

Premier Flooring

R E T A I L E R

www.pfrmagazine.com

March/April 2014



**Star Flooring and
Decorating Sets the
Gold Standard**

*Star Flooring and Decorating, Wichita, Kansas
2013 WFCAs Gold Standard Winner*

**Design Trends
Main Street**

**Exclusive
Market Research**

New Product Intros

**SWOT Analysis
Made Simple**

brought to you by the



Initial Sales Present the 6.881.7.681 (and other Patents), StainProof (residential installation only) to common household cleaners, liquids and other goods. Clean all spills immediately. 4-5-06-1213 ©2013 LATICRETE International, Inc. All trademarks shown are the intellectual properties of their respective owners.

The Easiest Upsell Yet... Carefree Grout.

StainPROOF^{^^}
Easy to install & clean
Vibrant, consistent color



SPECTRALOCK[®] PRO PREMIUM Grout*

You'll make more money on every job when you up-sell your customers from traditional cement grout to the SPECTRALOCK[®] PRO Premium Grout*. Increase your profits, reduce your call-backs, and provide your customers a beautiful appearance for years to come.

www.laticrete.com | 1.800.243.4788

Snap for more information.



**Globally Proven
Construction Solutions**



LVTSKU

Because you need choices

EarthWerks® Luxury Vinyl flooring gives you choices. Glue-down, Clic, Grouted, Loose lay.
The look of wood and natural stone in a variety of textures and colors.
With over 250 SKUs, the hardest part is choosing.


earthwerks®
FLOORING INSPIRED BY NATURE



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



Premier Flooring

www.pfrmagazine.com

R E T A I L E R

Volume 1, Issue 2

CONTENTS

March/April 2014

FEATURES

It's All About You 6

WFCA CEO Scott Humphrey details the association's focus and willingness to listen to flooring professionals to ensure your success and profitability.

Selling & Installation 8

It's time to focus on the person who has felt the brunt of the past few years -- you, the boss, according to Tom Jennings, WFCA VP Member Services.

WFCA Gold Standard Winner 12

Star Flooring & Decorating Wins WFCA's 2013 Gold Standard Award. Check out some of their programs to enhance the customers' experiences.

Design Trends - Main Street is Open for Business 16

Columnist and Color Marketing Group Chairholder Annette Callari outlines what's hot in commercial and details ways to enter the segment.

Market Trends 22

The results of the most in-depth market research study are in! Find out which flooring products grew exponentially, and what fellow dealers are saying.

Momentum in the Mundane Middle 26

Randy Gravitt of i2i Leadership discusses the importance of the mundane middle and how you can use it to reach your goals.

Legal Matters: Criminal Background Checks 27

Association General Counsel Jeffrey King describes the do's and don'ts of criminal background checks, part one.



New Product Showcase 30

Hot new products entering the marketplace.

B2B: Technology is Changing 34

Pamela Bowe, Exec. Director of Floor Covering Business to Business, says the dividing line between in-store and online is no longer clear. Competition is everywhere.

Retailer Best Practices 38

Scott Humphrey challenges retailers to think outside the box to beat the Big Box Stores.

Unlock Your Marketing 40

PFR's Josh "The Fixer" McGinnis says looking at the cost to generate a lead is only one part of your marketing equation. You also need to look at other numbers to intelligently analyze your business.

Sales Training: Selling Made in USA Products 42

Columnist Michael Vickers says customers are looking for the best bang for their buck. Make sure to tell the "Made in USA" story.

Management: SWOT Made Simple 44

Columnist David Romano says SWOT analysis can be overwhelming. Picking one or two things to focus on will help you map out your internal strengths and weaknesses.

DEPARTMENTS

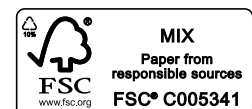
The Floor Covering Industry Foundation 21

Case Study: Step-by-Step Development of Website and Digital Marketing 37

How to Become a WFCA Member 46

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: In order to ensure uninterrupted delivery of *Premier Flooring Retailer*, notice of change should be made at least five weeks in advance. *Premier Flooring Retailer* is published bi-monthly (Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/June, Jul/Aug, Sep/Oct, Nov/Dec) by the World Floor Covering Association, 2211 E. Howell Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92806. Application to Mail at the Periodicals Postage Prices is Pending at Anaheim, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: please send address changes to: Premier Flooring Retailer, 2211 E. Howell Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92806.

Printed in the U.S.A. Copyright 2014 by the World Floor Covering Association. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited.



Bona® Adhesives



Bona's moisture controlling, silane based adhesives are unique with a carefully weighted combination of elasticity and strength.

Bona adhesives are an integral part of the Bona system for bringing out the best in hardwood floors.

Cost	Moisture Control	Product	Features & Benefits	Floor Types
\$			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 square feet per gallon • Excellent shear strength of 245 psi • Easy to clean up, won't harm finish surface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineered flooring up to 5/8" thick and 5" wide
\$\$			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radiant heat approved • Tenacious bonding strength • Easy to clean up, won't harm finish surface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All flooring including solids up to 8" wide
\$\$			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superior adhesion • Superior moisture control system • 100% GREENGUARD System 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All flooring including solids up to 8" wide and up to 95% RH or 18 lbs
-	-		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 linear feet per tube at 1/4" • Ideal for all glue assist installations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All flooring including wide planks, stair treads and risers



Official
Hardwood
Floor Care
Partner of
the NBA

bona.com

Bona®

Hitting the Mark - It's All About You

By Scott Humphrey, CEO, World Floor Covering Association

Welcome back! Based on your feedback, we can tell we hit the mark with our first edition of *Premier Flooring Retailer* (PFR). We continue to be excited about the opportunity to enhance our communication with our members, but this publication is more than just a way to communicate with our membership!

This publication is about living out our purpose statement: *"The purpose of the World Floor Covering Association is to ensure the success and profitability of professional floor covering dealers and to protect their common interests."*

That is our goal, and we don't hit that mark by accident. Hitting the mark is the reason we exist!

I once heard a story about a city slicker who was traveling through the country. As he traveled through, he couldn't help but notice that every barn he went by had a target on the side and smack dab in the bulls-eye of every one there was an arrow. Intrigued, the city slicker had to meet the man that was that good at hitting the mark.

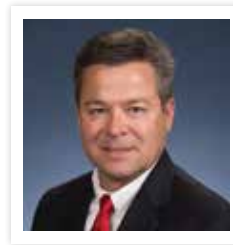
Finally, after asking around at several country stores, he found the home of the master archer. He was surprised to find out it was a 12-year-old boy.

After a bit of small talk, he asked two questions, "Do you ever miss?", and "How are you able to center the target on every shot?" To which the country boy replied, "No, I never miss. I

just shoot and wherever the arrow ends up, I draw the target around it!"

Unlike the country boy, we are able to hit the mark because of our focus on you and our willingness to listen to flooring professionals who are hitting the mark on purpose day in and day out.

I am confident that you will find the content of this issue a valuable resource as you seek to hit the mark with your customers at every interaction! ■



Scott Humphrey
Scott Humphrey
CEO of WFCA

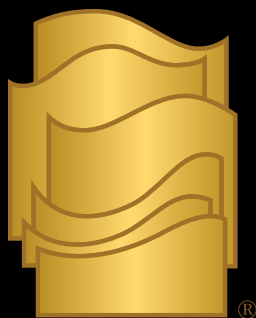


“ We are able to hit the mark because of our focus on you and our willingness to listen...”

ARE YOU CONNECTED?



Turn the page to find out
how the pieces **CONNECT!**



Abbey Carpet
& Floor[®]

The Boss May Merit More

By Tom Jennings, VP of Member Services, World Floor Covering Association

Congratulations! Your business has survived our industry-wide slowdown to welcome an invigorating spring season. By all accounts, the worst of our industry's crisis appears to be behind us. May I suggest that you now turn your focus toward the person who has felt the real brunt of the past few years – you, the boss!

My bet is that it has been too long since you shut the lights off for the day in your office and said “that was fun!” or, “I can't wait to do that again!” Very understandable, as all successful people seem to have the common trait of being able to see what needs to be done and then doing it. However, if this type of crisis management is allowed to continue indefinitely, the results could be very sad indeed.

You may be a **great boss** to work for, but are you a great boss **to yourself**? Far too often, the **answer is no.**

Just as new growth springs from the cold gray ground at this time of the year, I believe the time has come for store management to change the focus from coping to maintain to beginning to grow again.

Are you a good boss for whom to work? Most employers would self-evaluate and say they are. You know how to praise and are constructive in your objections. You pay fairly. Your employees like you. Very commendable.

Indeed, you may be a great boss to work for, but are you a great boss to yourself? Far too often the answer is no. In your drive to be a good boss to others, many small business owners like you drive themselves too hard and forget to be good to themselves as well. Trust me; I've been down this path, too.

When was the last time that you gave yourself a raise? All good employees expect a periodic increase in their pay and so should you. If you have not raised your prices for a while, consider doing so. Do you, like so many, only review your

pricing when one of a handful of suppliers changes theirs? If so, why?

There are a myriad of costs that go into the retailing of a floor besides the product itself. Failure to constantly be aware of these creeper costs can really erode profitability over time. I'm not suggesting that you implement changes across the board. Your store will always need to have leader products at important price points. But there are many blind items in every store that are not, or cannot, be easily shopped. Try increasing the margin on these items. If you need help, the WFCA has vendor partners available to our members to guide and assist. You will be surprised at the difference this can make to your income.

Do you regularly work overtime? No one would want to work for a boss that demanded they continually work overtime. If you don't expect that of your employees, then it's not realistic to expect it of yourself. If you find yourself seeing your staff both arrive in the morning and depart at night – there could be a problem.

Do you take time off and leave work behind? There is a real dark side to the current age of electronics. It allows us to work anywhere at any time. This is great if used and not abused. Just because you can doesn't mean you should. I would hope that you don't expect your employees to check in with work constantly when they take a few days off. However, when it's your turn to be away, I would bet that you do.



Continued

CONNECTING WITH OUR MEMBERS



EVERYDAY!

Our exclusive programs and services will benefit your business through ABBEY CONNECT

CUSTOMER CONNECT: Exclusive program that enables Members to attract more customers using online advertising. This targeted Pay-Per-Click advertising program focuses on potential customers within their geographic trading area using keywords and Google AdWords text ads that link directly to their Abbey website landing page promotions.

MERCHANDISING CONNECT: Enables Members to sell our private branded products which protect their margins from comparison shopping and allows them to sell at a higher ticket price.

MEMBER CONNECT: Provides our Members with person-to-person contact with an experienced customer service representative to assist with daily issues that may confront them.

ADVERTISING CONNECT: Provides Members the opportunity to connect with our in-house advertising agency. Customized advertisements are created for Members to promote their business to prospective customers in their local trading area.

If you would like to learn how we can **CONNECT** with you and your business in order to help you successfully compete in today's changing retail environment, please contact:
STEVE MINTZ - VICE PRESIDENT OF FRANCHISE DEVELOPMENT.
866-432-2239 / SMINTZ@ABBEYCARPET.NET



Abbey Carpet & Floor[®] www.BuyAbbey.com

Premier Flooring

R E T A I L E R

Columnists

Dr. Stan Beecham, Annette Callari, Stacy Eickhoff, Randy Gravitt, Leah Gross-Harmon, Jeffrey King, Josh McGinnis, David Romano, John Simonson, Michael Vickers

Publication Staff

Jeff Golden, Editor/Co-Publisher
Dan Lipman, Sales Manager/Co-Publisher
Arpi Nalbandian, Associate Editor
Tony King, Art Director
Mona Lisa Sana-Andrews, Assistant Art Director

Editorial and Advertising Offices

JG Media Group LLC
4607 Lakeview Canyon Rd. Ste. 560
Westlake Village, CA 91361, (877) 742-6467
jeff@pfrmagazine.com; dan@pfrmagazine.com
www.pfrmagazine.com

WFCA

Scott Humphrey, Chief Executive Officer
Cammie Weitzel, Vice President, operations
Tom Jennings, Vice President, member services
Jenny Ostad, Education/Membership Mgr.
Freida Staten, Vice President, recruitment and affiliate relations
Kay Wiley, executive assistant to the CEO
Gena Basenback, membership operations manager
Renee Gutierrez, administrative assistant

Offices

2211 E. Howell Ave., Anaheim, CA 92806
(800) 624-6880 (714) 978-6440 Fax: (714) 978-6066
E-mail: wfca@wfca.org
855 Abutment Road, Suite 1, Dalton, GA 30721 (855) 330-1183

Executive Board (2013-2014)

Janice Clifton, Abbey Carpets Unlimited, Napa, CA, chairwoman of the board
Paul Johnson, Interiors One, Inc., Carpet One, Tulsa, OK, chairman-elect
Scott Walker, Walkers Carpet One Floor & Home, Bellingham, WA, CFO
Mark Weaver, Carpet Weavers, Bloomington, IL, secretary
Aaron Pirner, CAP Carpet, Wichita, KS, vice chairman
Harold Chapman, Bonitz Flooring Group, Inc., Greenville, SC, immediate past chairman
Scott Humphrey, World Floor Covering Association, CEO

Board of Directors

Maryanne Adams, Avalon Carpet Tile & Flooring, Cherry Hill, NJ
Scott Appel, Touch of Color, Harrisburg, PA
Bob Caputo, Carpetland of Dothan, Inc., Dothan, AL
Deb DeGraaf, DeGraaf Interiors, Hudsonville, MI
Kelby Frederick, My Flooring Texas, Denton, TX
Jason Fromm, Carpet Spectrum, Inc., Lomita, CA
Dean Howell, Moda Floors and Interiors, Atlanta, GA
Eric Langan, Carpetland USA, Inc., Davenport, IA
Melissa Murphy, Johnston Paint and Decorating, Columbia, MO
Carrie Seifert, Diversified Flooring Design Center, Edgewater, FL
Mark Tollefson, Tollefson's Retail Group, Inc., Minot, ND
Terry Wheat, Wheat's Carpet One, Northport, AL
Keith Campbell, Mannington Mills, Salem, NJ
Paul Murfin, IVC USA, Dalton, GA
Bob Weiss, All Tile, Inc., Elk Grove Village, IL

Brought to you by the
World Floor Covering Association



Selling & Installation

The Boss May Merit More, Continued

Your staff needs time away from you just as you need time away from them. It's like I told my youngest daughter when she kept coming home from college every weekend, "How can I miss you when you won't go away?" Besides, if your business can't exist without you for a short while, you may not have the staff that you need. There's only one way to find out.

When was the last time you changed your personal routine? This topic falls into the "can't see the forest for the trees" category. You've unlocked the same door and sat at the same desk in the same chair for so long that you've become oblivious to your surroundings. You're in a rut! When I am visiting dealer's stores, this is very obvious to a set of fresh eyes.

Rearrange your office. Paint the walls a fresh color. Get rid of the clutter. Many offices have piles of files on the floor! How handy! While this may seem comforting to you, it can give a very disorganized and unprofessional appearance to visitors. Don't let cost be an excuse. Paint isn't expensive. You don't have to break the bank to enjoy an updated environment. You encourage customers to update their environment. Isn't it time to take your own advice?

If you don't take a regular day off – start. If you do, change it. Eat your lunch at a different time of day. Shake up your routine a little. It will reenergize your perspective.

I commented to an industry executive recently that no one seems to be having fun in this business like they used to. Enough already! Change can begin with you! While times have certainly been challenging recently, perhaps the beginning of nature's most encouraging season would be a great time to start treating yourself better. You made the sacrifices when necessary. It's time to have some fun again. You, your family, your co-workers, your vendors and your customers will all be glad that you did! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Jennings is a lifelong member of the flooring business. Since selling his family's retail business in 2006, he has served the industry as an educator and speaker. He is a past-board chairman of the WFCA and is currently the board chairman of WFCA Services, Inc. and WFCA vice president of member services. He may be reached at tjennings@wfca.org.



*Photos: David Federoff



The grout world is changing, and Fusion Pro® is changing it.

Taking grout to the next level of performance for indoor, outdoor, commercial and residential installations.

- Unsurpassed Stain Resistance
- Easy to Spread and Clean
- Ultimate Color Consistency

FUSION PRO SINGLE COMPONENT GROUT. WE KNOW GROUT. COUNT ON CUSTOM.



CUSTOM®

custombuildingproducts.com

800-272-8786



Microban® protection inhibits the growth of stain causing mold and mildew on the dried grout.

Microban® is a registered trademark of Microban Products Company.

Star Flooring & Decorating Wins WFCFA's 2013 Gold Standard Award

By Arpi Nalbandian, Associate Editor

The World Floor Covering Association's (WFCFA) recent announcement of Star Flooring and Decorating winning the association's annual Gold Standard Award for excellence in retailing came as no surprise to its more than 350 employees, or to its loyal customers.

Star Flooring and Decorating, Inc. has been owned and operated by the Goebel family since 1939 when Earl Goebel founded Star Lumber & Supply Co. in Wichita, Kansas. "Being in Wichita nearly 75 years has fostered feelings of responsibility and love for the community, which is felt by all who work at Star," said Allen Clouse, Star's director of retail sales.

Along with the recognition and honor for receiving the Gold Standard Award, recipients are also awarded a \$5,000 check. Upholding their reputation of dedication and giving back, Star Flooring and Decorating will be using their prize money for employee and installer training, added Clouse.

As a major Kansas corporation that now operates four divisions — Star Lumber & Supply (Wichita); Star Flooring & Decorating (two locations in Wichita – one for the builder/contractor, the other for retailer customers); Perfection Structural Components – Truss Mill (Wichita); and Star Home Concepts (Wichita and Hutchinson) — it's safe to say that the methods, practices and modifications Star has implemented in recent years to increase the customer's experience has been very successful.

"We are proud and honored to be selected. Having spent time visiting many other retailers over the past few years, we are excited to have been chosen as there are some wonderful retailers in this business segment," added Clouse.



The old showroom area prior to remodeling in 2012.



The inviting entrance to the newly renovated Star Flooring & Decorating showroom.



Star Commercial Flooring's Oklahoma City team members.

In addition to completely remodeling the showroom in 2012, Star reviewed and assessed the various methods of delivering a great customer experience. As a result of this overhaul, they implemented several innovations and changes, including revamping the sales area by improving the purchasing and shopping experience so both retail associates and customers could enjoy peacefulness and privacy during transactions.

Custom fixtures were also designed and built to both emit a fashionable environment, and to eliminate clutter. "It is clear to me after reviewing multiple applicants that Star Flooring 'left no stone unturned' when it comes to the retail experience," said Scott Humphrey, WFCFA chief executive officer. "Not only have they been recognized four years running in their largest daily, *The Wichita Eagle*, as the #1 flooring retailer in the city, but they have completed a state-of-the-art store renovation with themed room settings, a children's play space, and custom sample displays to keep everything clean and organized."

Further, Humphrey added, "To give you an example of the lengths this store goes to make their customers happy and satisfied, they even have fresh sugar cookie scent piped into their kitchen showroom area. Another bonus for this store is

“Continuous **improvement** is critical to the **success** of Star and all brick-and-mortar businesses. We are **proud** that our **efforts** have been **recognized**, but our society is **changing rapidly** and we need to **keep moving!**”

a sales force comprised predominantly of certified interior designers – I am sure their customers truly appreciate the added benefit of a trained eye. The Wichita store’s efforts extend far beyond the storefront, too, as they donate 10% of net income each year to a charitable trust that supports organizations, including United Way, Habitat for Humanity, and many others.”

Star also prides itself on keeping the shopping experience positive from beginning to end. “We are intensely focused on achieving a 100% Likely to Refer score,” said Clouse. After completing an installation, customers are called and asked how likely they would be to refer Star to a friend. As a result of their associates’ actions and the services/amenities that are offered, Star has consistently rated in the high 90% percentile, most recently 97.50%.

Of course, floor covering sales is not a one-shot deal. By becoming a trusted part of its customers’ family, whether a retail or commercial account, Star continues to earn new and repetitive business.

“A significant part of our business is related to helping new construction customers, as we currently sell and install product in nearly 60% of the new homes built in the Wichita area, noted Clouse. Star also sends mailers to its past customers to offer free padding if they come back to Star for new carpet, personalized thank you cards, and more.

In addition to advertising on television, radio, direct mail, billboards and on the web, Star updates its website with



The newly renovated showroom features a fashionable, clutter-free environment, among several other well-planned, customer-centric features.

weekly blog posts and articles to increase its search engine optimization (SEO) and online presence. On a more personal, face-to-face level, they are a highly visible participant in local remodeling shows, as well as their own Builder’s Expo that is attended by builders and remodelers.



However, having a high customer satisfaction rating doesn’t mean that Star could sit back and relax. Quite the contrary – they have consistently implemented new ideas in the last year that have proved successful, such as: a secret shopper program to keep the sales, management and administrative staff working hard to continually improve; pre-calling every installation customer two days in advance to review key installation points, concerns, and preparedness; moved one of their most experienced salespeople off the sales floor and into a new coordinator position to manage the details of the flooring installation; changed their payment policy to 100% payment required at purchase; and more.

The next 12 months include a strategic planning series for the flooring division where the goal is, “to be 100% ready for each installation each day” with the correct drawings, maps, instructions, product, and labor tickets.

In line with the company’s objective of preparedness, Star has weathered the recession with thoughtful planning and execution. “When the recession set in,” says Clouse, “we rolled out a Roadmap to Remodeling campaign and partnered with remodelers so we could sell more countertops, cabinets, backsplashes and flooring packages. The program has been

Continued

“When the recession set in, we rolled out a **Roadmap to Remodeling** campaign and partnered with remodelers so we could **sell more** countertops, cabinets, backsplashes and **flooring** packages.”

Gold Standard, Continued



Through the Roadmap to Remodeling program cabinet sales increased dramatically.

successful as we have grown our countertop sales by 250% and significantly increased our cabinet and backsplash sales in the past few years,” Clouse added.

As any industry evolves, such as floor covering, so do its products. From new hardwood species to sustainable woods, from recycled tiles to recycled carpet – highly knowledgeable retailers and sales staff are looked upon with high regard. How does Star keep-up-to-date? “We place a large emphasis on training and holding weekly one-hour sales meetings with our retail and purchasing staff where we cover product, installation, and processes,” said Clouse. In addition to its weekly training, Star staff members regularly attend local supplier product and installation seminars, as well as invite specialized training from manufacturers such as Invista (Stainmaster), Shaw, Mannington, and others. Our retail associates have also attended Shaw Learning Academy Floor Tech, Schluter-DITRA training, and the WFCA’s There is Only One Boss, said Clouse.

When asked about how, if at all, the Gold Standard Award will affect the company, Clouse said, “We are using this recognition as inspiration to keep pushing. We know we have work to do in many facets of the business, however, like any team, it is always good to get a win to put some wind in your sails.”

He added, “We are honored to receive the Gold Standard award from the WFCA. The foundation of our family-owned

business is based on the very principles this award represents. We work hard to continuously improve and I am proud that the team is being recognized by the WFCA.”

To receive the Gold Standard Award, companies were reviewed and judged based on:

- **Knowledge** – ensuring a knowledgeable management and staff who work to remain actively informed on the state of the industry;
- **Customer Service** – providing courteous service and offering customers help throughout the purchase and after-purchase process;
- **Quality of Store Image** – a clean, professional, well-maintained store must be presented at all times;
- **Code of Conduct** – the facility must adhere to the WFCA Code of Conduct, which states retailers must: be truthful with customers in all matters related to the sale, service and installation of floor covering; refrain from misleading advertising of any nature, and offer only merchandise and services that are readily available; treat all floor covering retailers with respect; be attentive to the customer’s desires and needs; uphold the highest standards of excellence and fairness in their business; observe and abide by the laws and regulations governing good business



The showroom also features an expansive and cohesive tile area.



The Welcome Station is where customers are greeted, and where they are happily offered fresh coffee and drinks throughout their visit.

practices; conduct business in a sensitive and considerate way; subscribe to the highest standards of professionalism in their business at all times; and treat violations of this code as inconsistent with membership in the WFCA.

In order to be considered for the Gold Standard Award, companies had to be WFCA members, been in business for a minimum of three years, and have a clean Better Business Bureau report. Applicants also had to complete a multiple-page submission form and present multimedia marketing materials and other collateral that factored into the review process.

Star Flooring and Decorating, Inc. obviously met and exceeded the requirements by adhering to a simple rule.



Shopping for wood floors with samples and selections efficiently and effectively displayed.

“The Goebel family operates with point-of-view that can be defined as, ‘is this good for everyone involved?’ Because of this, the business is based on integrity, and therefore the employees and customers become the company’s biggest cheerleaders,” Clouse said.

Lastly, when asked for additional wisdom that could benefit flooring retailers, Clouse said, “Don’t rest. Continuous improvement is critical to the success of Star and all brick-and-mortar businesses. We are proud that our efforts have been recognized, but our society is changing rapidly and we need to keep moving!”

Companies interested in entering or nominating an entrant for the 2014 Gold Standard Award can visit wfca-pro.org for more details. ■



The New Construction Showroom is an appointment-only area where customers can comfortably peruse through samples in a large lounge-like space.

Main Street is Open for Business

By Annette M. Callari, Chairholder, Color Marketing Group International

Main Street commercial business is important to flooring retailers. The extended great recession certainly reinforced that fact. A balanced portfolio of residential and commercial work has proven to be the right formula for weathering tough economic times. In my discussions with many flooring retailers in Southern California, I heard differing opinions and advisories about the commercial market. There is much to consider before you decide to jump in.

Part I – Entering the Commercial Flooring Market

A long-established retailer in Orange, CA, surprised me recently by saying he was withdrawing from the commercial arena. He had been involved in corporate and financial institution floor covering installations for several decades. The reasons he cited for withdrawing were valid. If you take on large commercial projects, consider the fact that you may be financing the purchase of the materials for 60 days or longer. That's the average payment turn-around time you can expect. If you don't have the reserve funds to weather that time cycle comfortably, then large commercial projects are not for you.

The owner of this same business stated that commercial margins are not what they used to be. Many end-user customers will buy directly from manufacturers if the flooring retailer isn't amenable to selling materials on a cost plus basis. Every retailer has to judge for himself if the profit margin will be worth the upfront expense and total liability that goes along with large commercial installations.

This is not to say that Main Street commercial isn't a profitable market sector. That is exactly the business you *should* be courting. Usually these customers have already done business with your company on a personal level and trust your expertise and professionalism. They expect you to make a reasonable profit in doing business with them, in return for the guidance, materials coordination, and expert installation services you can provide.

Smaller medical and dental offices, churches, smaller retail stores — these are just a few examples of manageable commercial projects you can be searching out. If you've been in business for some time, no doubt these opportunities have already presented themselves to you. Every residential job you complete provides an opportunity to expand to Main Street commercial if you ask the right questions. (Be sure to have a list of commercial references available.)

Now that you see the rich possibilities to Main Street business, let's talk about what you need to bring to the table. Do you

have the right product resources in place to handle light commercial work? Have you invested time in manufacturer's product presentations to understand what's new, what's hot, what's not? Have you built a strong commercial library for customers to see a current selection of carpet and hard surface materials? Do you have sufficient credit lines established to pursue these projects?

Design is trending towards more homey environments for commercial settings. Organic colors representative of earth and nature continue to be important.

Do you have commercially experienced installation crews available to get the job done? Be prepared to have your crews work weekends or evenings. Businesses can't afford down time, so your flexibility to install at their convenience is critical. Also, have auxiliary services lined up in case you need them. For example, open office systems may require you to provide a specialized "lift" system to raise cubicle panels for easy installation of carpet tiles or other materials.

Part II – Commercial Design Snapshot: What's Hot

Design is trending towards more homey environments for commercial settings. Organic colors representative of earth and nature continue to be important. There is so much to choose from on the commercial side, that you will need to be selective. No doubt you have limited space for your commercial library, so here are just a few of the hot products available to you.



Tandus - Halftone

Continued

Continuing to Innovate for Your Flooring Comfort!

For more than 10 years we've been manufacturing flooring underlayments from recycled materials. We were "Green" before it was fashionable. In the early days, our competitors scoffed at our "ugly" pads, but today everyone else is scrambling to "invent" their own green story. Thanks to all of you that have helped make QuietWalk one of the best known, best selling, and best performing floating floor underlayments on the market today.



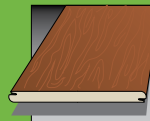
Thousands of satisfied customers have installed literally acre after acre of our products. There's a reason that more and more architects and designers specify flooring underlayments from MP Global Products . . . and most qualify for LEED credits (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) as established by the United States Green Building Council. . . Furthermore, our products are certified by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) for recycled content and as a clean air contributor.



QuietWalk[®] Acoustic Floor Underlayment

NEW! From the company that brought you QuietWalk...
Our most Versatile Underlayment product yet!

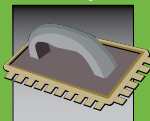
VERSAWalk[™] Universal Underlayment



Float It



Nail It



Glue It



- Install beneath floating laminate or engineered wood flooring
- Install beneath nail-down or glue-down wood flooring



global products L.L.C.

888.379.9695 | quietwalk.com

Think Green!
CERTIFIED RECYCLED AND
HEALTHIER INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Be sure to do your due diligence to become an informed flooring advisor to the commercial marketplace.

Main Street, Continued

Carpet Tile/Broadloom

In addition to the amazing selection of commercial broadloom styles available, carpet tile is often a solution product. Easier to install in occupied offices than broadloom, it provides a practical solution for commercial interior updating. Offering the end user an overage of tiles for back-up replacements is important. This can extend the good looks of the floor and allow damaged or soiled tiles to easily be replaced without disruption (and within the same dye-lot). Tiles also allow for easy subfloor access if needed. Commercially speaking, it makes sense to partner with the carpet manufacturers you are already working with. Mohawk, Shaw, Beaulieu and Tarkett each have a commercial division well suited for Main Street projects. Add to that one or two mills dedicated exclusively to commercial products and you will have a well-rounded library.

Mohawk (Bigelow) – Bending Earth II Collection, a patterned loop with converging lines, rectilinear shapes, and flowing contours all moving in harmony.

Shaw – Material Matters Collection Embark, a sophisticated, linear geometric in soft neutrals.

Bolyu – Marketplace, a solution dyed, tip-sheared loop in a subtle, contemporary grid pattern.

Mannington Commercial – Connected Collection Social, a tip-sheared, architectural, patterned loop that offers complex layers of texture and color. Custom stripe options are available with 500 sq. yd. minimum.

Tandus – Offered in both tile and broadloom, solution-dyed style Halftone is a versatile patterned loop. Tile sizes allow for maximum creativity: 18 x 18, 18 x 36, 24 x 24 and 36 x 36 offer a la carte design options.



Luxury Vinyl Tile/Wood Planks

This is the fastest growing product sector in the floor covering industry. Have you taken the time to see the authenticity of these products? Manufacturers have developed state-of-the-art replication processes to capture the look and graining of real woods and natural slate, marble or travertine. The new technologies have made these products look identical compared to the genuine products. The benefits are numerous: cost savings, durability in commercial settings, resilience underfoot, ease of maintenance, plank or tile replacement if needed, and exceptional aesthetics.

Amtico – Linear Metallic Steel is a 40 mil heavy-commercial rated LVT. It's a contemporary linear design, with subtle metallic accents to present a unique visual (available in 4 colors and multiple sizes). Also check out Fiber, a woven textile imbedded in the wearlayer with an aluminum oxide coating.



Centiva – Royal Oak LVP features rich graining and color, bringing luxury to its environment. Contrasting sapwood highlights in colors such as Foxwood, Country Manor, and Crestwood add appeal to this sophisticated plank.

Earthwerks – Innsbrook 6" x 36" vinyl planks bring three variegated color choices to life. Realistic wood graining adds to the natural good looks.

IVC – The Moduleo Collection's Tivoli Travertine interprets the beauty of natural travertine into commercially-approved vinyl tiles. Ease of maintenance and durability make it an excellent choice for a variety of commercial applications.

Tarkett – Tarkett LVT and LVP provide excellent performance in commercial settings. Styles are appropriate for retail, hospitality, offices and housing projects.

Continued

TAYLOR

Advanced Solutions for Precision Performance.™

Innovative Science
meta-tec®
Applied Technology
Patent #6,706,789

MS-PLUS® RESILIENT™

WITH **Acous-Tec**™
TECHNOLOGY

MBA® MOISTURE BARRIER SOUND REDUCTION
MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ADHESIVE

Maximum Moisture Levels: **CaCl₂ Max. 10 lbs** **RH Max. 90%**

High Performance Benefits:



meta-sept
ANTIMICROBIAL

meta-sept is a proprietary antimicrobial agent that protects against the multiplication of bacteria and fungi in the wet and dry adhesive or coating film.



- + 100% Solids, Self-Leveling
- + One Component Product, No Mixing
- + No Discarding of Unused Mixed Two Component Adhesives
- + Replaces Urethanes & Epoxies
- + Contains no isocyanates, solvents or water
- + Features lowest permeability ratings of any resilient flooring adhesive
- + Withstands maximum moisture levels of 10 lbs & 90%RH
- + Provides sound deadening ratings performance up to IIC 59 & STC 61
- + Imparts crack isolation protection up to 1/8"
- + Enhances thermal insulating properties
- + Very Low Odor, Easy Surface Cleanup
- + Wet Lay for Time Saving Installation
- + Rapid Cure to High Strength Water Proof Bond
- + Use Over Broad Variety of Non-Porous & Porous Substrates
- + Non Hazardous per OSHA Reg. 29CFR 1910.1200
- + Bis-Phenol A (BPA) Free
- + Plasticizer Migration Resistant
- + GREENGUARD certified for low VOC Emissions
- + Qualifies for LEED credits, meeting California CHPS 01350 & SCAQMD Rule 1168 Requirements
- + Anti-Microbial Protected
- + Saves Money, Time, and Material Waste

Acous-Tec™
TECHNOLOGY

Sound Deadening Flooring Adhesive

- + Saves You Time & Money
- + Is Safe For You & The Environment
- + Exceeds Major Building Code Sound Requirements

WFTaylor.com | 1-800-397-GLUE

Main Street, Continued

Porcelain Tile

Large open areas and lobbies seem to favor large-format tile designs. Slip resistant finishes allow for a dressed-up, welcoming look with exceptional material durability



Crossville – The Wood Impressions collection is a style-minded alternative to real wood. This collection is suitable for residential or commercial applications and is virtually maintenance free. A variety of plank sizes adds to the design versatility.

Daltile – Florentine offers the elegance of marble and stone, but with the durability and low-maintenance of ceramic tile. This is a timeless style that captures the unique tones of marble and stone with a color palette of crisp whites, neutral tans and fresh grays.

Resilient Sheet

Sheet vinyl in heterogeneous and homogeneous constructions is another solution product. When health care applications require a sterile environment, homogeneous sheet is the go-to product. There are two stand-out options in this category:

Mannington – BioSpec MD – a homogeneous sheet flooring product with MCare anti-microbial. This inhibits a wide range of bacteria and mold growth. BioSpec MD features Quantum



Guard HP, a patented urethane wear layer with aluminum oxide for exceptional durability.

Armstrong – Medintech sheet vinyl – a high-performance homogeneous sheet product available in multiple colors and backed by 25 years of performance. This product was designed for use in sterile and aseptic areas within medical environments.

Resilient Tile

Congoleum – DuraPlank II and DuraCeramic offer wood plank and ceramic good looks, well suited to multi-family living projects. Especially suited to kitchens and baths, both styles offer Scotchgard protector for cleanability and Silver particles for natural antibacterial protection.

Flexco – FLEXCO contract solid vinyl tile features homogenous color that extends through the entire tile thickness. Minor scuffs are avoided so FLEXCO solid vinyl tile stays looking cleaner for a longer period of time.

Roppe – Their vinyl tiles are specially made to be anti-microbial and anti-fungal, bringing to the commercial market flooring products that create a cleaner, safer environment, resistant to staining, mildew and bacteria. No waxing or polishing is required.

In summary, be sure to do your due diligence to become an informed flooring advisor to the commercial marketplace. Recommending the right product for each project is critical. You also have a responsibility to use the manufacturer’s recommended installation methods and adhesives, so that you do not invalidate warranties. Once you have completed the installation, be sure to provide your customer with the manufacturer’s maintenance instructions to ensure long-term product satisfaction. Understanding the commercial landscape before jumping in will make you a valuable asset to the businesses in your community. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Annette Callari is an interior design expert with over 20 years of residential and commercial design experience. An allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers and a Chair Holder of the Color Marketing Group International, she is the Southern California district manager for Mannington/Amtico.



The Floor Covering Industry Foundation — Providing a Foundation Beneath the Feet of Our Own

By Leah Gross-Harmon, Principal, Story Dept.

It's one of those things you probably don't know much about until you really need it. You're in mid-career, supporting a family, going about your daily routine, when suddenly you're injured and find yourself unable to work. Or your doctor delivers the kind of news to you or a family member that you thought only other people received.

It happened to Roy Davison, a veteran installer from just outside Kansas City, MO. Davison was diagnosed in 2009 with muscular dystrophy, affecting his arms, legs, shoulders, and hips. At the time, Davison had no problem sitting and standing hundreds of times a day or slinging a 100-pound roller over his shoulder. But by 2012, he couldn't climb out of a chair and had trouble lifting his morning cup of coffee.

Disability payments helped, but without the ability to run his business, Davison's income ceased and his family's savings dwindled. His condition required expensive tests and home medical equipment. A much-needed wheelchair-accessible van was out of the question.

It also happened to Valerie Adams from Bee Jay Carpet One Floor & Home in Lansdale, PA. In the summer of 2012, Adams' two-year-old son Garret began experiencing chronic back pain. She took him to a pediatrician for x-rays to rule out any muscular skeletal issues, but within 24 hours, Garret stopped walking, sitting, and eating.

An ambulance raced Garret to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where after four days of tests, doctors diagnosed him with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL). Adams had no choice but to quit her job to care for Garret — in addition to a new baby named Levi.

Though Adams had health insurance, which covered the family's co-pays, it did not make up for the sudden 50% drop in the family's income, nor cover all of the added expenses resulting from Garret's condition.

What these colleagues of ours have in common is that both Davison and Adams reached out to the Floor Covering Industry Foundation (FCIF).

Founded in 1980 by several prominent industry figures, led by the late Walter Guinan, the FCIF is dedicated to financially assisting floor covering industry professionals who experience medical/mental illness or severe disabilities or other life-altering hardships. These philanthropic efforts are administered with compassion, confidentiality and preservation of dignity for the individuals concerned. The

goal is to keep unexpected setbacks from turning into permanent roadblocks.

The Foundation's criteria for grants are medical/mental illness or disabilities resulting in financial need. Grants are awarded on the basis of need for such expenses as medical care, medications, medical supplies and other living expenses. Grants may be given for a specific medical procedure or for ongoing therapy. No loans are given.

Since the Foundation depends on charitable contributions from industry employees, companies, manufacturers and industry associations, the amount of assistance that can be provided, as well as the number of beneficiaries who can be helped, is determined by the availability of funds. And thanks to the World Floor Covering Association, all of the administrative functions for FCIF are taken care of allowing 100% of the contributions made to the Foundation to go to assisting applicants.

Any applicant or immediate family member, who has derived their primary income from employment in the floor covering industry for at least five years, may qualify for assistance. The applicant or immediate family member must be in extreme financial need — with other sources such as family assistance, medical insurance and disability insurance depleted.

Since its founding, the FCIF has granted more than \$3 million to help those in need. Beneficiaries include retailers, installers, retail salespeople, distributor personnel, mill employees and executives. Financial help is viewed as an opportunity to say, "we care" to those in our industry.

"I'm not typically comfortable reaching out for help," Davison said. "I've always been the provider; it's always been my job to take care of everything. Plus I've always been my own boss. But I had to face the reality that I couldn't do this by myself."

"The FCIF allowed me to stay focused on taking care of my family while not working instead of worrying how I would pay our bills and mortgage," said Adams. "I honestly don't know what we would have done without the FCIF. It's scary to think what could have happened had we not received help."

If you or someone you know in our industry has suffered a medical setback and is experiencing serious financial hardship — or if you'd like to help put a foundation beneath the feet of industry families experiencing life-altering adversities, then please visit fcif.org. ■



Industry Seeing Year-Over-Year Growth LVT Category Leads With Sales Expansion

By Jeff Golden, Editor

Knowledge and implementation of new ideas to keep your business on the cutting edge are vital to building a solid specialty flooring operation. The hottest product segment, across the United States and Canada, according to the just-completed WFCMA Members Market Trends Study, is luxury vinyl tile and it is leading the uptick in sales for both the residential and commercial segments.

Over 500 dealers participated in this survey throughout the year from across the United States and Canada. Their blind responses to our survey questions help create a roadmap to you, the flooring dealer, for success. Our participants range from small communities up to large mega-cities.

The panel sees the greatest opportunities in the industry by selling fashion and design instead of just price. Sell quality and certified installers instead of price. Pent-up demand is there as consumers have waited for the economy to improve before making flooring purchases.

The Internet is viewed differently by the panel: as an opportunity to build growth through search engine marketing, social media or as a competitor to the survival of the brick and mortar stores. As one retailer said, "Our past customers are old or dead. There is a new breed coming and I don't think they purchase like their parents. The Millennials are a different breed. Finding a way to stay relevant with them will be critical."

Customers are willing to pay more to a reputable dealer with an updated showroom and great service, said another panelist. "Loyalty among customers is declining and finding ways to make shopping and purchasing products easier for the younger customer base will yield results."

Others commented about the challenges created by the mammoth home centers and the specialists like Lumber Liquidators that are able to garner competitive advantages because of their size. And, the move to carpet in bedrooms only and hard surface everywhere else.

The Residential Market

The Big Picture Look: Year-over-year residential sales in 2013 were

Editor's Note: The World Floor Covering Association and Premier Flooring Retailer have partnered with BOWE Company, Inc. to deliver the most in-depth market research available in the floor covering industry. The research has been conducted at quarterly intervals throughout the year to provide an accurate analysis of the data.

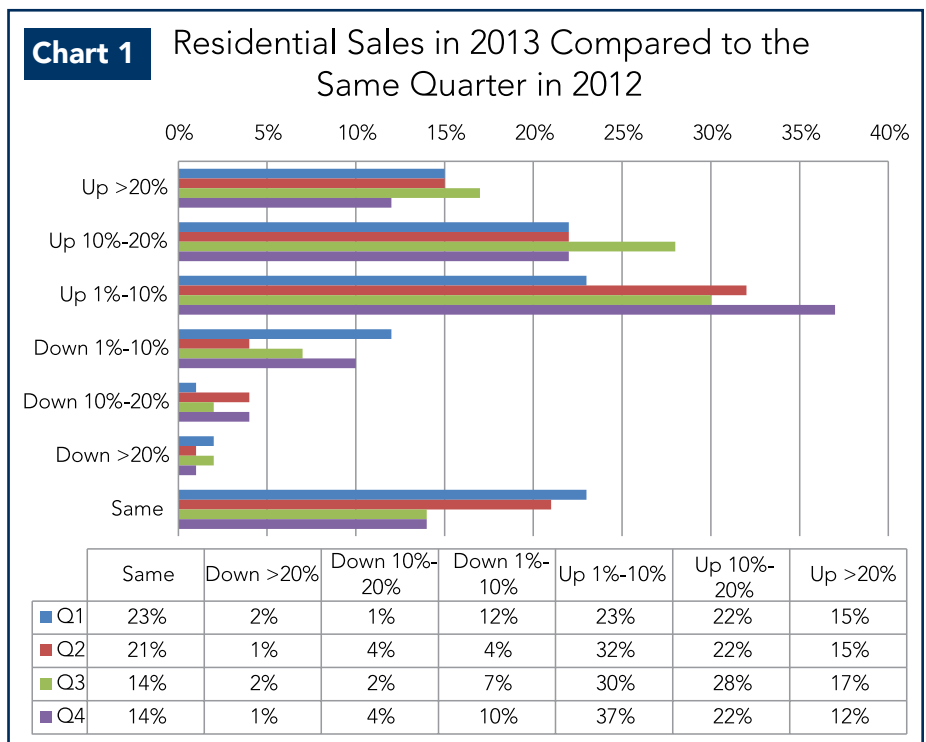
dramatically up over the same period in 2012. The growth ranged from 62% of respondents saying business was up in Q1 to 71% in Q4 with a spike of growth in Q3 from 75% of the survey group.

Of the respondents (9-15%) reporting a business decline, a closer look reveals that most had a small (1-10%) drop with fewer having business losses from 10-20% and just over 1% with business curtailments of over 20%. Less than 3% reported business reductions of between 10-20%, while 8% saw a decline in sales between 1-10%.

Q3 was the strongest for the residential segment with 17% tallying an increase in sales of over 20% compared to the same period in 2012. (See Chart 1 below)

The Commercial Market

Business in 2013 was up for 61-65% of survey respondents compared to the same quarter in 2012.



Continued

Four years in development.
So powerful it's never been attempted before.
Solves your biggest marketing challenge.

And now it ~~can be~~ unleashed.
has been



What exactly have we unleashed? A unique program designed to provide the competitive advantage you've always needed over the big box stores. The My Flooring Warranty® Program is the customer retention and retailer brand-building marketing strategy that includes five unique components:

- Auto-delivery of and customer access to the original manufacturer's warranty
- A one-year spot & spill service program that complements the original manufacturer's warranty
- A customer shopping experience feedback survey
- An annual "Happy Anniversary" message regarding their past flooring purchase
- Scheduled cleaning reminder cues based on each individual manufacturer's requirements

This is the edge you've been waiting for. Fully automated, the My Flooring Warranty® Program delivers automatically-timed, high-quality, branded e-mail reminders that keep your store in front of your customer.

ENDORSED BY



"Every successful dealer knows that maintaining a relationship with current customers is the key to building a growing and profitable business. The My Flooring Warranty® Program's cutting-edge technology creates those critical touch points that will ensure repeat business and customer referrals."

Scott Humphrey, CEO, World Floor Covering Association

enroll today at **MYFLOORINGWARRANTY.COM/WFCA**

WFCA members are enrolled in Tier One for free their first year, a \$695 value

Industry Seeing Growth, Continued

The segment was stable for between 20-26% and the commercial segment was down for between 10-15% of the panel. Most (nearly 8% of respondents) experienced a minor dip between 1-10%. Another 3% saw the commercial segment decline between 11-20% and 2% reported a drop of over 20%.

Q4 was the strongest for commercial business with 13% of the panel reporting over 20% growth compared to the same period in 2012. (See Chart 2)

The Builder Business

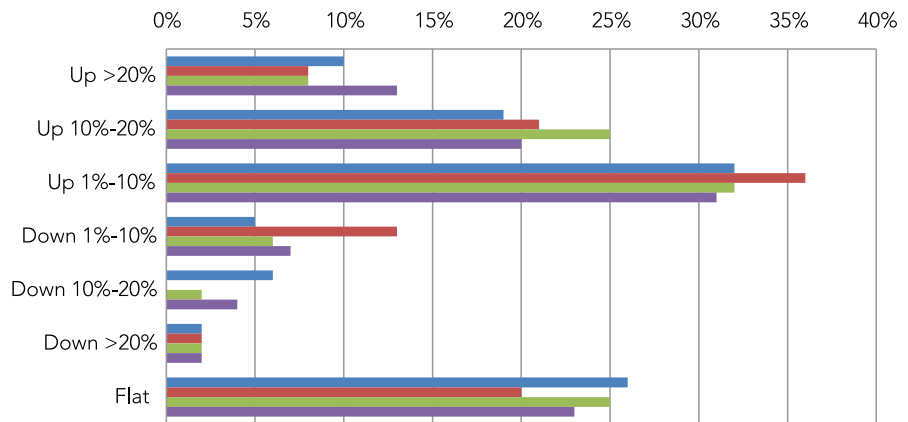
Q3 was best for the segment with 54% experiencing growth in their builder business. Fourteen-percent saw growth over 20% with another 22% up between 11-20%, and 18% seeing increases of between 1-10%.

The segment trails both the residential and commercial business as just over 40% see the category as producing the same level of business as 2012. Gains were seen by nearly half of the respondents (48%). Of those seeing a decline, most saw a downturn between 1-10%.

Product Category with Greatest Sales Volume Growth

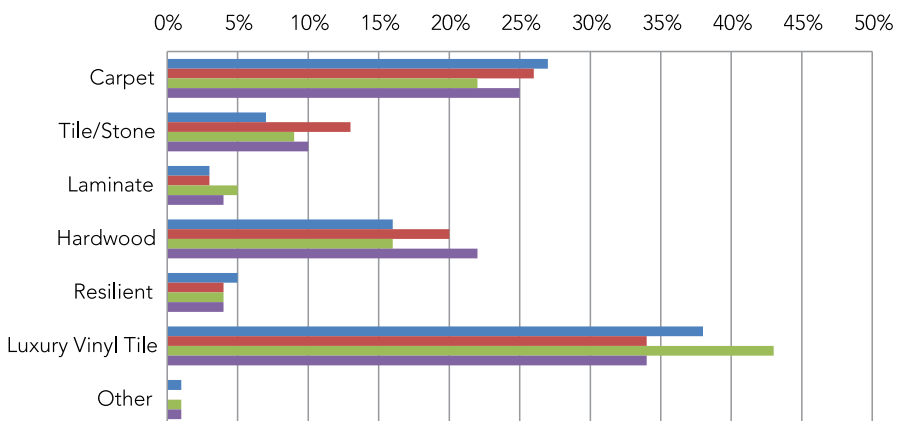
Luxury vinyl tile (LVT) was the leading product category with the greatest sales volume growth consistently throughout 2013. Our panelists reported LVT was the sales volume growth leader in all quarters from a low of 34% in both Q2 and Q4 to an enormous 43% in Q3. The carpet segment placed second with 22-27%, followed by hardwood, tile/stone, resilient and laminate. (See Chart 3)

Chart 2 Commercial Sales in 2013 Compared to the Same Quarter in 2012



	Flat	Down >20%	Down 10%-20%	Down 1%-10%	Up 1%-10%	Up 10%-20%	Up >20%
Q1	26%	2%	6%	5%	32%	19%	10%
Q2	20%	2%	0%	13%	36%	21%	8%
Q3	25%	2%	2%	6%	32%	25%	8%
Q4	23%	2%	4%	7%	31%	20%	13%

Chart 3 Product Category Producing the Greatest Sales Volume Growth



	Other	Luxury Vinyl Tile	Resilient	Hardwood	Laminate	Tile/Stone	Carpet
Q1	1%	38%	5%	16%	3%	7%	27%
Q2	0%	34%	4%	20%	3%	13%	26%
Q3	1%	43%	4%	16%	5%	9%	22%
Q4	1%	34%	4%	22%	4%	10%	25%

Product Category with Slowest Sales Volume Growth

Laminate flooring was the product category producing the slowest sales volume growth in all quarters of 2013 with a range of 47% in Q1 and then growing in Q2 to 59% before dropping to 49% in Q3 and 46% in Q4. Tile/Stone was next beginning at 17% in Q1 and then lowering to 13% in Q4. The resilient segment softened in Q3 and Q4 with reduced sales, according to 21% of respondents.

The hottest product segment, across the United States and Canada, according to the just-completed WFCMA Members Market Trends Study, is luxury vinyl tile...

Increase in Sales Same Quarter from Previous Year

Luxury vinyl tile (73-83%) was the consistent product sales leader throughout all quarters of 2013 compared to the same quarter in 2012. Next was carpet (57-73%), followed by hardwood (45-62%), tile/stone (43-48%), resilient (26-35%), and laminate (16-24%).

Our panelists reported no change in 2013 sales from the same quarter in 2012 most in the resilient category (43-48%), followed by tile/stone (34-44%), hardwood (30-40%), laminate (25-35%), carpet (21-29%) and luxury vinyl tile (13-21%).

The laminate category (45-51%) experienced decreased sales from the same quarter in 2012 most, according to respondents. The resilient category was next at 19-31%; followed by tile/stone, 12-23%; hardwood, 8-18%; carpet, 6-14%; and luxury vinyl tile, 4-6%.

Thirty-three percent of the survey group planned to expand their advertising programs in Q1 2014, while 60% continued with their same programs. Just 5% looked to decrease their marketing plans and only 2% did not do advertising.

According to the panel, just 48% of their customers look for products that are environmentally friendly with the interest level continuing to be consistent throughout 2013. And by an overwhelming margin, most customers (73-82%) are unwilling to pay a premium for the products. ■



FINDING YOUR WAY

...discovering the truth about you

From an early age, each of us is *on a quest to discover who we are* and what we are born to do. You were born for greatness, possessing incredible talents and amazing gifts that are not only to be identified, but also used to serve others.

The question is, *"How do you discover the truth about Y-O-U?"*

FINDING YOUR WAY is an engaging story about Mark Johnson, a college senior, who is struggling to discover the truth about himself in the middle of conflicting voices each attempting to shape his future. In his story you will discover a proven process designed to help you discover the truth about **YOU** so you can *live the life you are meant to live*.

Authors, Dan Webster & Randy Gravitt offer multiple services to help **leaders** clarify their contribution, **teams** be more productive, and **parents** as they assist their children to find their way.

To purchase a copy of **FINDING YOUR WAY**, or to contact the authors, visit www.randygravitt.com.



Momentum in the Mundane Middle

By Randy Gravitt, President, i2i Leadership

Momentum, also known as *Big Mo*, is defined as the driving force gained by the development of a process or course of action. How would you like to be the kind of leader whose results are described as a *driving force*?

In baseball, momentum is said to be only as good as your next day's starting pitcher. In football, *Big Mo* delivers a turnover or a great play. Businesses look for momentum based on the economic climate. Churches, schools, and fitness centers have certain times of the year when *Mo* shows up.

Want in on a little secret? Momentum is not that random; it is more available than you might think. In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins likens momentum to a flywheel. He says it like this: "In building greatness, there is no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Rather, the process resembles relentlessly pushing a giant heavy flywheel in one direction, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough, and beyond."

Did you get that? The power of a flywheel comes more from consistency than from a single spectacular act. If you want to see your influence go to driving force levels, you must find a flywheel to push and stay the course.

Growing up, I had a front row seat to a *flywheel pusher*. He was my dad. In 1960, long before I even came along, he left a job working in the flooring industry, where he made \$1.05 per hour. Dad pursued an opportunity to work for Georgia Power making \$1.71 per hour. Talk about moving up in the world!

He was hired as a helper for the line crew, digging holes for power poles, by hand, with a set of post-hole diggers — no augers or heavy equipment to get the job done. It was hard manual labor and my dad loved it.

Fast forward 35 years to 1995...my dad's retirement party. I remember gathering in an office building in Chatsworth, GA, to celebrate my pop's rise through the ranks to become Georgia Power's northwest Georgia area manager. On that day, tears were shed, stories were told, and a lot of reminiscing took place about a man who had left a legacy.

Looking back, it was not the first day, nor the last, that determined my dad's greatness. Neither of those days earned him the respect of his family and friends, or the honor of having a substation named after him. No, it was all the mundane days in between relentlessly pushing a giant heavy flywheel in one

direction, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough, and beyond.

Everyone loves a good start. Think about it. No one can sleep on the eve of the first day of school. Toe the line for the start of a race and the excitement drips. The first tee of a golf course always brings promise.

The same is true for endings. The finish line of a marathon is one of the most satisfying places on the planet. Graduation day never arrives soon enough. The last five minutes of a good movie can be riveting.

But oh how we dread the in-between times. Middles are made up of mostly ordinary stuff, like average days, unmemorable moments, and unexciting monotony. No one loses sleep or experiences anticipation over the stuff in the middle. Just look up *mundane* in a dictionary and, rather than keeping you awake, the definition might actually send you to nap time. It means lacking interest or excitement; dull.

If you want to be a great leader, let me remind you that the mundane middle matters. Legacies are built by those who consistently show up, recognizing there are no average days, only opportunities to be appreciated. Legacies are built in the *mundane middle*.

Perhaps you will start something new today or a completion (finish) is on your horizon. True or not, today is all you have. So, if mundane middle stuff is on your schedule, please give it your very best focus. A legacy is on the line.

Consistency without becoming bored or calloused can be a challenge, but greatness is not about a monumental moment, a miracle idea, or a special time of the year. It is about reliable integrity.

As you lead, I encourage you to be true to who you are, the ones you love, and the customers you serve. And if you embrace the mundane middle, don't be surprised if *Big Mo* makes you a driving force too! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randy Gravitt spends his time reminding influencers that *Leadership Begins at Home*. For information on how he can serve you and your company, email him at randy@randygravitt.com. You can read more of Randy's thoughts on leadership by visiting randygravitt.com.



Criminal Background Checks: Damned If You Do, Damned If You Don't

By Jeffrey King, General Counsel for the WFCMA

(Part 1)

Employers often face a Hobson's choice: Run a background check on employee candidates and risk a potential discrimination lawsuit by the candidate or government agencies; or forego such a background check and risk exposing the company to potential liability for negligent hiring.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recently determined that using criminal background checks often result in racial disparity in hiring in violation of the civil rights laws. As a result, the EEOC issued extensive Guidelines cautioning employers that any criminal background checks or questions about criminal history should be related to the position to be filled and not automatically used for every position to be filled.

The recent EEOC Guidelines are not the only limitations on using background checks. The federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) imposes significant restrictions on obtaining and using criminal background and other information on employment applicants. Moreover, a growing number of states prohibit the uniform use of criminal background checks on all potential employees.

Not all criminal background checks, however, are prohibited. Rather, the concern is using background checks on all employee candidates regardless of the job and instituting hiring policies that automatically reject all applicants who have been convicted of a crime.

Employers need to review their hiring procedures to ensure they do not violate federal and local laws, but also ensures their employment policies take appropriate precautions in hiring personnel to avoid a claim of negligent hiring.

To understand the do's and don'ts of criminal background checks, a brief overview of the potential risks of negligent hiring, the use of background checks and the recent EEOC's Guidelines is provided in Part I. In the next issue, Part II will address the limits imposed under the FCRA and a brief discussion of the growing state restrictions on the use of criminal background checks, followed by some suggested precautions all employers should take.

Negligent Hiring

Negligent hiring is a claim made by a party injured by a company's employee while the employee is on the job. The injured party sues the employer based on the theory that the employer knew or should have known about the employee's background that indicated a dangerous or untrustworthy character. All 50 states recognize a claim of negligent hiring.

In order to claim negligent hiring successfully, the injured person must show the employee had dangerous tendencies, which should have been apparent if the employer had exercised reasonable care in screening the applicant, and the employer placed the employee in a position where others could be injured.



Continued

Background Checks, Continued

For example, hiring a delivery truck driver with multiple drunk driving convictions or a history of blackouts will likely give rise to a negligent hiring claim by anyone injured if the employee has an accident while on a delivery run. Similarly, sending an employee recently convicted of robbery and assault into a customer's home to measure an installation job or to install flooring will expose the flooring dealer to liability if the employee assaults the homeowner.

Negligent hiring cases often result in substantial liability. Based on available statistics, employers lose approximately 60% of negligent hiring cases, with average verdicts of \$3 million. The average out-of-court settlement is \$500,000, plus attorney fees. To avoid potential liability, an employer needs to identify whether an employee creates a risk based on the employee's duties. Pre-employment background checks, employee drug testing, and employment physical exams often create a defense to negligent hiring claims. What precautions need to be taken will depend on the employee's duties and the potential risks he or she poses to others if hired.

Background Checks

Background checks are a very common employment practice. These may be as simple as verifying past employment and education or contacting references. Often job applications require information on an applicant's background and many ask for information on all prior arrests and convictions for a crime.

Not every request for or check on past criminal activity is improper. In fact, federal and state laws require that background checks be conducted for certain jobs and, depending on the job, may require an extensive investigation for a security clearance. For example, a number of states mandate criminal background checks on utility workers that come in contact with the public.

The issue is the indiscriminate or universal use of criminal background checks. The EEOC Guidelines allow criminal background checks only if it can be shown to relate to the job under consideration. Accordingly, every employer needs to understand the limits imposed by the EEOC on using criminal background checks.

Title VII and the EEOC

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in employment based upon an individual's race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces Title VII and promulgates

regulations, issues guidelines and files lawsuits to implement Title VII. Recently the EEOC determined that using criminal background checks often result in racial disparity in hiring. The EEOC found statistical disparities in the hiring rates of white and non-white applicants for companies that ran criminal background checks. As a result, the EEOC issued extensive Guidelines cautioning employers that any criminal background checks or questions about criminal history should be related to the position to be filled.

Under the Guidelines, the most important considerations are: (1) The nature and gravity of the offense; (2) the time that has lapsed since the offense; and (3) the nature of the job and whether a criminal conviction relates to the job. The EEOC Guidelines also provide suggested best practices when considering criminal record information when making employment decisions that include the following:

1. Any policies or practices that automatically exclude people from employment based on any criminal record should be eliminated.
2. A narrowly tailored written policy and procedure for screening applicants and employees for criminal conduct should be developed. The policy should include:
 - a. Identifying job requirements and the circumstances under which the jobs are performed;
 - b. Determining the specific offenses that may demonstrate that an applicant is unfit for each job;
 - c. Determining the duration of exclusions for criminal conduct based on all available evidence;
 - d. Undertaking an individualized assessment of whether the criminal record of each applicant impacts his or her fitness for a particular position;
 - e. Establishing a record of the justification for the policy and procedures; and
 - f. Keeping a record of consultations and research considered in crafting the policy and procedures.
3. Managers, hiring officials, and decision-makers should be trained on how to implement the policy and procedures consistent with Title VII.
4. Questions about criminal records should be limited to inquiries of criminal conviction that relate to the position and business necessity.
5. Information about applicants and employees criminal records should be kept confidential and only used for the purpose for which it was intended.

Following the suggested practices will minimize the risk of being found to have violated Title VII, but are not required. So long as an employer can show that it does not automatically eliminate every applicant with a criminal record and its criminal background checks are limited to the job requirements, it is likely to be in compliance with the EEOC Guidelines.

For example, doing a full criminal background check on a warehouse worker will rarely ever be justified since the employee will have little contact with the public. On the other hand, checking just for crimes of theft if such an employee has unsupervised access to the warehouse likely will be acceptable under the EEOC Guidelines. Similarly, a broader criminal background check on a salesperson that will go to a customer's home is likely to be valid.

As will be explained in Part II, many states and local governments have embraced the EEOC's determination that automatic use of the criminal background checks often result

in racial disparity in hiring. In addition, the limits imposed on using criminal background checks under the FCRA will be addressed. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeffrey King has more than 35 years' experience in complex litigation with a focus on contracts, employment, construction, antitrust, intellectual property and health care. He serves as general counsel for WFCA and other trade associations, and is a LEED Accredited Professional. For more information, contact him at (561) 278-0035 or jeffw@jkingesq.com. The information contained is abridged from legislation, court decisions, and administrative rulings and should not be construed as legal advice or opinion, and is not a substitute for the advice of counsel.



My Place® WFCA

Unique Concepts For Our Independent Retailers



My Place® Showroom Design Services

Optimizing your customer's experience; from marketing to merchandising!

My Place® offers a custom, full service, design/marketing & merchandising program that is scalable to your vision, maximizes positive customer experience and can work within your specific budget. Improve your sales and branding!

Service Overview:

- Pre-planning research to establish customer service expectations and opportunities.
- Conduct detailed on-site* / operational evaluation and management interviews.
- Set priorities, using existing conditions to plan desired future outcomes.
- Establish final design / merchandising environment for showroom / warehouse, recommend lighting* options, and product, promotional and operational signage.
- Provide* installation supervision and follow-up.

For more information call:

Darin Hayes: (916) 770-7728
or email: darin@myplaceservices.com

This is an exclusive program for members of the WFCA.

*On-site travel is optional within the member service packages available.

New Product Showcase



Mannington

Flooring: Walnut and Pacaya
Mesquite Hardwood Collection
Phone: 800.FLOOR US
Web: www.mannington.com

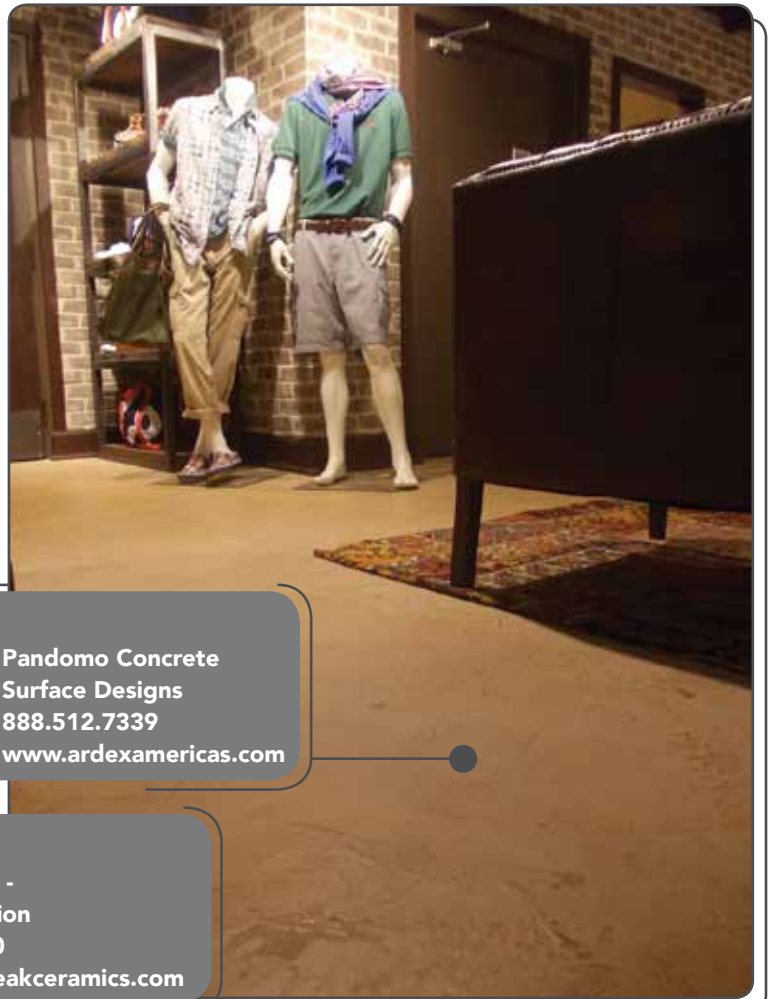
Emser Tile

Flooring: Europa Collection -
Porcelain Tile
Phone: 323.650.2000
Web: www.emser.com



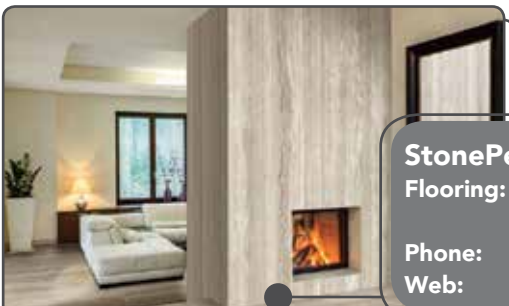
Crossville

Flooring: Speakeasy Porcelain
Tile Collection
Phone: 931.484.2110
Web: www.crossvilleinc.com



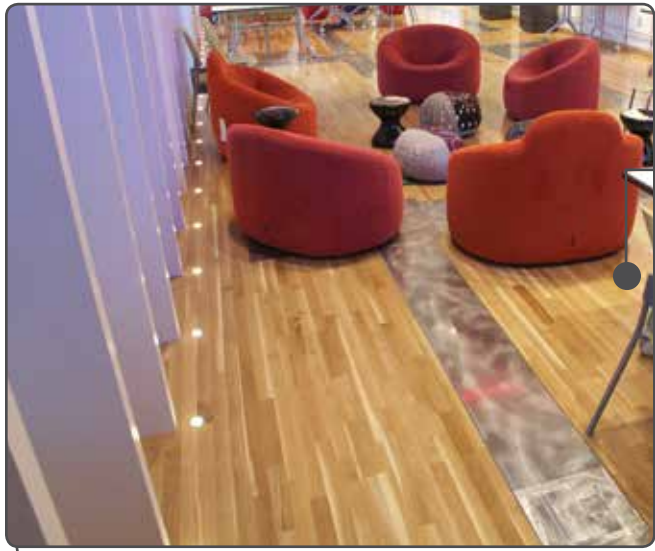
Ardex

Flooring: Pandomo Concrete
Surface Designs
Phone: 888.512.7339
Web: www.ardexamericas.com



StonePeak

Flooring: Porcelain Tile -
Plane Collection
Phone: 312.506.2800
Web: www.stonepeakceramics.com



Stoehr Flooring

Flooring: American made Hardwood Flooring
 Phone: 877.525.4632
 Web: www.stoehrflooring.com



Harris Wood

Flooring: Prefinished Engineered Hardwood - Aspen Collection
 Phone: 561.994.5550
 Web: www.harriswoodfloors.com

Tarkett

Flooring: SPECIFI Easy Living Collection
 Phone: 800.367.8275
 Web: www.tarketta.com



South Mountain

Flooring: Washington Oak Series Engineered and Solid Hardwood
 Phone: 516.487.3510
 Web: www.southmountainflooring.com



Mohawk

Flooring: EverStrand Soft Appeal PET Carpets
 Web: www.MohawkFlooring.com

Continued



US Floors

Flooring: Engineered Locking Strand
Bamboo - Muse Collection

Phone: 800.404.2675

Web: www.usfloorsllc.com



**Engineered Floors and
Dream Weaver Carpet**

Display: PureSoft Cashmere
Space Saver Display

Phone: 866.706.9745

Web: www.DWCarpets.com

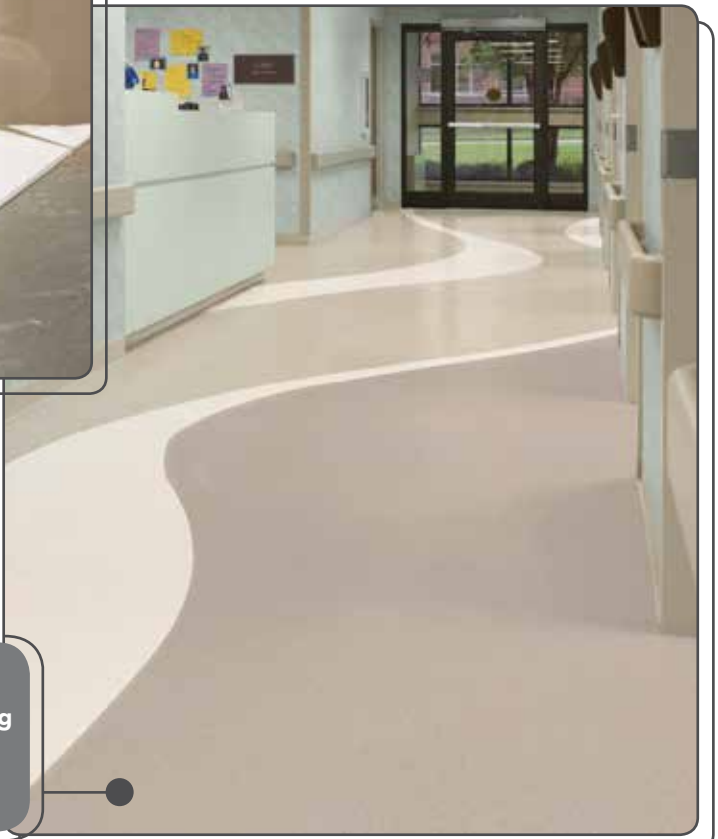


Schönox

Patch: Schonox AST Smoothing/
Patching Compound

Phone: 256.246.0345

Web: www.hpsubfloors.com



Johnsonite

Flooring: Arcade Rubber Sheet Flooring

Phone: 800.367.8275

Web: www.tarketta.com

Bona

Adhesives: Silane Based Wood Adhesives
Phone: 877.289.2662
Web: www.bona.com



Mapei

Grout: Next Gen Flexcolor CQ Grout
Phone: 800.426.2734
Web: www.mapei.com

Bullet Tools

Install: EZ Tile System
Phone: 800.406.8998
Web: www.bullettools.com



Bostik

Adhesives: Axios Tri-Linking Polymer Technology Hardwood Adhesives
Phone: 414.774.2250
Web: www.bostik-US.com

Custom Building Products

Primer: Multi-Surface Bonding Primer
Phone: 562.598.8808
Web: www.custombuildingproducts.com



IVC US

Flooring: Balterio Laminate
Phone: 706.529.2600
Web: www.ivcgroup.us



Technology is Changing - Are You Keeping Up?

By Pamela Bowe, Director, Floor Covering Business to Business Association

Today's flooring retailer is competing with their fellow retailers, big box entities and internet retailers. The geography has expanded. Competition is everywhere. The dividing line between in-store and online is no longer clear. Consumers now begin their research online for flooring.

They search, compare, shop across brands and use room scenes to expand their choices, before they step foot through your door. Once they do come in they are informed and have a good idea of what they want.

They may also believe they can get it anywhere. According to Associated Press close to 25% of holiday sales in 2013 were completed online. Comparatively, retail sales at brick-and-mortar operations rose just 2.5%, while store visits declined 15% in the same period.

What does this mean for you? It's clear consumers are buying once again. What has changed is how they buy and what their expectations are. Technology is changing the way we do business. Are you using software to run your business? Are you using flooring software delivering the latest technology? Are you as well equipped as your customer?

You can create a new experience for customers, and increase the productivity and effectiveness of employees, by adopting mobile technologies beyond smartphone shopping. For example, store employees can be equipped with tablets that have point-of-sale (POS) capabilities.

Consider what is on the horizon. Members of fcB2B (Floor Covering Business to Business) are using new technologies that allow your sales staff to instantly check stock in your warehouse, at your distributors or manufacturer — all while on the showroom floor using POS technology.

Today's systems allow you to electronically send/receive a purchase order, order acknowledgement, invoice and more using technology. Processing documents electronically has been proven to save time and money. Ask anyone using fcB2B technology and they will tell you that they will never go back to paper. Add to that the sustainability of digital vs. print and learn about this great advantage. We could not do this without software and the internet.

Now is the time to look further into web-based services to include stock check and material reservation. This requires a new toolset to success. The new technologies now provide the elements for you to prosper and grow in 2014. A web service puts this powerful tool into the hands of your salespeople and



B2B: What is it?

B2B is simply the sending and receiving of information using computer technology.

Its efficiency has made it a condition of doing business in dozens of industries, including retail, grocery, warehousing, transportation (rail, ship, and trucking), health care, education, real estate, and government. Any standard business document that one company would exchange with another (such as a purchase order, invoice, shipping schedule, inventory inquiry, and claim submission) can be exchanged between two parties, or trading partners, as long as both have made the preparations.

B2B cannot be activated with a flip of the switch or in a moment's notice. Many procedures must be carried out in preparation for exchanging data with a trading partner.

The use of B2B is not limited by differences in companies or communication methods. Instead, B2B bridges the information gap that exists between companies using different computer systems.

Continued

Integrate Automate Expand

your flooring business



Systems for Success

www.rfms.com

**Goodbye paper.
Hello speed and accuracy.**

If you are seeking a way to move your business to the next level, look no further. RFMS has the necessary tools to streamline the way you run your flooring business.

1-800-701-RFMS



MEASURE

www.measureflooring.com

You can **create a new experience** for customers, and **increase the productivity and effectiveness** of employees, by **adopting mobile technologies** beyond smartphone shopping.

Technology is Changing, Continued

gives you more opportunity to prove to your customer why they should buy from you! The dividends are immediate!

Want to learn more about FCB2B? Check out our brand new video at www.fcb2b.org/videos/.

The video is packed with everything you need to learn about this new technology and the steps required to implement into your store's operation.

Details about today's web-based services, including stock check and product reservation are also highlighted.

For more information, contact the Floor Covering Business to Business Association, pbowe@fcb2b.org. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pamela Bowe MBA has served as executive director of fcb2B, the Floor Covering Business to Business Association since 2008. fcb2B is a 501(c)(6) non-profit community of leaders working together on the development of B2B technology designed to benefit all entities in the flooring industry. A recognized industry authority on emerging technology, she combines real world experience in the flooring industry with a thorough understanding of technology and its practical applications. Her 30 years of experience include digital marketing, finance, strategic planning and online development of professional grade websites and multi-national networks.



COMPLETE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

"You can't afford NOT to have it."

I love my QFloors.

"I wouldn't be in business today without QFloors."

Find out why customers say switching to QFloors flooring software was the best thing they've ever done for their business & their bottom line.

"QFloors saved my business."

QFLOORS SOFTWARE
RAISE PROFITS • LOWER STRESS

(866) 563-0140

www.qfloors.com • sales@qfloors.com

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

Are Mills or Media Partners making your marketing decisions?

If you're handing your marketing to others to "just do it for me",
you're making a mistake.

Our only interest is to make you money and get you the largest ROI on your marketing dollars. Let us share our best ideas specifically tailored for your business.

Get a **FREE** outside perspective on your marketing at no cost or obligation.

Call **800-528-5055** or email
Josh@unlockyourbiz.com

UNLOCK 
YOUR BIZ

WFCA Website & Digital Marketing Case Study: First Steps

By Tony King and Kathryn Baird, Partners, Torus Marketing

Torus Marketing has begun the initial phases of the WFCA Website and Digital Marketing Case Study. A suitable candidate from a pool of WFCA members has been chosen. The candidate has multiple locations and business divisions, a widely varied target audience from builder to homeowner to the architect and design community.

The first step in any enterprise of this magnitude is a needs assessment. Torus Marketing is currently conducting an analysis of existing assets and outlets, plus a brand and market review. This will provide Torus with a complete understanding of how the candidate fits into their market and how to optimize communications across mediums to the various key target audiences.

The fundamental guiding principle underlying all of the work is the commitment to creating a consistent and positive consumer experience across every touch point. Today, the digital touch points represent the crucial cross road of consideration and evaluation for any audience.

The key to successfully implementing a digital marketing strategy is in knowing the audience: consumer, designer, or builder; and what is critical to achieving quality to them. Understanding how the segments interact with digital touch points is fundamental to crafting messaging and effectively utilizing the various digital communications outlets. This will influence not only the message, but the medium. Effectively engaging the consumer at these touch points will drive local traffic to the store.

As part of this holistic effort, Torus Marketing will make recommendations on sales and marketing materials, as well as branding communication to help the candidate most effectively convey value to the targeted audience. The refinements that take place in this stage will directly impact how and what is communicated across traditional and digital marketing platforms, as we move forward to build out a new website and social media presence.

The initial tactical execution efforts will involve creating comps for the new look and feel, and the start of establishing a social media foundation, including building out and creating content for YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Google+. The needs assessment process will lay the groundwork for effective execution of e-mail marketing and re-targeting campaigns, as well.

In every issue of *Premier Flooring Retailer*, we will present a progress update of the study as it unfolds. Look for the case study series continuing in the May/June issue of *Premier Flooring Retailer*. Contact editor Jeff Golden for details at jeff@pfrmagazine.com. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tony King and Kathryn Baird are from Torus Marketing, a full-service marketing communications firm based in Sacramento, California, offering an extensive assortment of solutions for the WFCA. Torus Marketing offers expertise in providing guidance in creating relevant and engaging strategies that resonate with women consumers within the framework of the brand experience.





“You Don’t Have To Kiss A Bunch Of Frogs To Find Your Prince!”



Benchmarkinc: a recruiting service just for the flooring industry! Our team has held every position in the flooring industry, from warehouse to owner, so we know exactly what you are looking for in an employee!

We do all the work for you. We write and post job descriptions onto job boards. We source, prescreen and test candidates. We set up the interviews, check references and complete background checks, even present the offer. We are extremely effective in finding top candidates and our fees are flooring friendly!

Stop your royal search and put those frogs back in the pond! Today is the day to call Benchmarkinc!

Contact Kristy Sifford:
kristy@bmarkinc.com • 800.393.8515
www.bmarkinc.com








Ways to Beat the Big Box Stores

By Scott Humphrey, CEO, World Floor Covering Association

Differentiation...now that is a big word, especially for a southern boy like me. According to Merriam-Webster, it simply means, "The process of making someone or something different in some way: to see or state the difference or differences between two or more things." In my last article we took some time to discuss a few of the things the Big Box stores do well.

Remember the purpose was to identify their strengths and determine those things they do well that you can emulate. We briefly looked at three things that generate traffic and sales for the Big Box stores: hours of operation, variety of storewide product offerings, and consumer credit options. In this article, I want to discuss some of the key differences you can exploit to encourage consumers to shop your store over their local box store.

Variety of Flooring Options and Colors

Big Box stores are able to negotiate great buys from manufacturers because of quantity commitments on a select group of styles and often limited colors. The consumer who is truly in the market for flooring wants a more targeted shopping experience. They are not looking for a row of flooring next to an aisle of plumbing supplies.

They want variety, and they want options. I have yet to see a professional flooring dealer that did not provide more options for the consumer than their Big Box counterpart. But remember, all of those options can be a bit overwhelming. Make sure your showroom is set up in a logical manner. Find what works best for you and your customers, whether that is grouping products by style, color, fiber type, price point, etc. Always remember: the end goal for the consumer is a simplified shopping experience that ends in a confident purchase at a reasonable price.

Simply tout who you are and what makes you different from the shopping experience they will receive at the Big Boxes.

Experience/Professionalism/You

I recently changed wireless phone companies. Before making my decision, I went to my potential new company and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of making the change. I will never forget the professionalism and confidence of Jaunita, the sales lady I dealt with, but what I remember

most was the final thing she said to me before I left. She said, "Your current carrier will counter offer. They will want to keep you just like we would if you were looking at leaving us."

She then stated all of the reasons the change would be good, even though it would not necessarily be easy. She closed by



“A written testimonial on an advertisement can carry amazing weight, especially if you get it from the right consumer.”

saying, “Besides all of the other reasons you should change, your current carrier doesn’t have me!” – Now that might sound arrogant to some, but after the professional way she had dealt with me and the time she had taken to answer my every question, it made me confident in my decision. In the end, both companies were good, but both companies didn’t have Jaunita, and now Jaunita has my business.

Don’t be afraid to tout your years of experience. Another way to do this is by highlighting your successes. A great advertisement tag line might read: “Over 75 years of exceeding our customers’ expectations”. The 75 years could be the number of years your business has been open or the combined years of experience among your sales force.

Another powerful way to create confidence and win over shoppers is by using testimonials. A written testimonial on an advertisement can carry amazing weight, especially if you get it from the right consumer. How do you get testimonials? Ask for them from satisfied consumers. When you or your business receives a compliment, ask them to put it in writing. Now that is something you will rarely if ever see from the Big Box stores.

If you want to take testimonials to the next level, attach them to before and after pictures. This can easily be done on your website. What better way is there for your customers to see what you can do for them, than to see what you have done for others?

I recently made the decision to go to a chiropractor. In all honesty, I just wasn’t real sure if I believed it could make a difference. I visited several doctors before selecting the one I would go to. Ultimately, I made my decision because of a notebook displayed on a table in one of the offices. On the front it simply said, “Our satisfied customers.” Inside was letter after letter of patients who shared how their health and lives were better because of the services they received.

These were patients or customers if you will, who were just like me, sharing story after story of success. You should keep a notebook or professionally bound book of before and after visuals and testimonial letters in your showroom. While customers are waiting, hand them the book and encourage them to scan through it. It will create ideas and instill confidence.

After Sales Service

Even though the buying cycle can be every 5-7 years for soft surface and 15 years and up for hard surface, it is often what happens after the sale that creates more positive word-of-

mouth advertising for you. In reality, the experience and end result last much longer than the buying cycle.

The website, www.consumeraffairs.com has a section on one of the Big Box stores. One only has to read these reviews to see the weaknesses in their after sales service.

Here is a posted review from Wayne in Arizona: *“Unhappy with the process and results with respect to purchase and installation of carpet and vinyl. I am in AZ for a limited period. I believe that I made it clear that I required the vinyl and carpet installed by a certain date. Essentially, it appears to me that the zealous attempt by the sales staff to complete a sale did not consider my requirement for a completed job by a certain date. As a result, I have to hire someone to attend at the property to deal with the vinyl installation, and had to interrupt my painters, etc., and re-group 3 people to return to complete the details that are required.*

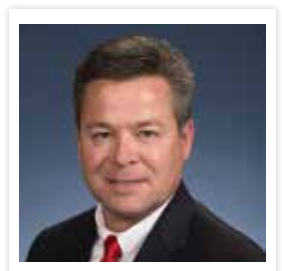
I did receive a telephone call from what seemed to be an installation call center. The woman I spoke with could use a little charm school training. Even after speaking with her, it was not clear what was being proposed. Again, this has been a case of, “We’ve got your money, now you can just wait for the work to be done at our convenience.”

Now that is advertising you can’t buy and they can’t afford. But it isn’t necessary to speak to what they don’t do. Consumers usually don’t come to you because of what others don’t do. Simply tout who you are and what makes you different from the shopping experience they will receive at the Big Boxes.

Now it’s your turn. Share with us what you are doing that is having success against the mega stores. Contact me at scott@pfrmag.com, and I will give you credit as we share your best practices with other professional flooring dealers. And remember, at the WFCA, we are always working to exceed your expectations! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After 43 years in the flooring industry, WFCA CEO Scott Humphrey has seen it all. His knowledge is extensive from his position as manager of Leadership Development and Training Services for the Shaw Learning Academy to helping Shaw Flooring Network members turn difficult situations into success stories.



What Can the Fosbury Flop Teach Us About Marketing?

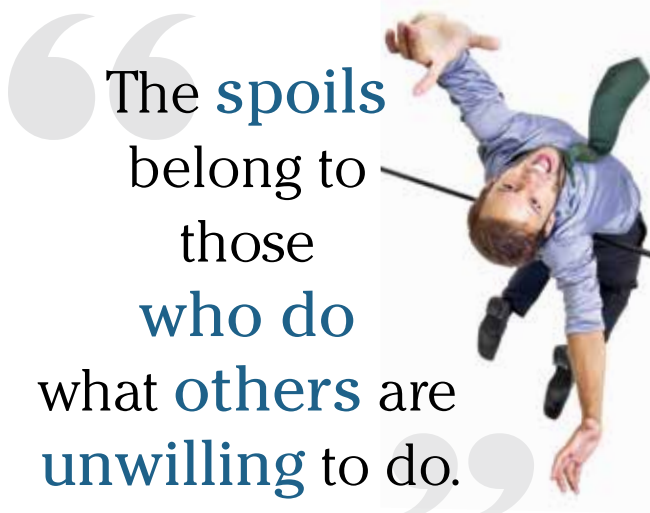
By Josh "The Fixer" McGinnis, Owner, Unlock Your Biz

A tall and gangly boy longed to be a great athlete. The only problem was his coach told him he was too tall for his chosen sport of high jumping. His love of science and math and persistence would eventually pay off and an entire sport would forever be changed by Dick Fosbury.

You see, up until Dick Fosbury began going over the high jump bar backwards, no one had tried it and judges would often deliberate on whether or not his technique was even legal in the sport. Fosbury, and his soon to be called jumping technique, The Fosbury Flop, would be mocked, laughed at, and even threatened. Winning the gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City was not enough as some criticized him for destroying an entire generation of high jumpers who would attempt to emulate him but would destroy their backs doing so.

Dick Fosbury flopped when everyone else was jumping. In business we should do the same. When everyone zigs, we should zag. Fosbury wasn't comparing himself to others and trying to jump better than them. He was his own comparison and history will forever remember him. What would have happened if he had given into fear or pressure? Well, he never would have won a gold medal and no one would know his name. And probably someone else would have been willing to innovate and jump a little different to win the gold.

But most business owners are creatures of habit. We would rather stick with what we know, instead of taking a risk to win the gold. Instead of innovating, it is easy to copy others and find ourselves stuck in the same place...at the mercy of the economy.



Remember, most marketing is based on what the largest companies do (100 companies spend over 80% of all marketing dollars), which is simply not affordable for the rest of us because we can't afford to do the same branding they do. So what do we do? Well, unfortunately we have to start with activities most find boring; but the spoils belong to those who do what others are unwilling to do. We first begin with numbers. For this article, let's just focus on one equation involving two numbers:

1. Total Marketing Dollars Spent
2. Total Leads Generated (people who call, email, or walk into your store)

**These two numbers create the following equation:
Total Marketing/Total Leads = Lead Cost
(lower number is better)**

Sample Company A (large or multi-store locations):

Total Marketing Spent: \$389,000
Total Leads Generated: 4,275
\$389,000/4,275 = \$91 Lead Cost
(what it cost to generate a lead)

Sample Company B:

Total Marketing Spent: \$77,000
Total Leads Generated: 1,150
\$77,000/1,150 = \$67 Lead Cost

This **lead cost** number becomes your baseline. Anything better than this is great -- and anything worse should be eliminated or reduced. I often have clients ask what the ideal number should be. They are fishing for an average from others. Unfortunately there is no fair way to answer this question as too many factors are at play: size of your city, competition, demographics, area of the country, time of year, and more will affect your numbers.

Instead of focusing on what others are doing, use your own numbers as your baseline and strive to make improvements. Many of our clients quickly stop looking at their competition because they are able to surpass them. Don't try to jump—learn to “flop.” In other words, act differently.

So how do you do this? Here is a simple way:

Step One: Write down every form of marketing you engage in and the costs.

Looking at the **cost** to generate a **lead** is only **one part** of the equation. You also need to **look** at **other numbers** to **intelligently analyze your business.**

Step Two: Measure how effective each is and be specific.

Step Three: Reduce or eliminate what is not working.

One client found he was spending over \$90 for each lead. We began to measure each marketing tactic. He wanted to immediately cut his radio ads, but we encouraged him to measure each individual station, and here are the results:

Radio Station #1:

\$3,000/month produced 17 leads at \$175 each

Radio Station #2:

\$2,000/month produced 16 leads at \$125 each

Radio Station #3:

\$150/month produced 10 leads at \$15 each

This totaled \$5,150/month producing 43 leads at \$120 average.

By examining and measuring, the dealer cut advertising on stations 1 and 2 which were producing the least results. Spending on station 3 was increased to \$1,000. By eliminating what was not working and increasing his spending on what was working, he was able to increase his leads while lowering the cost of generating those leads.

The dealer dared to do the hard work of examining the numbers and then doing what most are unwilling to do—make decisions based on fact instead of emotion, to be different when all outward signs indicated he was on the right track.

But remember, looking at the cost to generate a lead is only one part of the equation. You also want to look at total sales, average sale, and margin. It could be you generate tons of leads from one source for little money, but those leads never materialize into business. This is why we encourage our clients to take a holistic approach.

Key Points to Remember:

1. Measure your marketing so you know what customers cost you.
2. Take the lower performing tactics and replace with better ones.

3. Repeat this throughout the year remembering to give new tactics enough time to prove if they are or are not working for you. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Josh “The Fixer” McGinnis is in the top 5% of business coaches worldwide. He specializes in fixing marketing, sales, and people problems so his clients can maximize their growth potential. His clients routinely outperform the national average for their individual industries. This is part of the reason he has doubled his own business by word of mouth and referrals each year for the last four years.



Contact Josh via email at josh@unlockyourbiz.com or (800) 528-5055.

Premier Flooring
www.pfrmagazine.com **RETAILER**

6 BIG Issues

100% Retailer Focused

Reaching Thousands of
WFCA Members and Retailers
With Exclusive Editorial Content

For WFCA membership information, please call:
(800) 624-6880
May/June Ad Space Deadline: April 3rd, 2014

For Advertising information, call (877) 742-6467 or email info@pfrmagazine.com
Media kit available at: www.pfrmediakit.pfrmag.com

Selling Made in USA Products

By Michael Vickers, Executive Director, Summit Learning Systems



The numbers are in, and a recent study conducted by Perception Research Services (PRS) found that 75% of shoppers are often motivated to purchase products that have the “Made in USA” label on it. Apparently, the Made in USA label makes them feel patriotic and that their purchase is helping the economy.

There is no question that many companies have successfully lowered their manufacturing costs by going offshore, however, the research is clear that domestic buyers will pay a premium for products that are manufactured in the United States.

According to the Boston Consulting Group, if a similar product being considered is from China or India, more than 80% of U.S. consumers will pay up to a 60% premium for the domestically made product. One of the key takeaways from the study suggests that quality and safety may be the influencing factors behind the purchasing decision.

Another reason the Made in USA story is so powerful is just what the label implies. These products come from a manufacturing facility in America that is hiring Americans that spend their money locally, which ultimately helps the economy.

The Made in USA story is powerful for other categories beyond flooring. Just look at the children’s products segment of toys and furniture. Parents will definitely pay higher prices for American-made products to make sure the paint that is used doesn’t contain toxic levels of lead or their baby food isn’t tainted with chemicals.

American consumers want their food organic, sustainable and grown as locally as possible to avoid the required treatments when transporting food over long distances. People are tired

of buying tools at a big box store only to have it break after a couple of uses versus the strength and quality of American-made.

A good in-store strategy is to communicate to your customer that if there are any issues with the quality of a Made in USA product, that you can contact the factory directly and get product support from someone who shares your values for service and quality.

Tell the “Made in USA” Story

One thing is certain, we all can do a better job at communicating to our customer the importance of supporting American-made products and your commitment as a retailer.

According to the Americans Working (www.americansworking.com) website, here are the top reasons to buy American-made products. Remind your customers of these important benefits during your sales conversations.

Jobs – When you buy American, you save or create American jobs. We all know that jobs are critical to a healthy economy and you just might be saving a job that was headed off-shore.

Environmental Issues – Many products that are not Made in USA come from countries that have little or no regulations in place that protect the environment. They use chemicals that pollute the air, soil and water. American-made means they have met our manufacturing standards.

Human Rights – There are many countries that use children in the manufacturing process and those children work in conditions that are worse than our prisons. They work long days for low pay and don’t have the protection of our laws and regulations.

“People are **tired of buying** tools at a **big box** store only to have it break after a couple of uses **versus** the **strength** and **quality** of **American-made**.”

Democracy – Buying American-made also supports the ideals of democracy which many believe in and will stand up for. Proceeds from your purchases ultimately support the governing structure of the country you choose to live in.

Conservation – When products are produced elsewhere and shipped to America, they usually have to be transported across the oceans. In doing so, they use large amounts of petroleum and unnecessarily send emissions into the atmosphere.

Domino Effect – When you buy American, most of that money stays in America. It goes to pay the wages of many people that are directly or indirectly responsible for creating your product. They then spend money on products and services, pay their taxes and the cycle repeats itself.

More Jobs – Studies show that for every manufacturing job added, there are five additional jobs created. So when you buy American-made, you are in essence, investing in America.

There is no question that in today's competitive marketplace, the buyer will often make their purchasing decision based on price, at least when there are no other issues to consider. They are looking for the best bang for their buck, but make sure you don't neglect the "Made in USA" story. Our products are often more expensive than the foreign imports, but the quality and the impact on our economy can often be enough of a reason for your customer to buy American-made. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Vickers is executive director of Summit Learning Systems, a provider of customized in-house training and e-learning programs; and the author of the best-selling book, Becoming Preferred – How to Outsell Your Competition. Contact Michael at: www.michaelvickers.com.



Digital. Print. Web. Social. So Many Tools. So Little Time. Feeling Overwhelmed by Your Marketing? We Can Help.



360° Marketing. A complete, turnkey consumer marketing solution.

- WFCFA Member Website
- Mobile Website
- SEO / Power SEO
- Social Media Content & Management
- Blogs
- Re-Targeting
- Banner Ads
- E-Mail Marketing
- Traditional & Hybrid Direct Marketing
- Customer I.Q. Program

T O R U S
MARKETING, LLC

For More Information, Contact Kathryn Baird
kathryn@torusmarketing.com • 1.530.823.7835 • wfcfa.torusmarketing.com

SWOT Analysis Made Simple

By David Romano, Founder and Owner, Benchmarkinc

One can only imagine the sigh you made when reading the title. Then the comment under your breath... "Not that darn acronym SWOT" (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats); just thinking about all of those things for many flooring owners creates another "S" word – sweat!! However, a major ingredient to business success is sweat and that sweat comes from both hard work and hard planning.

I have to admit that when doing research to create this article I became overwhelmed with just how much information is available on conducting a SWOT analysis and the complexity of the instructions. It made sense that the term SWOT first began to be used in college classrooms, and then was brought into businesses, including the flooring industry.

Let's take a look at the definition of SWOT found on Wikipedia: "**SWOT analysis** (alternatively **SWOT Matrix**) is a structured planning method used to evaluate the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats involved in a project or in a business venture. A SWOT analysis can be carried out for a product, place, industry or person. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving that objective."

It goes on to define each letter as:

- Strengths:** characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others.
- Weaknesses:** characteristics that place the team at a disadvantage relative to others.
- Opportunities:** elements that the project could exploit to its advantage.

Threats: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project."

Let me tie it to an example for the flooring industry:

SWOT analysis is an exercise where you look at your business, with an unbiased eye, listing all of your internal strengths and weaknesses within your business. Then take a look at the environment where you compete and identify opportunities and the threats you are facing outside of your four walls. The key is to then take that information and build a plan to take advantage of the opportunities (leveraging your strengths), shore up your weaknesses, and never take your eye off the threats.

Let's grid out a SWOT analysis for ABC Flooring Company (see grid below). Here is some background on the company:

ABC Flooring is a family-owned operation that has been in business for 30+ years in the same location. Ninety-percent of their business is retail and their gross profit is 44% (which has held strong during the economic downturn). Their high in volume came in 2008 when they did just over \$3 million; their sales have been trailing down since 2008 and they ended 2013 at just over \$2 million. The owners own the building and it is paid in full. Everyone in the company, including the owners, is making a fair living and cash flow has been pretty tight for the last five years; the owners earn extra income from the rent of the store. The majority of the sales staff has been in the flooring industry for 3+ decades and they are all paid a salary. One could surmise that, after laying out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in this simple format, there is a tremendous opportunity to grow outside business. The owners could take out a line of credit, collateralized by

S	Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best retail location in the market Experienced and knowledgeable sales team Unique products and largest selection Hold great margins at retail Great reputation for quality and service Longevity in the market We are debt free 	O	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential building in the market is really picking up Commercial business is still going strong and we continue to receive requests to bid Building a large retirement community in 2014 XYZ Flooring just lost the contract on \$1 mm in apartment work
W	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales associates do not want to prospect business Tight on money and cannot fund large jobs Short on warehouse space Great at retail but not in other areas such as (builder, commercial, and multifamily) 	T	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most large accounts have been serviced by my same competitor for years Low margins being offered by competitors Competitors have more resources to fund this work Large accounts not paying for the flooring assignment Competitors more experienced at this type of work

Just like a New Year resolution, a SWOT analysis in its totality may appear overwhelming. Don't try to conquer all of your shortfalls in one sweeping plan.

the building, and fund the hiring of an experienced outside sales/contract sales associate (paid draw against commission).

Once this person is hired, the company could then create unique offerings and design flashy marketing materials for her/him to use to secure the business from builders, Main Street commercial, or multifamily and load all of this information on an iPad or Android tablet for presentation purposes. They could collect 100% on retail jobs, discuss shorter draws from the contractors, push out terms with the mills, or find a third-party financing company to help fund larger jobs; thus not relying solely on the line of credit. Space in the warehouse could be cleared by holding an inventory clearance sale and if need be sell old inventory at cost; this would help with cash as well. During conversations with any prospective customer, they can always reference their great reputation, large selection of products, longevity in the market, and their experienced sales team. You see, a SWOT analysis made simple.

Just like a New Year resolution, a SWOT analysis in its totality may appear overwhelming. Don't try to conquer all of your shortfalls in one sweeping plan. Just pick one or two things to focus on and you will be well on the road to losing those unwanted sleepless nights or halting the shedding of tears when you read your financial statements. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Romano is founder and owner of Benchmarkinc and its predecessor, Romano Consulting Group. David's professional career spans nearly 20 years of management experience in the retail, restaurant and consulting industries. His companies have been providing consulting, benchmarking, and recruiting services for nearly a decade exclusively for the flooring and restoration industries.



FCB2B: What is it?

FCB2B is simply the sending and receiving of information using computer technology.

Its efficiency has made it a condition of doing business in dozens of industries, including retail, grocery, warehousing, transportation, health care, education, real estate, and government. Any document that one company would exchange with another (such as a purchase order, invoice, shipping schedule, inventory inquiry, and claim submission) can be exchanged between two parties as long as both have made the preparations.

FCB2B cannot be activated with a flip of the switch or in a moment's notice. As with any new technology, preparation and software are important aspects when exchanging with a trading partner.

FCB2B bridges the information gap that exists between companies using different computer systems. Implement the FCB2B vehicle and platform into your business to help lower your cost centers.

Contact Pamela T. Bowe, Executive Director
206.448.6655/pbowe@fcb2b.org Today!



TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL



Also available for Kindle

"If you sell anything, this book will definitely help you become preferred. Read it. Apply it. And then lead the field."
Robin Sharma, Best Selling Author of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*

How to Outsell, Outperform and Outposition the Competition

Michael will teach you how to:

- Become the preferred provider of what you sell
- Become unique and distinct in a crowded marketplace
- Up-level the brand experience
- Deliver high-touch in a high-task world
- Create added-value to win the price war
- Insulate your customers from competitive erosion

Contact best-selling author and speaker Michael Vickers today!

MICHAELVICKERS.com

For information on Michael's seminars, keynotes or online learning contact: beth@michaelvickers.com
(888) 817-3751 • (403) 265-8133



Application for Regular Membership



FOR THE PERIOD ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2014

The undersigned hereby applies for membership in the World Floor Covering Association, a non-profit trade association serving the floor covering industry.

For Renewal - WFCA Member Number _____

Company Name _____

Contact Name Title _____

Physical Address (Primary Location) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mailing Address (If different from above) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone(s) (_____) (_____) FAX (_____)

E-mail _____ Website _____

Number of Store / Operation locations _____

WFCA Membership Dues Investment is \$275 valid through 12/31/14

Please submit payment with completed application & member profile to:

WORLD FLOOR COVERING ASSOCIATION

Mail to: 2211 East Howell Avenue • Anaheim, CA 92806

Or FAX to: (714) 978-6066 or submit via e-mail

If paying by credit card: MasterCard VISA AMEX Discover

V-Code (3 or 4 Digit Authorization #) _____ Amount \$ _____

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Name on card _____ Signature _____

*Only US funds are accepted

**World Floor Covering Association • 2211 East Howell Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92806 USA • (800) 624-6880
(714) 978-6440 • fax (714) 978-6066 • www.wfca.org • e-mail: wfca@wfca.org**

Membership dues paid to the World Floor Covering Association are not tax deductible as charitable contributions. However, they may be tax deductible as ordinary business expenses. WFCA estimates that 12% of your dues are not deductible because of WFCA's lobbying activities on behalf of its membership. Your dues include a subscription to Premier Flooring Retailer magazine.



1. Start with a smooth, sound subfloor. Don't have that? We've got you covered.



2. Open the fully integrated Roll and Go™ package.



3. Roll on the primer.



4. Roll on the adhesive.



5. Install your new LVT.



SCHÖNOX ROLL AND GO™

AN ELEVATED APPROACH TO LVT INSTALLATION

Schönnox Roll and Go™ Luxury Vinyl Tile Adhesive
Makes Your Project Easier and Faster!

- Fully integrated kit contains everything you need
- Apply adhesive from a standing position
- LVT installation can begin minutes after application*
- Tiles are bound immediately and can bear loads right away

*always refer to the Schönnox data sheets



The best floors are based on subfloors from  **SCHÖNOX**®

HPS NORTH AMERICA, INC.

The Schönnox Provider

 facebook.com/HPSubfloors

Toll Free: 855.391.2649

www.hpsubfloors.com



HARRIS
WOOD®



Shown Here: Vintage Maple Snow Cap HE2332



Made in the USA since 1898... *Still going strong*

1-800-842-7816 | www.harriswoodfloors.com | 2225 Eddie Williams Road, Johnson City, TN 37601 | A Quality Brand of Q.E.P. Co., Inc.