the best luxury vinyl flooring choice for both residential and commercial applications.

Consumers are demanding high-performance luxury vinyl flooring that can be installed anywhere and closely emulates the look and feel of real hardwood planks or natural stone. SPC delivers all of those qualities.

There are two particular manufacturing processes to look for that take SPC flooring to an even higher level for consumers—ABA construction and EIR technology.

The unique ABA

construction process uses two layers of 100% virgin vinyl around the SPC core. This adds extreme dimensional stability and greater durability to the flooring while also offering a softer sound underfoot. It also provides increased resiliency and versatility, resulting in waterproof flooring that is pet- and family-friendly, is resistant to high impact, scuffing, heavy traffic, direct sunlight and extreme

fluctuations in temperature, and can be installed anywhere.

In addition, the ABA process allows for richer and more detailed EIR (embossed-in-register) patterns. This deeper layer of embossing creates a textured finish that is highly similar to the wood grain on authentic hardwood flooring, thus creating more realistic, beautiful floors designed to look great for years and that—in many cases—cost a fraction of the price for the real thing.



ABA construction and EIR technology adds durability and aesthetics to SPC offerings. Shown is Axiscor Pro 7.

construction

Continued from page 45



Prodigy and Prodigy MXL from the Floorté Elite Series by Shaw Floors feature a PVC-free mineral core that's 100% waterproof.

mineral core that's 100% waterproof. They also feature two new technologies: Enhanced Natural Realism for leading style and design and PAWdefense technology for the ultimate scratch resistance.

Enhanced Natural Realism technology aims to more closely mimic true hardwood visuals, spotlighting the latest design innovations in waterproof flooring. This captures high and low gloss levels in the same plank to create greater depth and dimension. Both new Floorté Elite Series styles also feature a 15-year residential scratch warranty thanks to

the company's PAWdefense technology that guards against pet nails, dining room chairs and other scratches from common household activities.

The Dixie Group

The proprietary Tru-SPC is an ultra-stable composite core free of harmful content and ortho-phthalates. It is also waterproof and provides excellent sound abatement properties. SPC cores, according to TDG, are waterproof, dimensionally stable and can eliminate most subfloor imperfections such as telegraphing. Plus, SPC makes for an easy and generally quick installation. A key attribute for SPC is its density, which is at least two times that of WPC. SPC also provides a greater amount of dimensional stability when compared to WPC due to less PVC in its make-up. SPC core products provide an opportunity to be specified in both residential as well as light to heavy commercial applications. For 2021, TDG's Trucor 3DP with its Tru-SPC core incorporates all the benefits of a SPC along with an enhanced digital print of wood or a stone image printed directly onto the core.

Wellmade

With a proprietary blend of virgin PVC, calcium carbonate and plasticizer additives, Wellmade's patented HDPC core is a non-toxic flooring material backed by the GreenGuard Gold indoor air quality certification. Extreme density is another hallmark of HDPC flooring. Increased impact and dent resistance make the product ideal for high-traffic and commercial applications. Increased density also improves locking strength, while the rigid core eliminates telegraphing yet remains pliable for easy installation.

Wellmade's patented HDPC is 100% waterproof, featuring a closed-cell construction that eliminates air pockets and moisture absorption. As a result, HDPC is dimensionally stable in any environment and installs right out of the box, without acclimation. HDPC also performs exceptionally well in areas prone to temperature fluctuations and/or direct sunlight. Exceptional HD visuals and new painted bevels help HDPC Waterproof Vinyl Plank stand out from the crowd.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: INHAUS

Ceramin: Technology for a sustainable future

Finding a technology that can produce an exceptional product while being great for the environment is rare, and achieving a balance between sustainability and performance is challenging—until Ceramin came along.

the use of PVC or plasticizers. The main ingredient is polypropylene, one of the two most used plastics in the world. Primarily used for food packaging and outdoor use applications, polypropylene is revered for its safe-for-consumer properties, durability and recyclability.

It is highly robust against changes in temperature, waterproof and has ultra-low VOC emissions.

Choosing polypropylene has enabled Classen to create more sustainable products that form part of the circular flow of goods. The makeup of Sono Eclipse and Elandura is 25% post-consumer content, meaning that recycled material is used in the production of the product. To maximize resources, Classen

has invested in a waste collection program, enabling the company to pick up material that is sorted, cleaned, certified and used as raw material to produce Sono Eclipse and Elandura cores. The finished product is 100% recyclable, Blue Angel Certified and can be reused to produce new goods—forming part of the circular economy. As an example, yesterday's yogurt cup is today's Sono Eclipse flooring and tomorrow's lawn furniture.



Elandura is a PVC-free, rigid core flooring made with 25% post-consumer material and is 100% recyclable.

Ceramin is a proprietary technology invented in Germany by the Classen Group. At first glance, it is a unique process used to produce high-performing rigid core floors. However, upon further understanding, it's clear that the technology presents a solution that extends beyond flooring.

The Sono Eclipse and Elandura collections are Inhaus' Ceramin-based lines of products. At its core, Ceramin is a type of vinyl made without

Inhaus

BETTER FOR TODAY BETTER FOR TOMORROW

100%

RECYCLABLE

25%

POST-CONSUMER
RECYCLED MATERIAL

NO PVC

OR ADDED
PLASTICIZERS

SONO ECLIPSE elandura

GERMAN-MADE WATERPROOF RIGID CORE FLOORING

Installation

Multiple methods to lay down vinyl flooring

By Ken Ryan

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

That said, the importance of correctly matching method and application is a conversation dealers must have with their customers.

Glue-down

Many flooring retailers prefer the glue-down method because it is a safe choice and a process with which their installers are familiar. "The material itself is less expensive and our guys actually like installing it better," said Jeremy Winges, co-owner of 3 Kings CarpetsPlus in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Grip-strip/loose lay

Floating and grip-strip LVTs serve as more than a quick and easy glueless installation option; they're often the only suitable solution for high-moisture areas that would damage wood-based



Ease of installation and replacement are major draws for loose-lay products.

products or destabilize an adhered vinyl installation, according to experts.

Grip-strip is increasingly popular as a faster method of installation, targeted to high-traffic commercial environments. Retailers who opt for loose lay say a tile can be replaced easily.

General tips

Make sure all subflooring is properly prepped. All underfloors must be clean, with all traces of dust, dirt, wax and other foreign substances fully removed. Also, installers should have the recommended tools and materials on hand.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: TARKETT

Fashion-forward realism with the benefits of rigid core

Innovation within the vinyl flooring industry is not just important—it's imperative. Perhaps that's why Tarkett Home designed ProGen and NuGen with key features designed to not only meet your customers' needs but also leave them touting its benefits to friends and neighbors.

To wit:

Installation: These rigid core products have three things in common that bring value to your experience: ease of installation, no acclimation time, and no temperature limits, handling wide temperature fluctuations from windows and sunlight.

With access to basic tools, ProGen and NuGen installation is made simple with a Uniclic system that is friendly to both seasoned professionals and DIY enthusiasts. Plus, without acclimation requirements or temperature limits, it's nice to know you can confidently complete the job when you want, where you want.

Durability: Nothing will test the limits of your flooring like pets or family. Both ProGen and NuGen are designed with a rigid core construction that goes beyond basic LVT. This means it can handle whatever you throw, drop, scrape, or spill on it. What more could a home ask for?

Design: Today's society is more trend-conscious than ever. As if plucked right from nature, ProGen and NuGen's designs give you fashion-forward realism with all the benefits of rigid core flooring. With five new ProGen designs and three 60-inch NuGen XL products, there is no shortage of unique options for your home.



ProGen is designed to handle wide temperature fluctuations from windows and sunlight and can be used in any room in the house.



Two great products from Tarkett Home.

ProGen™

RIGID CORE FLOORING
Designed for life.

With designs featuring realistic embossing and modern micro and painted bevels, ProGen™ rigid core flooring is as beautiful as it is tough. From kids and pets, to water and dirt, ProGen™ stands up to it all, delivering a worry-free experience, every step of the way.

PROGEN™ | MARBLE NOUVEAU | IBIS



NuGen™

RIGID CORE FLOORING
Rigid. Flexible. Beautiful.

NuGen™ combines the best of both worlds. Rigid core flooring that is also more flexible, easy to install, and beautiful in any room. It's waterproof so it's safe to use in kitchens, bathrooms, or laundry rooms. Now, available in 60" XL planks!



Scan this code to visit www.tarketthome.com



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NUGEN™ | PIN OAK | DRIFT



installation



Many of today's moisture mitigation products can be applied one time to prevent future issues as new flooring is reinstalled.

Steps to take before putting down LVP

By Jack Aspenson

A recent flooring industry trend, waterproof flooring, has been growing rapidly in both commercial and residential markets. The benefits have proven to support its rapid growth. Waterproof flooring is low prep, low maintenance and durable. Those advantages, combined with an ever-growing choice of designs, equate to a virtually worry-free floor—if moisture is not coming from the subfloor.

The consumer's perception of waterproof flooring is that it can be installed over subfloors without having to evaluate for moisture or pH. Understanding your environment is the key to a successful installation. Installers must address potential moisture issues whether the floors are labeled as waterproof or moisture resistant, because the environment can—and often does—change.

The floor covering industry recognizes the ASTM 2170, in-situ RH test and the ASTM 1869, moisture vapor emissions rate (MVER) testing to evaluate the amount of moisture in a concrete substrate. Both tests provide a point-in-time evaluation in regard to the amount of moisture present versus the amount of moisture leaving the slab. Many brands have required tolerances within their installation guides.

The largest problem for most hard surface products is the power of hydrogen, commonly known as pH, specifically a high alkaline pH between 11-14. Most waterproof flooring design today includes some form of plasticizer or PVC-type product for flexibility and, in some cases, rigidity. When a high pH or alkaline scenario occurs, many waterproof products may cup or dome as well as lose dimensional stability due to the effects of high pH on the PVC or plasticizer utilized in manufacturing. It is recommended that installers perform a pH test—which is inexpensive and quick—prior to the installation.

To mitigate many of these problems, follow the manufacturer's warranty requirements and recommendations.



Jack Aspenson is the CEO and president of S3 Surface Solutions, a client-driven organization that focuses on providing environmentally friendly, simple surface preparation systems that are long lasting and cost-effective.

Lvp 101: installation

Dimensional stability boils down to the core

BY FLORIS KOOPMANS

sales director intellectual property, Unilin Technologies

When choosing the right floor for your space, it is important to think about more than just the design. When choosing an LVT, SPC or WPC floor, it is necessary to consider the type of room and its surroundings. In rooms with a lot of windows, floor panels can be impacted by the fluctuations in temperature and long exposure to direct sunlight.

In these situations, dimensional stability is key. Dimensional stability refers to the physical property of a material's ability to maintain its original boundaries and structural integrity. In flooring materials, this would mean expansion in high temperatures and shrinkage in low temperatures. Some core materials with low dimensional stability may be impacted by so called "hot spots."

Hot spots are created by long

exposure to direct sunlight and core materials with low dimensional stability can expand or contract. When the floorboards expand too much, they will start to buckle. Buckling is most common in areas that get more direct sunlight, such as along sliding glass doors and large windows.

It is for this reason that Unilin has invested heavily in the research and development of an improved PVC-free core material that is immune to hot spots: XPC. This new core material has all the advantages of standard SPC or WPC, including a click system and being waterproof, with the additional benefit of being PVC-free while offering improved dimensional stability. XPC is therefore suited to be installed in direct sunlight, offering amazing potential for both residential and commercial applications.



Core materials with high dimensional stability will not expand, even in hot spots created by direct sunlight.

installation

Groutable LVT gives users more options

Part of luxury vinyl tile's allure is it can replicate real ceramic and stone without all the fuss and cost associated with installation of the real material. But for those who still want the look of real grout with the ease of installation of LVT, they can have the best of both worlds. Following are a few talking points:

1 **Groutable LVT is a lower-cost alternative** to ceramic tile, offering the aesthetic appeal of "the real thing." A primary benefit of groutable LVT, according to proponents, is its appearance. It makes the floor look so much more realistic as compared to porcelain or ceramic when it is fit together. Installers say there is much more you can do when grouting it as far as patterning and the ability to mix sizes as well as creating aesthetic contrast for a one-of-a-kind flooring installation.

LVT products that are grouted can also save time and money. So say distributors like A.J. Warne, vice president of sales and marketing at Abraham Linc, which carries loose-lay LVT product with built-in grout. "The overall visual you get with the plank and the

grout line is stunning," he explained.

2 **Grouted LVT won't crack or break** if something is dropped on it, and it is more slip resistant, making it a safer option for homes. Drop glassware or dishware on natural tile and you can break the dish or glass easily or crack the tile, said one seasoned floor covering installer. "LVT is much more forgiving and able to absorb that impact."

3 **Grout used with groutable LVT is different** than that installed with ceramic. It is typically easier to clean than traditional, pre-sanded grout, which requires sealing to avoid staining. "With groutable LVT you are primarily using pre-coloring grouts, which don't need to be sealed, are easier to use and you can use less of it because it is at a lower profile than the LVT itself," Warne said.

4 **Grout strips and borders are available to help with installation and**



Groutable LVT is most suitable for bathrooms and kitchens, but other areas of the home are fair game as well, experts say.

maintenance. According to experts, grout strips enable customers to get the style they want with any type of product, whether they're installing tiles or planks. Maintenance is also manageable with groutable LVT.

5 **Groutable LVT can be installed in a variety of different scenarios**, but are most suitable for kitchens, bathrooms and foyers. Design experts suggest placement in prominent areas where it can really be showcased. As trends move more toward contemporary designs, the industry is likely to see it start to reach into different areas of the home, more living areas like family and living rooms where there are more fashion-oriented designs.

lvp 101: construction

Explaining in layman's terms how WPC differs from SPC

BY MIKE SANDERSON

Vice president, marketing, Engineered Floors

In today's market, RSAs have to be subject matter experts on many different products. One of the many questions they may face from a consumer relates to the different types of LVT flooring.

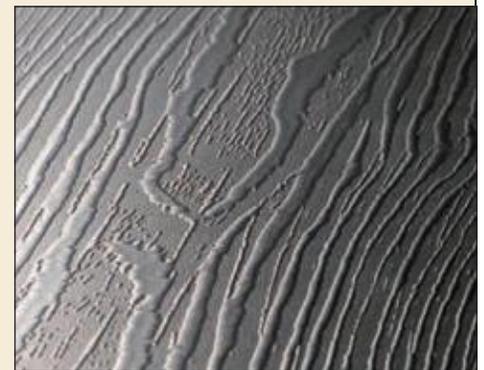
Whether it be SPC (stone plastic composite or solid polymer core), WPC (wood polymer composite or waterproof core), or others, it may be best to offer a short, concise explanation so as not to confuse the customer.

SPC is an extruded core made primarily of calcium carbonate with a smaller percentage of PVC. WPC is a foamed core made of primarily PVC with a smaller percentage of calcium carbonate. Both are waterproof while SPC exhibits better performance in extreme temperature changes and is also more dimensionally stable. WPC's construction, meanwhile, enables the best embossing and surface finishing, making for more authentic looks.

Due to their construction, SPC floors have a very dense core,

which makes them less prone to indentation. SPC floors can also be installed directly over imperfect subfloors. This along with the fact they are a floating floor (each plank locks together side to side, end to end) makes for quick and easy installation.

While SPC floors may have a few advantages over WPC, it is ultimately up to the RSA to listen to the customer to determine which flooring solution best meets her needs.



Due to their construction, SPC floors have a very dense core, which makes them less prone to indentation. Pictured is Ensignium's detail.

Installation

It's best to test for moisture prior to the install

By Jason Spangler

When a flooring failure occurs, one of the most common culprits is excess moisture. That goes for all types of flooring—yes, even waterproof flooring. Most people have a good understanding of the moisture-related risks associated with certain flooring materials. But what about popular materials that are considered waterproof, such as vinyl plank flooring? If it is waterproof, there must be nothing to worry about, right? This could be true for water spilled on the floor's surface. However, water lurking underneath the floor may be another matter entirely.

Case in point: If a waterproof flooring



When installing SPC—or any hard surface floor—over concrete, always test for moisture emissions.

product is installed over a concrete floor slab, a surprising amount of moisture may still be in the substrate. That's because water is one of concrete's most essential ingredients and

is always added before the initial pour. Water gives concrete its characteristic strength and durability. As the concrete slowly dries after being poured—a process that can take many months—moisture evaporates from the slab's surface. This drying process creates a moisture gradient with more moisture deep down within the slab than what's at the surface. The result? A concrete slab deemed "dry" on the surface could be holding moisture inside.

When you install a flooring material that's billed as waterproof, the water inside the concrete slab has no place to go; it's essentially trapped. Over time, the water will tend to rise to the slab's surface to evaporate—except, it can't. A waterproof flooring product will serve as an impervious layer that won't allow moisture to escape. Trapped underneath the waterproof floor, the moisture is left to interact with flooring adhesives and/or the finished floor itself. If the moisture is substantial, a flooring failure such as cupping, debonding of glue or adhesives, mold, mildew and other issues, could be the inevitable and disastrous result. Even if the flooring isn't waterproof, it's likely to slow down the evaporation of moisture from the surface, so it will have a similar effect.

Fortunately, it's quite easy to avoid these common moisture-related issues. The key is to pay attention to the possibility of excess moisture before the flooring is installed. If the subfloor is concrete, always conduct a moisture test to evaluate the overall moisture condition of the slab. Never assume it's unnecessary to follow standard practices of testing simply because you plan to install waterproof flooring. That could be a detrimental mistake. It's also important to carefully consider which type of concrete moisture test you will perform.

Bottom line: Even waterproof flooring can be damaged by water. If installing over concrete, always test for moisture before you install a waterproof floor.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: WELLMADE

HDPC rigid core vinyl: The value-added flooring

Wellmade's patented HDPC/SPC waterproof vinyl flooring continues to drive the growing rigid core flooring arena. Produced stateside in its new, state-of-the-art factory in Cartersville, Ga., the collection includes more than 50 on-trend designer flooring products available in a wide variety of price points and styles designed to meet the needs of today's fashion-conscious consumer.

Wellmade's HDPC waterproof vinyl plank anchors the company's rigid core vinyl collections. High-definition visuals are featured in character-driven oak, hickory, maple and pine visuals. Colors run the gamut from traditional gunstock brown

to muted grays and fashion trending neutral tones. Embossed-in-register textures and painted bevel edge treatments augment contemporary, low-luster finishes. Wellmade's traditional plank measures 6 x 48 while the premium planks measure 7 x 60 or 9 x 60.

Wellmade continues to expand its HDPC vinyl tile collection with new ceramic tile, marble, travertine and sandstone visuals, along with contemporary acid-stained concrete vinyl tiles. Embossed textures and realistic "grout-look" edges enhance the presentation throughout. HDPC vinyl tile is available in popular, large-format 12 x 24 tiles.

HDPC glue-down dryback represents the latest addition to Wellmade's HDPC family of rigid core vinyl. Designed to meet the needs of large-scale multi-family and commercial projects, the collection features the fashion-forward design and quality performance customers have come to expect from HDPC waterproof vinyl. Wear layers throughout Wellmade's HDPC vinyl collections include durable 8-, 12- and 20-mil constructions. Attached padding and genuine Uniclic locking systems (where applicable) are standard features.



Wellmade produces more than 50 HDPC/SPC waterproof vinyl flooring products in Georgia. Shown is Sandalwood.



Jason Spangler is sales manager for Wagner Meters. He has more than 25 years' experience in sales and sales management across a broad spectrum of industries.

HDPC® WATERPROOF FLOORING SOLUTIONS



HDPC Vinyl Tile



HDPC Vinyl Plank



A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: LIONS FLOOR

Providing customers with the most authentic looks in SPC

Lions Floor has been focused on staying up to date with innovations, trends and—most importantly—customer demands. Being one of the first distributors to introduce EIR technology on hot-pressed SPC, Lions Floor has provided the market with extremely realistic and authentic looks available in SPC flooring. This year, Lions Floor will add 36 new exclusive colors to its lineup—colors that will be warehoused in its new warehouse and distribution center in Houston, Texas.

Lions Floor's California exclusive collection, Indoor Delight, contains 14 new colors and measures 6 feet long x 9 inches wide with a 6.5mm overall thickness. It offers sophisticated European oak designs

with the latest EIR embossing technology.

Lone Star Spirit—tailored for the Texas market—offers versatile and refined exotic wood-like designs with the latest EIR embossing technology and an extra-long, 6-foot format. Eight of the colors measure 7 inches wide with 5.5mm thickness; the other eight colors measure 9 inches wide and feature 6.5mm thickness, resulting in a more realistic and natural visual effect. All the new colors are copyrighted domestically in the U.S.

Lions Floor's planks are waterproof, scratch-resistant, antimicrobial, easy to install and maintain, environmentally friendly, durable and long lasting.



Lions Floor provides on-trend designs in a durable, high-quality SPC format. Pictured is Ballroom Rodeo from the Lone Star Spirit XL collection.

Ivp 101: selling



Shaw's hard surface cleaner supports St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Set yourself apart with a customer-centric sales pitch

BY JULIE BETH FISHER

director of residential brand marketing, Shaw

(Second of two parts)

Now that you've learned about your customer's motivations and confidence level (see part 1 on page 16) let's zero in on where they might be in the sales funnel and, therefore, how you should approach the conversation.

Understanding where your customer is in their purchasing journey lets you know if your approach should be more educational or transactional. While you never want to miss an opportunity to close a sale, you don't want to come on too strong if the customer is still in their research/inspiration stage. A big-ticket item like flooring has a longer sales funnel, and that's not even considering the disruption of installation.

If your customer is ready to purchase, it's critical you manage her expectations on the entire installation process,

including aftercare and warranties. Fortunately, rigid core products are easy to install and care for, and typically don't require acclimation or other labor—and/or time-intensive steps during installation or up-keep.

Ask whether anyone will be home during the installation to avoid disruptions to remote work/learning. Oftentimes, homeowners will be understanding of inconveniences if they know what to expect.

Always remember the long game. It's important to position yourself as someone your customer can trust, not just someone looking to close a quick sale. This helps build brand equity and customer loyalty.

It's worth repeating: Sales is a relationship business. And in today's hyper-connected world, customer reviews can make or break your brand.



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Installation

Where glue down fits in a float-heavy market

By Megan Salzano-Birch

The booming flooring industry is chock-full of high-style and innovative products aimed at tapping the unprecedented growth in demand that began in 2020. From rigid core SPC to a resurgence in hardwood and even laminate and carpet, it seems like there's no shortage of available options for consumers to choose from.

In fact, the resilient flooring market took the industry by storm yet again when it posted a staggering—and industry-leading—21.3% increase in sales in 2020 vs. 2019. Most of that growth was felt in the SPC subsegment of the LVT category of resilient flooring. However, about 20% of residential resilient sales still remains in the flexible LVT category, including dryback (glue-down) products. And in the com-

mercial market that number is much higher, with flexible LVT garnering a whopping 62% share of the market's \$1.7 billion in sales.

So that begs the question: Where does glue-down flooring fit in today's rigid core-obsessed market and what are the features and benefits that allows it to remain a viable flooring option? According to glue-down LVT/P suppliers, the benefits are many.

"The two main advantages glue down presents over interlocking products are design and pattern options and the ability to individually replace damaged pieces without disturbing sur-

lvp 101: installation

Understanding the determining factors in glue-down vs. floating method

BY DEREK WELBURN
CEO, Inhaus

LVT is a product with a long heritage in the flooring industry. Recently, it has taken the market by storm thanks to its durability, ease of installation and exceptional moisture protection capabilities.

All LVT plank products are similar in the sense that they are multi-layer products consisting of a core material, a décor layer (a printed design) and a wear layer. The wear layer determines the durability of the product in terms of foot traffic over time and performance against more extreme events such as scratching.

Vinyl-based products measure wear resistance based on the thickness of the wear layer. The thicker the wear layer, the more traffic it can withstand before any damage is inflicted on the décor layer. Generally, a wear layer of 0.5mm or 20-mil is suitable for commercial installations, while thinner layers, typically 0.3mm or 12-mil or less, are rated for residential use. Another important consideration beyond thickness is the quality of the wear layer, although this is a more difficult attribute to judge. However, reliability in the producer's reputation is an ideal place to start. Furthermore, many suppliers will have accessible performance test data that can demonstrate the product's performance on established industry-standard tests, such as a Taber Abrasion test.

Historically, LVT has been based on a



Floating installation of LVT floors is quick, simple and requires a minimal number of tools.

glue-down installation system. However, with the recent innovation of rigid core vinyl, which enables the milling of a click system, LVT can now be effectively installed via the floating method. One of the key considerations is heavy rolling loads. If the floor (after installation) will be subject to heavy rolling loads such as the movement of goods on a pallet jack, then choosing a glue-down LVT should be the primary option. The advantages of floating floors are ease of installation and more modest site preparation.

Both floating and glue-down LVT may have the same durability from the wear layer construction. However, one of the main dividing factors is the performance under heavy rolling loads; glue-down is the recommended installation method for this application.



Mohawk's Leighton line is a glue-down option that offers many coveted features in the category. For example, the product needs no on-site acclimation and offers an expanded

rounding planks or tiles," explained Jenne Ross, director of marketing, Karndean Designflooring. "Consumers can work together with their retailer to choose a layout and design that makes the home more stylish and functional while remaining affordable and faster to install than other types of hard surface flooring."

David Sheehan, vice president of residential resilient business, Mannington Mills, agreed, adding that alternative installation options are also the draw. "Speed of installation or ability to go over an existing floor are the pri-

mary advantages of floating floor,” he explained. “That said, the condition of the subfloor can significantly impact whether it is appropriate to install a floating floor. Glue-down/flexible products don’t require transition profiles. For these reasons, flexible options are well received in Main Street and commercial applications where foot traffic and everyday rigor require a better performing installation. For tile visuals, glue-down products can be installed with or without grout.”

At retail, many floor covering installers prefer the glue-down method given their familiarity with this installation option, making it a “safe” choice for floor layers. “The material itself is less expensive, and our guys actually like installing it better,” said Jeremy Wings, co-owner of 3 Kings CarpetsPlus, Fort Wayne, Ind.

So, where in the home—or office—does glue-down LVT shine? “As with any HDPC/SPC rigid core product, glue-down/dryback performs well virtually anywhere in the home while excelling in areas prone to moisture and spills like

Karndean recently added new stone visuals to its Opus 20-mil glue-down range, including Iberian-inspired mosaics and new sizes and colors of its brushed limestone design.

kitchens, bathrooms and below-grade basements,” explained Steve Wagner, director of marketing, Wellmade.

When it comes to commercial, Adam Ward, vice president of product management, resilient at Mohawk, noted that glue-down LVT/P holds up better in high-traffic areas and places where heavy loads are moved. “In addition, since its glue down, it’s also more appropriate for larger open areas versus a floating floor such as SPC/WPC,” he added.

Given the product’s versatility and cost-effectiveness, suppliers agree glue-down flooring is an asset to any dealer’s product lineup.

“Glue-down LVT allows retailers to differentiate and diversify their showroom in a crowded rigid marketplace and showcase products that aren’t as easily shopped down the street,” Karndean’s Ross said. That spells more



margin opportunities. “Most homeowners are willing to pay a bit extra upfront for subfloor prep if it allows them to have the layout that makes the most sense for their home.”

Mannington’s Sheehan noted that the consumer does not really care about the installation method. For her, he noted, color and pattern are the most important attributes.

Lvp 101: selling

Selling higher-end goods is worth the extra effort

BY KEITH RITTER
president, DeZign

As suppliers, we try our best to train and educate our retail partners and staff on our product categories. After all, it is imperative that the entire sales team have full knowledge of the products they represent.

While we all want to “make the sale,” knowing the needs of the customer is equally important, if not more so. Within LVP, there are many constructions, thicknesses, widths, lengths and wear layers that it can overwhelm RSAs to promote a specific product or brand. In our experience, we have found that upgrading and selling better-end products equates to larger sales numbers and fewer problems during, and after, installation. Upgrading the consumer to a higher-quality product is sometimes difficult based on budget concerns. However, using the tools provided by your rep is key to educating your customer on better-end products.

Ask your rep for goods from each collection to present to your customer during the selling process. Products made with virgin raw materials, for example, will have a stronger locking system than those with fillers or recycled content. It will be harder to break the end joint and male side of the click/locking system. In addition, educate yourself on each product by determining what you feel comfortable selling. Feel the weight of these materials and get to know what to expect from the flexibility of each collection and its various weights of loose planks. Let consumers sell themselves on the higher quality.



Upgrading and selling better-end products equates to larger sales numbers and fewer problems. Pictured is Ashville Oak.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: FLOORINGLINES

Performance, style personified

The Christina Collection by Christina Haack is unlike other luxury vinyl flooring products on the market. When creating the collection, Christina and the team wanted the flooring to be stylish, affordable and extremely durable.

As well, it was important to make sure the floor would hold up so homeowners would not have to worry about their floors looking damaged or worn after just a few years.

With that in mind, The Christina Collection is made using a virgin core compared to the usual recycled core—meaning there is no moisture barrier requirement, thus making the in-

stallation process a breeze. Another standout feature is the DiamondWalk finish, which is scratch-resistant and can withstand high heels, pets and everyday scratches.

This waterproof flooring can be installed throughout the home, even in traditional wet areas like bathrooms. Along with being durable, the Christina Collection is stylish and trendy. Whether installing the collection in a beach house or in a city apartment, there is sure to be a color among the 21 in the collection for everyone to enjoy. What's more, the Christina Collection offers an eight-pattern repeat, which provides a more natural visual.



The Christina Collection is notable for SPC floors that are scratch- and stain-resistant but still affordable.

Lvp 101: maintenance



It's important for consumers to be aware of the appropriate cleaning recommendations when dealing with luxury vinyl flooring. Shown is Mohawk SolidTech Plus.

Educate consumers on the cleanability story

BY ADAM WARD

VP of product management, resilient, Mohawk

With an active home usually comes an active cleaning routine, and that's especially true today. When selling LVT, make sure to sell the cleanability story. Your customers need to know that it's important to deep clean their floors with approved cleaning steps so they don't accidentally do damage. More importantly, if they're looking to clean and disinfect their vinyl floors to kill germs, they'll want to follow the advice provided by the CDC.

It only takes a few simple care and maintenance steps to keep luxury vinyl floors looking

beautiful for years to come.

Do's:

- Spills should be cleaned up immediately.
- Use a soft bristle broom to remove loose dirt.
- Damp mop as needed with clean water and a non-abrasive floor cleaner.

Don'ts:

- Harsh cleaning chemicals should not be used on luxury vinyl flooring.
- Never push, pull or drag furniture across vinyl floors—always lift and carry.
- Avoid using a vacuum with a beater bar.

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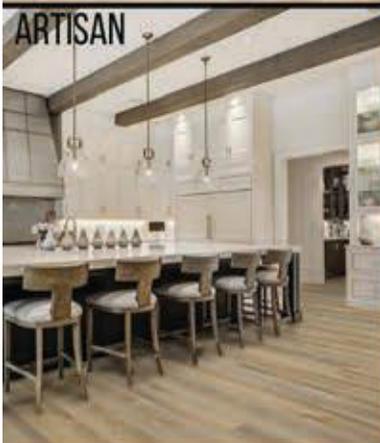
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underlayment

Padding: A proven path to add-on profits

By Megan Salzano-Birch

It's no secret that flooring accessory pieces such as premium underlayments are often the hardest to sell for the retail sales associate. And, even more so, can sometimes be the hardest for the retail store owner to find value in selling due to that fact. However, premium underlayments are high-margin products that not only help boost the retailer's bottom line, but they also support the overall success of the flooring project, ultimately leading to a happier—and potentially repeat—customer.

“If you're a retail sales associate or a store owner, a premium underlayment is an opportunity to ‘sell the floor twice,’” said David Moore, senior director of product management, wood and laminate, Mohawk. “It's always an upsell opportunity; a way to grow the ticket and make more money. And, from a consumer standpoint, for a relatively small price it's a way to increase satisfaction with the floor, gain more confidence and, ultimately, be happier with the total installation.”



QuietWalk LV was developed to help with full subfloor moisture control and sound-deadening.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MP GLOBAL

Giving installers a big ‘lift’

Sometimes you just need a little “lift.” The latest product from MP Global Products can provide the lift you need—introducing FloorLyft.

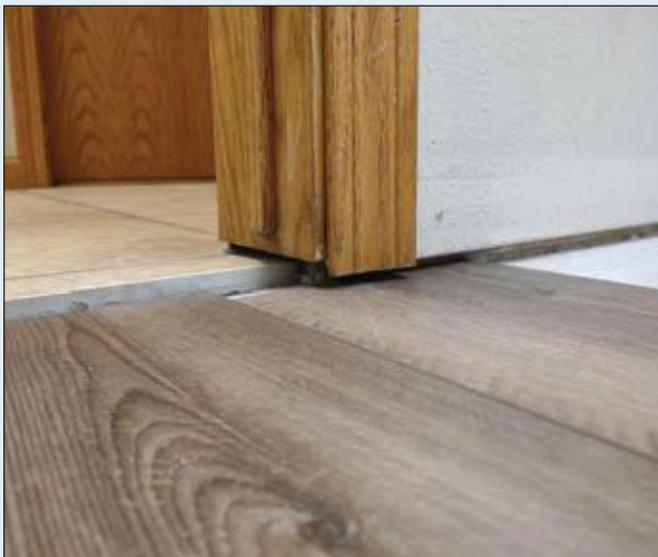
FloorLyft works as a “booster” to lift the vinyl flooring and close the gap to match existing base trim. In addition, FloorLyft has great acoustic and insulating value while adding support to the overlying floor. This is especially important in the case of multi-family housing such as apartments or condomini-

ums to quiet impact sound and floor to ceiling noise while inhibiting sound transmission into living space below. FloorLyft also adds insulating value for energy efficiency and can be used with radiant heat systems.

FloorLyft is manufactured in the U.S. with recycled materials. The 6mm thickness is dense making it look and feel more like a board; this construction passes the castor chair test and can be floated, stapled or glued under floating floor coverings. Easy to install

panels are available in 2-foot x 3-foot or 4-foot x 6-foot sizes.

MP Global also has an underlayment that is designed specifically for use with vinyl planks but is also suitable beneath laminate or engineered wood planks. QuietWalk LV can be installed over wood or concrete subfloors and provides moisture protection for the new vinyl plank flooring. The underlayment also quiets impact sound and floor-to-ceiling noise and inhibits sound transmission into the room below.



FloorLyft has great acoustic and insulating value while adding support to the overlying floor.

However, suppliers agree that it's easier said than done. In order to successfully sell this sundry category, it's important for RSAs to be aware of where premium underlayment makes an impact. Sound, for example, can be a top concern for consumers today, especially as more people continue to work and learn from home. Sound abatement also comes into account when considering the shift from soft to hard surface flooring that has happened in the market.

Several more consumer pain points—including the growing focus on waterproof—can benefit from the addition of a premium underlayment. As such, several suppliers suggest RSAs focus on multi-solution options. “For a potentially negligible add-on cost, a multi-purpose underlayment could provide acoustical abatement, moisture control, raised subfloor level and compensate for a subfloor not being flat or clean of adhesive residue,” explained David Jackson, vice president, field technical services, DriTac Flooring Products. “

There's another hurdle that RSAs must overcome when it comes to the successful sale of a premium underlayment: attached padding. “As a retailer, add-on sales equal add-on profits; too much emphasis has been placed on pad-attached flooring for convenience, especially for the do-it-for-me consumer,” said Deanna Summers, marketing specialist, MP Global. “They are more interested in the end result than the ease of installation. As a general rule, a separate underlayment can achieve better performance than a pad-attached product.”

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MSI

On-trend fashion flooring suits any style

LVT continues to be an incredible opportunity for MSI and its customers. With the strength of a vast nationwide distribution network, MSI can tap into customer data points throughout the system and learn about the designs they most covet for their flooring needs.

MSI never introduces any new product merely to “fill a color range.” Instead, it curates the most sought-after aesthetics—combining color, texture, finish, size and detailing—so its customers are empowered to choose among the best-of-the-best design options in the industry. First and foremost, MSI

ensures product design and pricing are the heroes. The company then backs that up with an industry-leading warranty and credibility that has been earned over a 45-year history.

MSI offers a designer-curated collection chosen by its consumers and a full spectrum of LVT merchandising. The merchandising support features cutting-edge B2B and B2C technologies in augmented reality, digital galleries and, most importantly, readily available inventory with the most comprehensive supply chain network in the floor covering industry.



MSI curates the most sought-after aesthetics, combining color, texture, finish, size and detailing. Shown is MSI Living.

Lvp 101: cleaning



Choosing the wrong flooring cleaner could irreversibly damage the floors' protective surface.

The do's and don'ts of caring for luxury vinyl floors

BY DANA **COELHO**

director of marketing, Johnson Hardwood

As technical director for Johnson Premium Hardwood Flooring, I frequently receive inquiries from retailers and/or consumers asking what type of cleaning product(s) we recommend for maintaining their newly installed luxury vinyl plank flooring. This is a great question, as choosing the wrong flooring cleaner could result in irreversible damage to the floors' protective surface (i.e., permanent dulling and/or a floor surface that mars easily). LVP flooring will add beauty and value to any home and/or office setting—when properly maintained it will last for years.

Here are some key maintenance do's and don'ts regarding LVP flooring:

Do's:

- Place walk-on/walk-off mats at all entry points leading into the home.
- Vacuum the floor as needed.

Note: We recommend using a canister type vacuum as the wheels typically consist of a firm rubber which is gentle to the floor's surface compared to rigid plastic wheels, which are not. In addition, we recommend using a China bristle attachment as the semi-firm bristles are gentle to the floor's surface.

- Clean up spills and/or pet accidents when they occur.
- Use only pH-neutral cleaners when cleaning the floor.
- Place furniture glides on all furniture posts.
- Keep pet nails trimmed.

Don'ts:

- Don't use wax as part of your maintenance routine.
- Don't use ammonia and/or bleach to clean your LVP flooring.
- Never use a vacuum with a beater bar attachment as it can/will scratch and/or mar the floor's surface.



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SCAN TO GET
GET STARTED.

State of the industry

Continued from page 3

ment, resilient, Mohawk. “There has been strong demand across all channels as business reopens and the home building/real estate market has been booming. I expect to continue to see resilient products take share from other categories as innovation in the category delivers differentiation and value for consumers.”

David Thoresen, senior vice president, product and innovation, Armstrong Flooring, noted that resilient products continue to gain more share and have become extremely popular in the home. “There’s a case



to be made for resilient flooring in every room of the house,” he explained. “Bedrooms are still primarily carpet, but beyond

Resilient flooring continues to outpace the growth of competing categories. Pictured is Adura Max from Mannington.

that, resilient floors are extremely popular options with consumers.”

Ana Torrence, hard surface category manager, Engineered Floors, pointed to resilient’s design and performance story to support its popularity. “Resilient continues to be the fastest growing category in flooring due to the beautiful visuals combined with the waterproof attributes and easy care that consumers demand.”

There are two main drivers of the category’s continued popularity and growth today—as well as the growth of the entire industry: the pandemic and the current housing market, two topics that are intertwined. “The recent pandemic has played a huge role in the unprecedented rise of resilient sales,” explained Steve Ehrlich, vice president of sales and marketing, Novalis. “When pairing the fact that our customers spent more time at home than ever before last year and thus craved a refresh of their surroundings/décor with elevated disposable income due to canceled vacations, no dinners out and school and extracurricular activities coming to a screeching halt, it was the perfect storm to make all residential remodeling—including resilient sales—go through the roof.”

Raj Shah, president, MSI, agreed, noting, “COVID-19 caused a refocus on the home. We are seeing renovations hitting record numbers as well as new home sales continuing to increase. With low interest rates the affordability of home renovations has never been better.”

David Sheehan, vice president, residential resilient at Mannington, added that the momentum that began on the residential side of the business in 2020 continues today. “Most of the dealers we speak to indicate that they are booked eight to 10 weeks out,” he explained. “Consumers continue to allocate a strong percentage of discretionary funds toward the home, and the entire flooring industry is benefiting from this increased demand.”

SPC continues to dominate

While the resilient category continues to

Lvp 101: merchandising

Pairing LVP and rugs all in one display

BY CHRISTINE ZAMPAGLIONE
senior director of marketing, Stanton

While color and style are two primary factors that influence consumers when it comes to flooring purchases, merchandising often plays a key role in conveying the story and inspiring consumers to take action.

Board visuals offering key attributes shown in real world scenarios help guide the consumer through her purchase journey. Without question, every board should

tell a story and inspire the consumer. Research indicates that rug purchases are often made after a large LVP installation.

While the rug purchase may not happen simultaneously, the conversation should have started before she leaves your showroom. This cross merchandising can be incredibly effective for both the RSA and consumer.

To take this a step further, companies including Stanton utilize a QR code on every board that links to a visualizer tool, which enables the consumer to “see” the inside of her home. This tool takes some of the guesswork out of the design process and most definitely elevates the consumer’s comfort level when making such an important decision for her home.

The message for RSAs: Never miss an opportunity to capture two sales at once, as LVP and rugs make for an ideal pairing.



Merchandising plays a key role in conveying the story and inspiring consumers to take action. Shown is Stanton’s DFW display.

dominate the flooring industry, it is the rigid core subsegment that leads the pack. FC-News research showed residential SPC grew from 30.8% of total resilient residential dollars in 2019 to a whopping 51.9% in 2020. In terms of its command of the LVT segment in which it resides, 2020 saw an increase from 37% to a staggering 59.2%. In terms of dollars, it generated \$2.516 billion of the LVT market's \$4.25 billion in 2020.

As such, SPC remains the dominant player in the luxury vinyl game, potentially at the expense of its sister sub-segments. MSI's Shah, for example, said he expects to see SPC continue to take share from WPC. "Ultimately, it's a lower-cost raw material with no detriment in technical attributes for the consumer, whether they be residential or commercial. Almost all new manufacturing capacity in the United States and across the world is made for SPC."

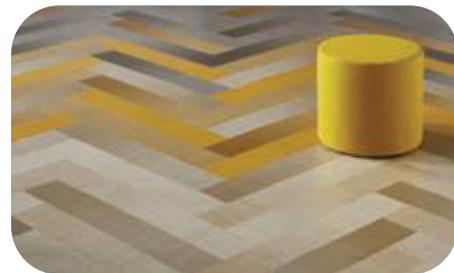
Suppliers agree SPC is propped up by its three main features—performance, aesthetics and price of entry, which give it a leg up against its sister sub-segments. "HDPC/SPC rigid core vinyl products continue to grow faster than LVT and WPC," said Dick Quinlan, vice president of sales and marketing, Wellmade. "The superior performance characteristics and greater ease of installation provided by HDPC/SPC rigid core vinyl will continue to drive increased sales and market share over LVT and WPC products."

Novalis' Ehrlich agreed, adding, "More and more market share is being given to SPC in the residential environment—customers are educating themselves and finding that it is a better product with more attributes (waterproof, dent resistant) at a comparable cost."

However, many suppliers argue LVT and WPC also have their place. "All rigid core products have their place in the home, depending upon application and/or individual preference," said Drew Hash, vice president of hard surface category management, Shaw Residential. "Each construction offers its own unique benefits: quiet and comfort for WPC; dent and impact resistance for SPC; and superior scratch resistance for mineral core products—in addition to all being 100% waterproof with simple installation and easy maintenance. Flexible LVT and sheet vinyl products still have a strong presence in other market channels and seg-

ments and meet distinct customer and/or end-user needs."

Bill Anderson, CEO, Karndean Designflooring, explained that all variations of LVT/P have done well and continue to do well for the company. "Within our luxury vinyl product offering of glue-down, loose lay and rigid core, we encourage consumers to shop our floors by color and design first rather than by format," he said. "We are seeing gains across all three categories."



LVT's design versatility makes it a go-to product for both residential and commercial applications.

lvp 101: education

Speaking the language of sustainability

BY JENNE ROSS

director of marketing, Karndean Designflooring

Consumers have been moving towards sustainable products for years and in today's climate, terms like non-toxic, hygienic and sustainable are becoming more frequently heard in showrooms across the country as homeowners become more mindful of the materials in their living spaces.

Flooring displays speak to waterproof and family-friendly aspects of a product, but with so many benefits of resilient flooring, few include sustainability messaging. As a store owner or RSA, how can you best equip yourself to address these homeowner concerns?

For the customer who is unfamiliar with resilient flooring, the consumer cam-

paign promoted by the RFCI, "Beautifully Responsible," provides valuable talking points on the category in consumer-friendly language.

Environmentally savvy consumers may inquire about volatile organic compounds (VOCs), whose tolerances are being controlled by some state governments, including California. Look to third-party organizations like FloorScore to check if products are low-VOC. FloorScore also certifies products that meet indoor-air quality emissions requirements.

Homeowners have also taken an interest in phthalates, due in part to California's OEHHA Proposition 65. Look for products that comply with Prop 65 and do not require warning labels.

Reviewing a product's life cycle can also reflect its sustainability. Many resilient flooring products offer a lifetime residential warranty, but how is "lifetime" defined? Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) provide a third-party assessment and communicate comparable information.

By familiarizing yourself with frequently asked questions about environmental attributes, you can instill confidence in all types of consumers, not just environmentally passionate ones.



Third-party organizations, such as FloorScore, can be helpful in determining the environmental impact of a product.

Ivp 101: environmental

GreenGuard certification: Insurance policy for today's floors

BY ISAAC LEE

corporate sales, product development manager, Eternity Floors

Flooring retailers are no doubt familiar with the term “GreenGuard” certification, but some might not know exactly what it entails—furthermore, why it is so important in today’s market where healthy homes have become so important.

A product that has been GreenGuard certified means it has been tested and scientifically proven to have low chemical emissions, according to United Laboratories (UL). In other words, it’s guaranteed to give off only low levels of volatile organic compounds. (VOCs are carbon-based chemicals, such as formaldehyde, that easily become vapors or gases.) Mattresses, flooring and even wall paints give off VOCs. Inside your home you may be breathing anywhere from 50 to hundreds of different VOCs at any given time, UL scientists say.

GreenGuard certification means the product has met industry standards for low emissions; however, anything designed for a child’s room or educational setting has to meet even stricter standards—GreenGuard Gold certification (products emit even lower levels and incorporate lower level of formaldehyde emissions specifically).



Eternity's Ecoessent SPC meets GreenGuard Gold certification.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: AXISCOR

Performance, design and stellar service

In today's fast-growing LVT/P market, it's not easy for retailers and RSAs to keep up with all the rapidly evolving technologies and sub-categories that dot the landscape. Fortunately, SPC core products check off all the boxes, with a wide variety of visual offerings along with stellar performance capabilities.

Axiscor Performance Flooring offers high-quality SPC multi-layered flooring in a broad range of patterns and colors. With 31 options in three price points, Axiscor also provides one of the most expansive and highest-performing SPC collections available to consumers today.

Since launching in early 2019, Axiscor has become one of the fastest-growing SPC brands in the United States, with performance, design and con-

sistent supply contributing to the company's success. "Key targets have included providing outstanding service to our distributors and retailers, offering the most realistic visuals and on-trend colors in the industry and maintaining

very reliable order fill rates, with back-up inventory available here in the U.S. to help overcome supply chain issues," said Art Layton, director of specialty products.

Products are designed to perform well in extreme temperature situations and include a 20-mil wear layer for improved impact and scuff resistance, greater stability and longer wear life. The wear layer also includes antimicrobial properties to prevent bacterial growth. The Axis Trio collection features an ABA multi-layered construction process, offered by only a few brands within the industry. This process creates the best look and feel for an SPC product, with deeper, richer embossing for a more realistic surface texture and added plank stability.



Axiscor's Axis Trio collection, including Axiscor Pro 9, features an ABA multi-layered construction process.

FEATURED: PRO 9 DARK WALNUT | 25193

AXISPRO₉



DARK WALNUT

AXISPRO₁₂



SHADOW STONE | 25147

AXISPRO₇



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New Floating Floor Collections from Johnson Hardwood

www.johnsonhardwood.com

- Clean and Modern Visuals
- Strong and Ultra Durable - **AC5 Rating**
- Scratch and Stain Resistant
- Lifetime Residential / 20 Year Commercial Warranty



HIGH PERFORMANCE FLOORING

DIMENSIONS: 7-5/8"W x 23.5", 47", 71"
 THICKNESS: 13.5mm
 WEAR LAYER: **AC5 Rating**
 CORE: WaterShield High Performance Core

- Multi-Length Planks
- Sound Reduction Underlayment
- Valinge 5G Dry Click
- Commercial Space Applications



Available **NOW**



Painted Bevel



Registered Embossing (EIR)

- Rustic / Reclaimed Wood Visuals
- Strong and Durable - **AC4 Rating**
- Scratch and Stain Resistant
- Lifetime Residential / 15 Year Commercial Warranty



HIGH PERFORMANCE FLOORING

DIMENSIONS: 6.5"W x 48"
 THICKNESS: 13.5mm
 WEAR LAYER: **AC4 Rating**
 CORE: WaterShield High Performance Core

- Sound Reduction Underlayment
- Valinge 5G Dry Click
- Commercial Space Applications



Available **NOW**



Realistic Wood Details



Registered Embossing (EIR)

- Clean and Modern Visuals
- Ultrarealistic Wood Aesthetics - EIR & Eased Bevel
- Ultra Durable - **30mil Wear Layer**
- Premium Attached Underlayment
- Limited Lifetime Warranty

Also comes in:
 4 Herringbone Patterns with Matching Planks



SPC / RIGID CORE FLOORING

DIMENSIONS: 7"W x 60"
 THICKNESS: 7.5mm (6.0 + 1.5mm Pad)
 WEAR LAYER: **30mil**
 CORE: WaterShield SPC Rigid Core

- Eased Bevel
- Clean Visuals
- Ultra Durable



Coming in **FALL**



Unique Eased Bevel



Herringbone Pattern