

# Premier Flooring

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September/October 2014

WFCFA Website/  
Digital Marketing  
Case Study Update

5 Steps to a Successful  
Showroom Design

Waivers of Warranties  
and Liability

Running Your  
Business Right

*Natalie Goodin and Stuart Loughrey of  
The Flooring Gallery view their website  
currently being updated in the WFCFA  
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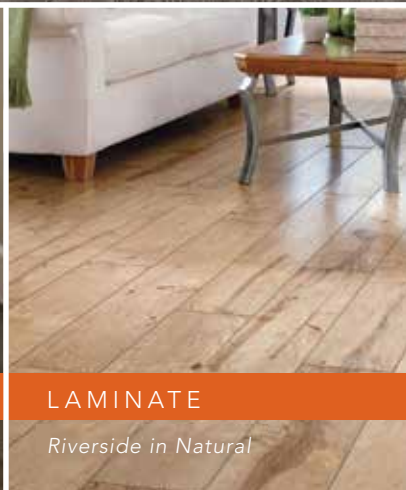


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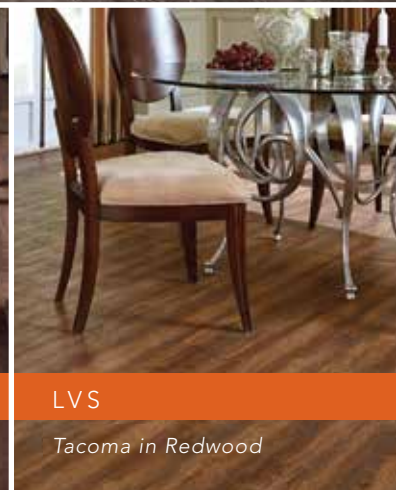
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# Premier Flooring

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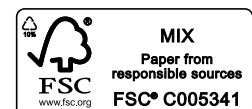
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# Three Simple Questions

By Scott Humphrey, CEO, World Floor Covering Association

**A**chieving success may be difficult, but the path leading there is more obvious than you think. In fact, your road to success, in many ways, parallels ours here at PFR. Success can be found in asking a few key questions. What we do with the responses from these questions will very likely determine our long-term success.

As a new publication, we are constantly seeking input from readers to determine if we are hitting the mark in our focus and effort on providing tools and expertise that will help our WFCA members and PFR readers achieve their goals.

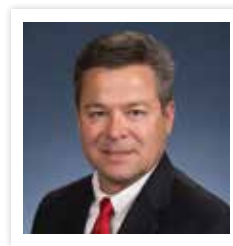
“Attaining success may be common sense but it is certainly not common practice.”

1. How do customers view you? Do you ask your customers how they would describe your business. What is your identity within your community? What you hear may surprise you. At a recent conference I attended, the leader spoke of a research company that asked 600 chief executive officers (CEOs) how often they were perceived as the best choice among their competitors. The response was overwhelming with 80% being perceived as best choice. The research company then went to their potential consumers and asked the same question. Not surprisingly, the response was different. What is surprising is how off the mark the CEOs were. Their potential customers responded that they were the premier choice only 8% of the time. It is essential that you know if your business identity is perceived as you intended.
2. What are my customers' pain points? Another way of asking this is to ask them, "What keeps you up at night?" Note: Failing companies don't ask, but assume they know the answer to this question. You must interact with your customers. It is equally important that you continually seek input from your customers. Individual needs differ and change over time, but two things are certain: We all have pain points, and we are all looking for someone who can help us eliminate them.
3. What is the best way to address my customers' need? To us, we are constantly seeking information and experts to address your challenges through

the articles in PFR; to you that means new products, new processes, and new possibilities. The answer to questions 1 and 2 will help you determine if you are equipped to meet potential consumer needs or if you want to make the investment necessary to do so.

Attaining success may be common sense, but it is certainly not common practice. Asking the right questions and responding to the feedback you receive is a simple way to differentiate your business from your competitors. At PFR, we are committed to eliminating your pain points and helping you achieve success. Because we are constantly asking the questions above, we are convinced that the information and expertise contained in these pages will equip you to be the solution for seeking consumers in your community. Enjoy the expertise in this issue, and know that we welcome your input on how we are doing at the WFCA and through our publication, Premier Flooring Retailer.

If you are not a member of the World Floor Covering Association and are reading this issue, you can sign-up for a free subscription by completing and mailing back the subscription card on page 17. This is a limited time offer only available by completing the form. Make sure to answer all questions, sign, date and return the form to: Premier Flooring Retailer, c/o JG Media Group LLC, 4607 Lakeview Canyon Rd. Ste. 560, Westlake Village, CA 91361. ■



*Scott Humphrey*

Scott Humphrey  
CEO of WFCA



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# Averting a Lost Opportunity

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

All flooring retailers are looking for ways to generate more traffic in their stores, increase customer satisfaction, reduce time spent dealing with complaints and most importantly, fatten their gross margins. An obvious category most stores are overlooking: floor care and maintenance products.

One only has to look at the seemingly endless selection of products offered at the grocery, discount and home improvement stores – compared to the pitiful looking displays in most specialty flooring stores. Check it out and you'll soon see the size of the category's potential and all of the opportunities lost. I feel this is largely due to a lack of commitment from both the dealer and the sales staff. Let's look at ways for both to improve.

Dealers: This is where it should all begin. Management must be willing to place an importance and emphasis on properly maintaining all quality flooring products they sell. Your customer should be educated to recognize these products are built to a high standard and will give years of pleasurable service – but only if they are maintained properly using the recommended products and techniques. We must do a better job of making the product special.

Take a page from the auto industry book. You may be willing to occasionally drive through the quick lube in your old beater or low-tech econobox. Surely, any lube technician can handle this task. However, if you invested in a prestigious luxury sedan, you want only a factory-trained specialist touching your engine's drain plug. Manufacturers of high quality automobiles know to place the emphasis not on the motor oil itself, but rather on the expertise of the mechanic. They would never think of sending you out of the new car delivery driveway in your new vehicle without proper instructions. They realize that if you were to roam the aisles of an auto parts store, select an incorrect product and have it fail – they would ultimately be blamed in some fashion anyway.

Are quality flooring products any different? Why not be proactive? What did the grocery store do to deserve this sale? Do the clerks at the hardware store know flooring as well the person who originally sold it? By building value in your staff's expertise, you can not only make additional sales, but more importantly keep the customer happy in the process.

The first place to start should be with both your display and the products shown. Make sure the display is inviting and has both a sense of order and purpose. The products offered should be both clean and current. I would not show any

items that did not expressly maintain the customer's product warranty.

Additional products only serve to create confusion. And please, if you have any products that are dirty, dated or obsolete, get rid of them. They are undermining your entire effort! When the customer sees these, they will think that your entire operation is also behind the times. The cost of keeping them is always higher than the cost of replacing them. You never see obsolete product in any successful retail store – period! They either donate these items to charity or wholesale them to a discounter. Savvy retailers know that it doesn't matter what these products cost yesterday. The real question is what are they costing now?

Sales Staff: Salespeople should always understand the lifetime value of a customer. We are all striving to build referral and repeat business. We want to be considered as trusted advisors – not merely as clerks. There is no better way to



Continued



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### Averting a Lost Opportunity, Continued

accomplish this than through properly explaining a product's upkeep. When doing so, the customer perceives that you care about her happiness with her purchase. Also, remember that she will never be more receptive to your advice than when the purchase is recent, and her interest level in her investment is still high. Return visits for maintenance products will allow you the opportunity to reconnect with her in the future. Since you don't get paid for products bought elsewhere, why not make every effort to ensure these products are only purchased from you?

**Salespeople should always understand the lifetime value of a customer. We are all striving to build referral and repeat business. We want to be considered as trusted advisors - not merely as clerks.**

One of the most critical goals of specialty flooring retailers should always be looking for ways to drive traffic through the door in a business that has a long replacement cycle. Good retailers understand that there is no such thing as a small sale. Each interaction we have with a repeat customer is to be valued. A few minutes spent explaining proper maintenance products and procedures can produce lasting benefits. Continued customer happiness can be both bought and sold – one quart bottle at a time! ■

### 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](mailto:tjennings@wfca.org).*



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# Stellar Showrooms on a Budget: Five Steps to Successful Showroom Design

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

**W**hat do your customers want? What appeals to them? What are their needs and expectations when they walk in the door to your showroom? Those questions are more important than you may realize since your retail space, all on its own, makes the first impression—good or bad. Creativity, fashion and emotion are at the heart of design, and floor coverings are the foundation for good design. So the real question is, does your showroom reflect creativity, fashion, and inspire emotion?

For a good part of my career, I specialized in coaching retailers on how to improve their showrooms, and in some cases, created new showrooms from the ground up. New construction allows for incorporating many tried and true features, but this article is dedicated to what you can do to give your existing showroom a fresh new appearance on a budget.

Only 20% of the population has the ability to visualize intangible concepts, so trying to choose carpet from a small sample...is difficult for them.

First of all, you need an unbiased opinion of what's needed. Do you have a trusted business acquaintance or family friend with an artistic eye? Ask for their opinion of what's working (and what's not) in your retail space. Beware husbands and wives—this has been noted to cause marital discord if your opinions are a little too honest—so proceed with caution.

Here's a checklist of givens that all successful showroom designs share.

1. Neatness. The space should be put in order at the end of each business day. Clean, neat, uncluttered is the goal. No samples should be thrown haphazardly on the floor and left there. (Dollar cost \$0)
2. Lighting. Combinations of natural light, ambient lighting and directed "spots" on products you want to highlight get the best results. Dark showrooms are not inviting, so make sure you have sufficient ambient lighting to reach every area. You can invest in motion sensors to activate lesser used areas, if energy savings is an important factor. Sometimes you don't have a choice about sources of natural light, but this is most important. Honest color selections can only be made in natural light. All types of artificial lighting have a color cast to them, some yellow, some pink, some even green. It misconstrues actual product colors. Be sure final selections are made in the presence of natural daylight. No windows? See if installing skylights is a possibility. Most design firms have skylights throughout their studios for that very reason. They work with color matching and coordinating materials all-day long. (Cost will vary according to number of fixtures required)
3. Sense Appeal. Not only should you be concerned by what your customers see, try to appeal to as many of the five senses as possible: fresh flowers, scented candles, or potpourri for scent; soft music in the background; luxury products on display to touch; and of course, attractive merchandising and vignettes for sight appeal. The more comfortable customers feel in your showroom, the higher their trust level becomes. Comfort is important, and areas where customers can sit, discuss design, and layout products makes the process much more comfortable. (Cost range: \$50 for sensory accessories, up to \$3,000 for furniture purchases, \$500 for in-store vignettes)
4. Use of Color. Dingy white walls do nothing to encourage customers to trust your sense of color. You've got at least four walls to work with, right? Use color to create a stylish background to your wares. Paint is not that expensive and you will be shocked how a fresh coat of color will spice up and contemporize your showroom. (Range \$1,000 to \$3,000 for professional painting services. DIY – cost of paint only)
5. Your entire floor should be used as a sales tool. This point is the most obvious, but perhaps the most overlooked. What you choose to showcase on the floor is what people will gravitate towards. Only 20% of the population has the ability to visualize intangible concepts, so trying to choose carpet from a small sample, or any type of flooring is difficult for them. Invest in well-designed floor modules to define your space and bring a multitude of materials to life for your customers. Porcelain, hardwoods, LVT, cork, carpet—they all deserve a shout-out and what better way to promote the many selections that you offer. Invest in doing your due diligence to preview the new products sales reps bring to you, and try to differentiate what you offer. Change the flooring modules installed on your floor frequently to keep yourself on the cutting edge of flooring design. Make sure not to keep anything that is discontinued. (Negotiate with your key suppliers to see what they might be able to provide you at minimal or no cost.)

Continued



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I hear from retailers, “I can’t afford the down time to make aesthetic changes.” You can’t afford not to make changes that will keep you current and competitive.

Stellar Showrooms on a Budget, Continued

**Traffic flow:** Here are a few rules to follow, just to touch on this. Your main entry should be uncluttered and open. If you use a reception desk or counter, don’t have it centered as customers walk in the door. That can be intimidating and perceived as establishing a gatekeeper. You want customers to feel welcome and invited to look around as much as they like. You can use displays/racks to create walkways as long as they are not narrow spaces. Creating walkways that are on the diagonal is much more inviting than right angles. Tall displays should be arranged on perimeter walls. Try to keep sight lines across the showroom open and unobstructed. Intersperse several comfortable work areas (with table and chairs) throughout the showroom. Use your walkways to direct customers to specific products, or to create product departments within an open floor plan.

**Product placement:** Most dealers choose to create a specialty display area for each product type. That certainly makes it easier for customers to navigate the store to find exactly what they are looking for. Give preferential placement

to higher end products in each area. Lead with the best and you can always trade down, but it is much harder to start low and get a customer to trade up. Be selective with the manufacturers you carry. The real estate on your showroom floor is valuable, and every square foot should be earning its way. Consider placing newly introduced products close to the entry—perhaps use a vignette approach and show multiple products that have just hit the market. That’s a great way to create customer excitement and show that you are in step with the latest and greatest products available.

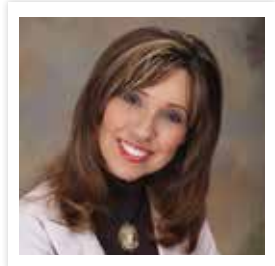
**Side note on displays:** Most manufacturers have come up with remarkable displays that rival fine furniture. Some include specialty lighting and even a work station. Choose carefully as you integrate these into your floor plan, and they will quickly earn their keep as part of your showroom. As a rule of thumb, use taller displays on the perimeter walls of your space, and arrange the shorter displays to create directed pathways (not too narrow) throughout the store.

The five points outlined above are the foundation for good showroom design. Some may be costly, but most of them can be accomplished inexpensively. I hear from retailers, “I can’t afford the down time to make aesthetic changes.” You can’t afford not to make changes that will keep you current and competitive. Once you have satisfied the five points above, you can get even more creative to make your showroom a pleasant experience for your customer. Fresh coffee brewing and cookies (taste and smell), a water feature built into the showroom (sight and sound), a comfortable conversational seating area (sight and comfort), a children’s play area (keeping one’s sanity), and amenities like bottled water or cappuccino (taste) are niceties you can add at any time.

Start with the basics and expand upon that to elevate your retail perception. You might just find as you raise the status of your retail store, you will be selling more high-end products, and overall, higher-ticket projects. It tends to work that way, but you won’t know unless you try. ■

#### 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.*



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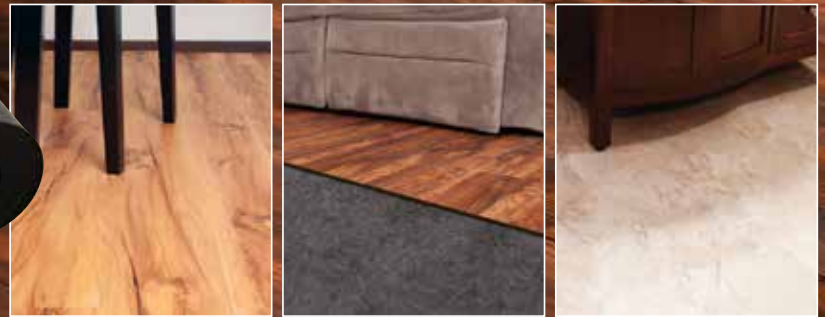




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# Consumer Research: Part II

## Residential Flooring Facts

In the July/August issue of Premier Floor Retailer, we began to provide sought after research from the leading global supplier of consumer, product and media intelligence company Mintel. The following are more results from Mintel research completed in February 2014 of 2,000 internet users over 18-years-old.

### Shopping for Flooring by Benefit Instead of Type

Recent flooring shoppers cite interest in easier cleaning, improved energy efficiency and a healthier environment among lifestyle-related reasons for purchasing flooring, in addition to long-standing factors leading to flooring purchases, such as replacing worn-out flooring and home renovations.

Shopping for flooring now means more than checking out price, style and color. Consumers are now looking into other factors: pet friendliness, noise levels, odor resistance and environmental consciousness. Mintel's online qualitative research suggests "carpeting is homey," "hardwood floors... are the most durable and easy to clean," etc. Shoppers starting with the idea that only one type of flooring meets their needs may never explore other types.



By organizing flooring alternatives by desired benefit, flooring retailers may stand a better chance of opening up shoppers to alternative products they wouldn't have considered on their own or even realized were available. Such a holistic approach might also help to position a retailer as a flooring expert.

### Trend: Life Hacking

While consumers continue to gravitate towards household surface cleaners, the trend Life Hacking is now being used in the residential flooring market, as they are outfitting their homes with surfaces requiring less cleaning. About 25% of hard surface flooring purchasers in the past year or those intending to purchase in the next year, plus about one in five carpet shoppers say making home cleaning and care easier is among the most important motivators for selecting new flooring. About four in 10 rate ease of cleaning and care among their most important selection criteria. Adults in their 20s and 30s with children at home are especially likely to express interest in healthier flooring.

As a healthy home gains prominence, hard surface flooring's inherent ease of cleaning is becoming an even more potent motivator and a contributor to the rising market share of hardwood, bamboo, laminate, and other hard surface flooring.

### Remodeling Trends Higher

The residential flooring market has benefitted from the quickening pace of remodeling projects in 2013. According to Moody's Analytics, home equity lending increased 18% in 2013.

As the number of households has increased about 1% per year since 2003, households are getting smaller and older. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, households with one or two people continue to increase as a percentage of all households – reaching 61.3% in 2013. Mintel research shows that adults aged 55+ are less likely than their younger counterparts to have recently made or be planning to make a flooring purchase. Motivating older adults to replace old flooring represents a growing opportunity for flooring manufacturers and retailers. Attributes Mintel research shows older adults value are durability, ease of cleaning and care. ■

Editor's Note: Mintel is a leading global supplier of consumer, product and media intelligence. For more than 40 years, Mintel has provided insight into key worldwide trends, offering unique data that directly impacts client success. For more information on Mintel, please visit [www.mintel.com](http://www.mintel.com).

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8.27.2014



# Waivers of Warranties and Liability: Are They Worth the Paper They're Written On?

By Jeffrey King, General Counsel for the WFCFA

Flooring dealers often face issues that may impact the performance of the products they sell and install. Customers often insist on a product or installation that is not recommended, such as installing tile on concrete prone to moisture problems. When the products fail, a customer often complains, refuses to pay balances, and threatens to sue. To avoid these potential liabilities, contractors may include in their contracts waivers of warranties and liability. Whether these waivers are valid raises significant legal issues that vary from state-to-state. Nonetheless, there are some generally applicable concepts the dealer should consider.

## The Uniform Commercial Code's Implied Warranties

The Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), which every state has adopted in some form, provides that all merchandise includes the implied warranties of merchantability (the goods must reasonably conform to an ordinary buyer's expectations) and fitness (goods to fit a specific request). While there is an issue of whether these warranties apply in construction contracts, they are likely applicable to dealers that sell and charge separately for the flooring products and the installation. Accordingly, a flooring retailer is likely subject to the UCC's implied warranties of merchantability and fitness requirements. These warranties can only be waived in writing and must be conspicuous in the contract, such as in a different kind of print or font that makes them stand out. An example is provided below in the section on Sample Waivers.

In addition, many state laws limit the ability of a merchant or contractor to waive liability. The law varies by state. For example, Massachusetts' consumer protection law prohibits the disclaimer of the implied warranty of merchantability on household goods sold to consumers. (Mass. Gen. Law, at. Ch. 106, §2-314.) The consumer protection statute in Washington provides that for goods purchased primarily for personal use, disclaimers of the UCC's warranty of merchantability

and fitness is only effective if the disclaimer sets forth "with particularity the qualities and characteristics which are not being warranted." (Rev. Codes of Washington, § 62A.2-316.). Accordingly, when dealing with consumers, a waiver should specify the circumstances when the waiver will be applicable. For example, if a customer insists on installing tile over an area testing with high moisture content, the waiver should specify there is no warranty for moisture damage.

## Warranty of Habitability

Many states also recognize the implied workmanlike quality for services and an implied warranty of habitability for a home. To waive these implied warranties often requires specific language be included in the contract, often in conspicuous and bold lettering. Moreover, as explained below, some states will consider whether the warranty waiver is unreasonable under the circumstances.

## Written Warranties

If the dealer provides a written warranty to a customer, there are limits on the ability to waive the implied warranties and any liability. The Federal Magnuson-Moss Act prohibits anyone who offers a written warranty from disclaiming or modifying implied warranties. (15 U.S.C. §§ 2301-2312 (1982)). This means that no matter how broad or narrow a written warranty is, it cannot waive the implied warranties. The Act does not require that a seller give a warranty on a consumer product, but if a warranty is given, it must comply with the terms of the Act.

There is one permissible modification of implied warranties. If a dealer offers a limited written warranty, the law allows the dealer to include a provision that restricts the duration of implied warranties to the duration of its limited warranty. For example, if a dealer offers a two-year limited warranty, it



Continued



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### Waivers of Warranties and Liability, Continued

can limit implied warranties to two years. A warranty is limited if the contractor limits the warranty's duration, covers only the first buyer, charges a service fee for warranty work, limits replacement, or requires the consumer to perform any duty as a precondition for receiving service other than notifying the dealer of a defect.

In addition, many products come with express warranties from the manufacturer and those warranties can only be waived if such disclaimers are not unreasonable and the waiver is conspicuously stated in the contract. Again, the enforcement of the waiver will depend on whether the waiver is deemed reasonable or unconscionable. At a minimum, the flooring dealer should state in writing that it is passing the manufacturer's warranty to the consumer and the contractor is not included in that warranty.

### Unconscionable Waivers

Waivers of warranties and liability will be enforceable only if they are not unconscionable, that is, so unfair that they should not be enforced. The factors determining whether a waiver is unconscionable include whether the parties are in an equal bargaining position, any disparity in the sophistication of the parties in dealing with construction contracts and issues, the nature of the injuries suffered by the plaintiff; whether the plaintiff is a substantial business concern; whether there is an element of surprise in the inclusion of the challenged clause; and the conspicuousness of the clause.

Where sophisticated business professionals enter into an arms-length transaction, a court will enforce the waivers unless there is some compelling reason that enforcement would be unreasonable or unjust. The courts generally consider construction contractors and subcontractors as sophisticated business people and waived warranties or limited liability in their contracts will be enforced.

Homeowners, on the other hand, are often not considered as sophisticated buyers in an equal bargaining position. A waiver is likely to be invalid if there were issues unknown by the consumer that the dealer or contractor knew of or should have known about. The courts usually consider whether the merchant has unique knowledge or skills that give it unique information about possible problems. For example, contractors and their flooring subcontractors know of moisture problems with concrete. A court is unlikely to enforce a waiver of the implied warranties if the contractor did not explain the issue so the consumer knew the impact of the waiver. To protect themselves, the contractors should always put the explanation in a written and signed document.

Think of a bank that makes you sign multiple waivers for a loan in which you acknowledge the issues were explained to you, you understand your rights and the issues and you waive those rights.

### Sample Waivers

Notwithstanding these limits, waivers of liability are often useful to include in a contract. At a minimum, the waivers raise issues of whether a dealer, contractor or installers are liable for any failure or defects of the flooring product and installation. The waivers should conform to the state law and UCC requirements. Any waiver of warranties, whether implied or express warranties, must be clearly stated and should be conspicuous. In addition, it is recommended any special circumstances be specified in the waiver. For example, if the issue is the installation of tile over concrete that may not have cured completely, that should be specifically explained in a written and signed document.

While there is no single answer to the issues that is applicable to all states, using clear and complete warranty waiver language will help. Set forth below is some sample language for waiving the implied warranties where a customer insists on installation of a product, notwithstanding the contractor or retailer recommending against the product in light of moisture issues:

**DISCLAIMER:** DEALER DISCLAIMS ANY AND ALL WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, HABITABILITY. THE BUYER(S) ACKNOWLEDGES THAT DEALER EXPLAINED ALL ISSUES WITH REGARD TO PRODUCTS, INCLUDING EFFECTS OF MOISTURE [ADD ADDITIONAL LIMITS] AND THAT THE BUYER(S) IS NOT RELYING UPON THE SELLER'S SKILL OR JUDGMENT TO SELECT OR FURNISH GOODS SUITABLE FOR ANY PARTICULAR PURPOSE AND THAT THERE ARE NO WARRANTIES WHICH EXTEND BEYOND THE DESCRIPTION ON THE FACE HEREOF.

TO THE EXTENT THAT CONTRACTOR MAY NOT DISCLAIM ANY WARRANTY AS A MATTER OF APPLICABLE LAW, THE SCOPE AND DURATION OF SUCH WARRANTY WILL BE THE MINIMUM PERMITTED UNDER SUCH LAW. SOME STATES DO NOT ALLOW THE EXCLUSION OF IMPLIED WARRANTIES, SO THE ABOVE EXCLUSION MAY NOT APPLY TO YOU. THIS LIMITED WARRANTY GIVES YOU SPECIFIC LEGAL

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## If the dealer provides a written warranty to a customer, there are limits on the ability to waive the implied warranties and any liability.

Waivers of Warranties and Liability, Continued

RIGHTS, AND YOU MAY ALSO HAVE OTHER LEGAL RIGHTS, WHICH VARY FROM STATE TO STATE.

The buyer should initial or sign this provision in addition to signing the contract. The contract should also have a provision acknowledging the buyer has read the contract and had an opportunity to have the contract reviewed by legal counsel. While, there is no guarantee that waivers will ultimately be enforceable, they can often cut off lawsuits before they are filed.

### Limitation of Liability

Contracts often include clauses that limit the liability. Although restricted in many states, if allowed, a contract should limit contractor's liability "not to exceed the price of the contract." It is one thing to lose the value of the contract as a result of a problem or a dispute. It is another thing to lose more money than the contractor or subcontractor could have possibly been paid for that contract.

To limit liability, the terms should be clear, unambiguous and conspicuous. For example, a common liability limitation clause can read:

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY: IN NO EVENT WILL CONTRACTOR BE LIABLE TO ANY PARTY FOR ANY INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, EXEMPLARY, SPECIAL OR PUNITIVE DAMAGES, INCLUDING ANY LOSS OF PROFIT, REVENUE, BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY, DATA OR USE, ARISING FROM OR RELATING TO THIS CONTRACT, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, IN TORT OR OTHERWISE, EVEN IF CONTRACTOR KNEW, SHOULD HAVE KNOWN OR HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES. CONTRACTOR'S TOTAL CUMULATIVE LIABILITY ARISING FROM OR RELATED TO THIS CONTRACT, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, IN TORT OR OTHERWISE, WILL NOT EXCEED THE FEES ACTUALLY PAID BY YOU UNDER THIS AGREEMENT. THIS SECTION WILL APPLY EVEN IF AN EXCLUSIVE REMEDY HEREUNDER HAS FAILED ITS ESSENTIAL PURPOSE.

SOME STATES DO NOT ALLOW THE EXCLUSION OR LIMITATION OF INCIDENTAL OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES, SO THE ABOVE LIMITATION OR EXCLUSION MAY NOT APPLY TO YOU.

It is recommended that the buyer initial or sign this provision acknowledging that it was read and that the buyer had an opportunity to have it reviewed by legal counsel.

### Waiver of Liability for Gross Negligence

Contracts may also attempt to exclude all liability that results from any negligent act or omission. The courts in many states, including California, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New York, Tennessee and Washington have all effectively ruled that waivers of liability for gross negligence are unenforceable. The court held that it would not enforce contracts that attempted to waive liability of a party from their own fraud, willful misconduct or gross negligence. A waiver of liability for gross negligence or willful misconduct is likely to be unenforceable and void as a matter of law. Contractors should review these clauses to ensure that they do render the entire waiver provision invalid.

### Conclusion

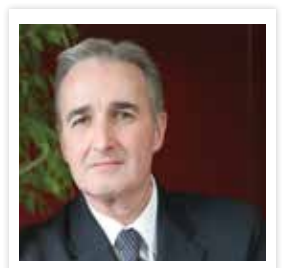
There are no all-applicable rules for warranties and waivers. The law varies from state-to-state. In some states, the fact that a contractor has a construction or home improvement license may be sufficient to render the UCC's warranties of merchantability and fitness inapplicable. In other states, these warranties cannot be waived or the waivers are limited. While there is no guarantee that the waiver will ultimately be enforceable, a well-written waiver can often provide some limitation on liability. Moreover, full written and signed disclosure of any product defects or characteristics will generally provide significant protection from liability.

Given the complexity of these issues and the different requirements in each state, it is recommended that competent legal counsel be consulted to ensure each flooring dealer meets all of its obligations regarding all warranties and waivers.

The World Floor Covering Association (WFCA) has published a book titled, "CONTRACTS: CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT THEM," to help members understand these issues. The book includes sample forms and contract language. Members can order this book at: [www.wfca-pro.org](http://www.wfca-pro.org). ■

### 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](mailto:jeffw@jkingesq.com).*







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# Roll Up Your Sleeves and Make a Difference

By Scott Humphrey, CEO, World Floor Covering Association

As I have traveled throughout North America over the last 15 months since taking the position of CEO for the WFCA, I have been taking the pulse of our members and the floor covering industry as a whole. As a new leader in a new role, I have spent a great deal of time listening, and observing. Though issues and challenges change across our great continent, there are many commonalities in what we face daily and the opportunities that lie before us. Here is some of what I have observed:

This industry is still full of amazing, hardworking, determined people who want to succeed. In the 51 years I have been blessed to live on this earth, having served as a plant worker, church worker, musician, and in the corporate world, I have had the privilege of interacting with countless people from various industries. Maybe I am biased, O.K. I know I am, but there is something special about those that make their livelihood in our industry. Maybe it is that many have worked their way up not counting simply on a degree to make them qualified. Maybe it is that we are a family-oriented industry with a great deal of our retailers still being family-owned – second, third, and even fourth generation businesses. Or maybe it is our propensity to roll our sleeves up and get the job done, whatever the job may be. One thing I am confident of, success is based on the quality of the people with which you surround yourself. That being the case,

I am certain that the foundation is in place for success at all levels of the industry.

Independent flooring dealers are closing their doors at an alarming rate. Statistics (from industry trade publications) show we have lost from 25% to 30% of the independent flooring retailers in North America over the last 7-10 years. Given this fact and the acceptance that we have good people working in this industry, we can only come to one conclusion: The things those good people are doing to succeed are no longer working for most.

As an industry, we must be willing to change or our businesses will begin or continue to die. I hope that concerns you enough to evaluate what has changed about your business over the last 10 years. If you drove up to your store 10 years ago versus today, would there be a noticeable difference? Do your people sell the same way they always have? What have you done to increase the knowledge level of your employees throughout your operation as it relates to people and product knowledge over the last 10 years? When is the last time you shopped your good competition? I can guarantee you that those businesses winning the battle for the consumer are not living in the past. The successful operations are constantly evaluating what works and what doesn't. It is scary but true, "We must change or die!"



“If we are to win the battle for the mind and pocketbook of the consumer, we must win it with our people, our ingenuity, and our service!”

Big Box stores are kicking tail in the battle for market share in the flooring industry. And the battle is getting more difficult. I used to say that the “Big Box stores sell more by accident than we do on purpose,” and that is still true. The challenge is that today, they have begun to see the profit possibilities in the flooring industry. As a CEO of one flooring manufacturer recently said to me, “The Big Box stores have determined that they will continue to take market share, and they don’t plan on taking it from each other.” Let’s face it, there is a war going on for market share out there, and one of the sides battling has a much bigger army, more money, and more resources. If we are to win the battle for the mind and pocketbook of the consumer, we must win it with our people, our ingenuity, and our service!

As an industry, we are still in the crawling stages when it comes to the utilization of technology. This is one of the key places they are winning the battle. Today’s consumer is reliant on technology in the purchasing process. Whether it is in the dreaming phase where they are being inspired by information shared on sites like Pinterest or Houzz, or in the educational phase where they are determining the best product for their application, or in the purchasing phase where an ever-increasing number are actually buying flooring online, getting a grasp on technology and embracing it rather than running from it is a must. You don’t have to become the expert in your store, but you do need to have someone who is.

Installation is once again one of the main issues impacting the average independent retailer. The most constant message I have heard in my travels is that installation is once again becoming the biggest pain point to many retailers. The challenges are many: There is a shortage of qualified installers available; there is no avenue for new installers to come into the industry; the Big Box stores are utilizing many of the best installers because they feel they can be assured of constant work; there is no differentiation between a quality installer and someone with little to no experience when it comes to compensation; retailers don’t know how to sell installation or battle the confusing “\$39 whole house install” false advertising; and finally, there is no comprehensive third-party installation standard for the industry’s largest product category: carpet.

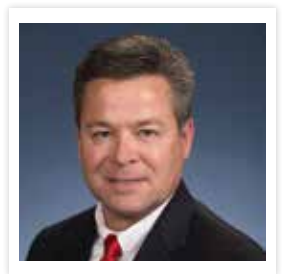
There is no doubt that the biggest detriment to the industry’s future success is our comfort in our current position.

At the WFCA, we are focused on addressing the issues that are hindering your success. Our purpose statement says, “We exist to ensure the success and profitability of the independent

flooring retailer and to represent your common interest.” Rest assured that we never rest when it comes to providing tools and resources that will simplify your life and help you achieve the success you desire. We are constantly evaluating changes to our organization in order to have a more positive impact on you, our membership. One of the best ways to determine where change will benefit you is to ask for feedback and act on what you learn. We’d love to hear from you! ■

#### 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.*



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# Getting Social: Online Marketing Strategies for Flooring Dealers, Part 1

By John Simonson, President, Flooring Web Solutions

It's a fact...most consumers today are using the Internet to do research, read the latest news, make purchases, as well as interact with friends. They are using many different digital devices from desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones. With the constant change in technology, it's difficult for flooring retailers to best use the Internet to reach potential customers.

The gateway to reaching your potential customers is through the use of the following web channels to increase the number of touch points:

- Website
- Blog
- Facebook
- Google+ Local
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Houzz

All of these web channels should be included in your program to develop an effective online marketing strategy. The importance of the channels may change over time so it is important to continually track your successes and failures. Think MySpace when it ruled social media compared to its current position. Some of these web channels will have dramatic level changes of interest. Be prepared to develop content with that in mind.

Angie's List has recently unveiled a new advertising program for flooring retailers to advertise on Angie's List. More details, (including costs) on how you can get involved in with angieslist.com in the Nov./Dec. issue. Houzz also is offering flooring retailers opportunities to advertise to home owners within specific zip codes and nearly 300,000 followers on Google+.

What do the above web channels all have in common? CONTENT, CONTENT, CONTENT!

Uncertain what makes up content?

- Text content, meaning words
- Digital images, photos
- Digital videos

Think of all those questions customers ask you while they visit your showroom deciding what flooring to buy. That is the same type of content they are looking for online for your website. Houzz, Pinterest, and even Facebook are extremely visual where many women shoppers explore their decorating options by looking at gorgeous room scenes and

previous work you have done. Photos of your previous work on your website, Houzz or Pinterest speak volumes to end-users deciding on shopping at Home Depot/Lowe's or your specialty flooring store! Also, photos of some of your hosted events, participation in the community and noteworthy installations work well and will give your store great visibility. Focus on quality, relevant content that tells a story or fulfills a customer's needs.

Next, start planning on how to make the connection between content and engaging customers to your store. Some content may come when answering the following questions:

- What are the common questions customers ask when in your store?
- What are the most popular items consumers seek in your store?
- What services do you provide your customers?

Prepare a list of bullet points answering these questions and others you have. Once the list is complete, you can prioritize the list by date and where each will be placed (website or blog, etc.) Keep the content simple in the beginning until your staff gains more experience in this project.

Review the list with your staff and help them gather the content and images you wish to use for each story. You can use a word editor like Microsoft Word or Google Docs. After completion, the materials can be uploaded by your team member or web designer. Make sure to keep track of when the new items are posted. Continue to add new story ideas for content as you or your staff think of them. Make content for your store's visibility a team effort.

Success comes from fresh content and a great way to engage your potential customers. All of this effort will also increase your search engine ranking placements, too!

For your photos and videos, you'll also need a digital camera to take photos in your store and on job sites. Or, hire a local photographer to assist you. For videos, most digital cameras come with the ability to take great videos. Even if you outsource your web design and social media updates, you'll need to supply them, via email, text (content), digital photos and maybe videos. Images generate more user engagement across all social media channels than any text content

Know your target audience and appeal to them. Always remember the purpose and goals of your online initiatives. Keeping it simple will keep your online initiatives more productive. The goal for your business should be: building



“With the **constant change in technology**, it’s difficult for small business owners to **really grasp** how to best use the **Internet to reach potential customers**.”

online awareness for your business; and driving consumers to your brick-and-mortar storefront.

Always be looking for opportunities to set your store apart. Act early and be the first store in your community to be part of new social media platforms and other marketing opportunities. Try new online advertising opportunities, such as Angie’s List, Houzz, Google Adwords, Yelp and others. Just be sure to measure the results and don’t commit to long-term contracts. Try to keep up on new digital advertising opportunities. Do you know Google just announced in mid-August call tracking for Google sponsored ads? More on that in future issues.

Now that you have the right tools, you need someone in the store who can use them correctly and with a good understanding of the Internet, as well as how to post the content onto the various social media channels. As the storeowner, you need to assign someone to implement all of the content or to interact with a web marketing professional.

For a successful online marketing program you must commit to at least 1 hour per week to meet (online or in the store) with your web marketing person to discuss and review text content, digital images and any videos before they go live (get published) to the web.

In the next issue of PFR, we’ll discuss the new opportunities soon to be released on Houzz.com and Angie’s List and some others. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*John Simonson, president of Flooring Web Solutions, has provided web design, content marketing, SEO and web metrics for all segments of the floor covering industry for more than 14 years. Email: john@flooringwebsolutions.com.*



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# Engage the Customer and Win the Business

By Michael Vickers, Executive Director, Summit Learning Systems

To engage customers in a productive sales conversation, make sure the message you are delivering is all about them. Assume the following – The customer doesn't care about your company, your products or you. So the less time you spend talking about you, the better. Customers only care about themselves. Failing to understand this fundamental truth can and will have a significant impact on your sales.

In today's marketplace, the buyer has many choices by which they can make their purchase. The quality of your engagement with the customer has to be better than your competition if you want to win the business.

The goals of an effective customer engagement strategy are to target, influence, nurture and convert prospects into customers. The better you are at engaging your customer, the bigger the impact to the bottom-line. We only have a limited time to engage the customer. Are your salespeople ready to start the process of an effective customer engagement?

## Transactional vs. Relationship Selling

There are essentially two types of selling in today's retail marketplace. The first is based on the simple concept of a transaction; a seller offers a product and the buyer purchases it. It's the most basic form of relationship between seller and buyer and the vast majority of purchases in the retail marketplace are transactional in nature.

A requirement is successfully met and there is no need for a deeper relationship to exist between buyer and seller for a sale to occur. There's absolutely nothing wrong with transactional selling – after all, no one needs a relationship with a sales representative to buy toothpaste or paper towels. With transactional purchases, most buyer information requirements are met before the purchase is made through marketing awareness information provided by the manufacturer or end-seller. When the customer gets to the store, they pretty much know what they want. The prices of a few products that are viewed as similar in attributes might be checked and then the decision is made. A simple transaction.

The other type of selling, and the one that will allow you to compete with the big boxes is relationship selling. In a relationship selling environment, the buyer is much more reliant on the experience, knowledge and level of direct personal interaction of the seller so the best choice can be made to meet the buyer's needs. In this environment, buyers may not be as confident in their product knowledge and are looking for expert assistance from the seller.

Relationship selling encompasses much more than simply offering a product or service for a specific price. It requires a strong engagement between the buyer and the seller. To engage your customer effectively, it is essential that you improve your information-gathering skills. With careful listening, develop a specific needs analysis and improve

Engaging your customer and creating a memorable experience isn't just a feel-good proposition, it's a strong bottom-line builder.

your ability to provide well thought-out recommendations and solutions and thoughtful after-sales follow-up. All of this takes more time than a simple transaction. So for many larger flooring retailers (including your big box competitors) it's not always practical.

Big box stores, by their sheer size and scope of products offered, rely on the transactional type of selling to be their mainstay. It wouldn't be practical for them to be able to offer relationship-based selling on the vast array of product offerings found in their stores. This is especially true after the transaction is completed. They serve so many individual customers that it's just not feasible for them to provide personalized, after-sale service. And that's where you have a distinct advantage you can capitalize on. When your customer base is smaller, you can afford to spend more personal time actively engaging your customer.

There are three stages of the total customer experience and you must be keenly aware of them if you're going to build relationships that will last. The first stage is what the customer expects coming into the experience.

The second is what actually happens during the buying experience. The third and most important stage is what the customer remembers about the experience. What customers remember – their own personal recollection of events – rather than what may have actually happened, will determine their future purchasing behavior.

If they remember the experience as poor, they won't be back. If it was just OK, but nothing special, then they may come back or they may look to other vendors for a better price because no other value beyond price was provided. If however, they leave with a great memory of their experience and believe they received unexpected value beyond just the price point,

# The goals of an effective customer engagement strategy are to target, influence, nurture and convert prospects into customers.

then chances are good that they'll be back again and even refer you to their friends and colleagues. So, engaging your customer and creating a memorable experience isn't just a feel-good proposition, it's a strong bottom-line builder.

Here are some good after-the-sale experience elevators, as I like to call them, which will position you as a salesperson focused on the total customer experience and creating a lasting relationship, rather than just a simple transaction.

**Business Card** – Be sure to offer it to the customer once the purchase is completed. Many times, sales reps only offer business cards to potential clients before the sale is completed. But offering your card after the purchase signals that you're willing to be of assistance beyond the initial transaction. Be sure to mention that they can call and ask for you directly if they have any questions or concerns. This solidifies a good initial purchasing experience and positions you as an advocate for the customer for any after-purchase requirements.

**Gifts or Coupons** – If your store offers any small after-purchase gifts or coupons for future purchases, then be sure to offer them to your customers. They have even greater impact if you haven't mentioned them prior to finalizing the purchase. This way they're seen as an unexpected bonus rather than as an inducement to purchase.

**Physical Assistance** – If applicable, be sure to offer help in getting products out to a customer's car. This often gives you a great opportunity to ask personal, relationship-building questions that help to create a lasting impression and encourage loyalty. It sounds simple, but you'd be amazed how much customers will tell you when you're helping them out to their cars with goods purchased. They'll be in a good frame of mind if you've helped them feel that they've made the best purchase decision possible for their needs and they'll usually be very responsive to any inquiries you make at this time.

**Thank You** – Never forget to thank the customer. It may seem obvious, but it's sometimes overlooked. Make sure yours is sincere and heartfelt. And remember, a verbal thank you is expected by the customer, but a hand-written thank you note provided after the purchase usually isn't and therefore has much greater impact. Thank you notes are a great way to separate you from a run-of-the-mill salesperson.

Great after-sales service leaves a lasting impression and can often create loyal customers for life. Remember, it's your

responsibility to nurture the relationship, not the customer's. Creating experience elevators is great for your business and it's not difficult. It just takes a little extra planning followed by a commitment to execution.

Building a memorable total customer experience moves you beyond transaction-based selling to relationship building and that's what. ■

## 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](http://www.michaelvickers.com).*





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# Running Your Business Right

By David Romano, Founder and Owner, Benchmarkinc

Have you ever had one of those epiphanies that hit you like a ton of bricks and changed your life? Mine came about 15 years ago on trip to visit a friend in New York City. I had just started a consulting business and began working with members of a large flooring cooperative. My friend Steve, an investment banker who lived on the Upper West Side, wanted to go to a local bookstore to get a coffee and just chill out and read a book. For a guy who was living in Texas and played rugby for recreation, this was about the last thing I wanted to do in NYC. Quite frankly, I would have rather watched Annie on Broadway.

But I guess being in that bookstore that day was fate. The business gods decided it was time for me to refocus with a good book. At the time, I thought I had it all figured out. I had an Ivy League degree, graduated from a top-five MBA program, had some solid work experience, and a list of clients that generated an immediate revenue stream. What else could an ignorant new business owner ask for?

Then, at the end cap of the aisle of business books was "The E-Myth Revisited" by Michael Gerber. Once I picked up that book I could not put it down. Other than my marriage and birth of two children, this was the most important event of my life. This was the incarnation of what became David Romano the business owner.

The book teaches the reason most small businesses fail is that they are run by a technician, someone who knows how to do the work but doesn't understand how to be an entrepreneur or a manager. An owner should have all of these traits, but must know when to take on the role of each. It is critical that for no extended period of time can the owner get stuck in one role.

- The technician is an expert in his/her craft (an installer, sales associate, distributor representative). This often leads these people to go into business for themselves – they're good at what they do, and they know it, so why not reap the rewards of their labor? The technician is happiest doing the work they are good at and ignoring the rest, which is, in the end, a recipe for failure.
- The entrepreneur is the dreamer, the one who sets out to do something new, who reaches for the stars. The entrepreneur lives in the future, thinking about what could be (rather than in the present). The entrepreneur is often frustrated by how slow the world seems to move.

- The manager is the detail-oriented one, who dots the i's and crosses the t's, the one who remembers to pay the bills, and wants a well-organized world with no surprises; a world where things happen in an orderly, predictable manner.

All of these components are necessary in the founder of a business: without the entrepreneur, you might as well keep working for someone else as a technician. Without any technical ability, the entrepreneur must rely on others to get anything done, and without the organizational abilities of the manager, the other two would probably find themselves without power in the company because they had other things to do than pay the bills.

If the business is to thrive, it must move beyond the founder: a business that is wholly dependent on the founder and their abilities is not really a business, but rather a very burdensome job for founder. Every time you are out sick or take a vacation or are otherwise absent, the business stops too.

A real business is one where the founder has created a system so that the business can run itself without their constant presence, and where he/she spends their time observing and managing the performance of their team within those systems. In fact, data shows that the most profitable owners take over three weeks of vacation per year!

So the question now becomes, what is the best system? Quite simply, the right way to run a business is to do just that - run it. Run it through managing people and systems. Meet with the team, design agreeable systems, and then ensure protocol is followed by observing and measuring. If this is done, it will allow an owner the luxury of being more of an owner and manager than getting dragged into the constant technician role.

Listed below is a diagram outlining a productive week in the life of a business owner in the flooring industry and further explanation of each task:

Sample Weekly Schedule	
Day	Task
Mon.	Review Staff Performance & Hold Sales Meetings
Tue.	Meet with Prospective Clients & Top Accounts
Wed.	Follow up Calls & Brainstorm New Growth
Thu.	Discuss Results & Develop Task Lists with Team
Fri.	Alternate Weeks - Day Off & Financial Reviews

# “ A real business is one where the founder has created a system so that the business can run itself without their constant presence...”

- Review Performance with Sales Staff – Cover sales to goal, close rates (overall, on quotes, on measures), average transaction, traffic, outstanding quotes, customer service, change orders, open orders, outstanding issues, etc... Hold sales meetings covering selling techniques, merchandising, and installation.
- Meet with Prospective Clients and Top Accounts – Develop a list of prospective clients to visit such as adjusters, realtors, builders and schedule meetings to secure new business. Have lunch with top accounts to ensure future business.
- Brainstorm New Avenues of Growth and Make Customer Follow-Up Calls – Create strategic plans outlining new avenues of growth and/or new lines of business. Contact all customers that have been quoted, but have not purchased, to try to secure the business or ask why they decided not to buy.
- Meet with Team to Discuss Results – Hold meetings with managers, administrative staff, and operations team to discuss both financial and operational performance. Utilize dashboards that illustrate all facets of the business such as receivable aging, average days to install, gross profit and sales by sales associate, etc.
- Alternate Day Off and Financial Review of Company – Alternate every other Friday off to recharge your mind with conducting a financial review projecting cash flow, viewing written and delivered reports, monitoring receivables and payables, managing inventory aging, etc...
- Flooring owners who tracked close rates of their sales team experienced an average of \$51,000 more in sales per sales associate per year.
- Flooring companies that have Policy and Procedures manuals experienced a 3.4% higher close rate and generated 35.2% more in volume per year.
- Flooring companies that held regular management meetings had a gross profit that was 2.5% higher and generated over 48% more in annual revenue.
- Flooring companies that held regularly scheduled sales meetings employed sales associates that generated over \$43,000 more in sales per year per each sales associate.
- Flooring stores that had someone actively scouring the community for new business, a hunter, generated over \$3.6 million dollars in additional revenue.

**Owners who spent at least 40% of their time on marketing and sales grew revenue 60% faster than those that did not.\***

What I had then realized, on what I viewed as a super boring trip to the bookstore, was that I was operating under a principle called “The Confidence Trap.” I believed that whatever I put my mind to I could get done. Sounds admirable right? Wrong! Studies show that the more confident an owner is in his/her abilities, the less profitable their business was. See, what I came to terms with is that hard work does not get the job done. It is hard planning and hard systems that work. One must plan for their future, build a team of people smarter and more aggressive, design systems, and never be complacent. Start working your business and not in it and create a schedule where you can create and mentor a team of All Stars and not have a company full of almos. ■

To many owners this may seem unrealistic or something derived from a textbook, but there is substantial data to back the importance of these tasks. Here are some examples:

## Marketing to Current Customers Pays

**42%** greater chance of hitting profit targets

**79%** higher growth rate (B2B companies)

## Get to Know Your Ideal Customer and Win

**25%** greater chance of hitting profit targets

**46%** higher growth rate (B2C companies)

### 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.*



\*State of the Business Owner Presented by E-Myth 2013 and 2014 Reports

# Target Your Marketing for Better Results

By Josh McGinnis, Owner, Unlock Your Biz

**H**aving a broad selection of flooring on sale, featuring durable products, and being in the flooring business for more than 10 years might just be killing your profitability. Why? Because if you're like most retailers, your ads feature this information when in fact, these attributes are assumed and expected by consumers. To put it into perspective, these features are the equivalent to a car manufacturer advertising they make cars that turn on when the key is put in the ignition; accelerate when the gas pedal is pushed; and stop when adding pressure to the brake.

Sound ludicrous? Keep reading.

When was the last time you saw an Apple ad focused on the amount of memory their computer has? Or explaining how the computer works? You probably can't recall.



**Instead of talking about what all the other flooring guys are talking about, promote how you make a house a home.**

When was the last time you saw a Kohler ad focused on how easy their faucets can be installed or the durability of their finishes? Again, you're likely scratching your head.

The mistake most retailers make is thinking, "What made me buy this product from the manufacturer and put it on my showroom floor? The consumer probably wants to know that information." Wrong. She doesn't care. You care, and that's great. You should care, because it's your reputation at stake. You want to make sure you can back up the products featured on your showroom floor. But the consumer...well, that's a different story.

I recently spoke with Mark Kooyman of Experience Discovery, about consumer targeting. But this isn't your average consumer targeting. No, Mark and his company get beyond the surface demographics of age, race, homeownership, gender, and household income and look at the consumer holistically. With all the consumer data available today, it's possible to know specifics like a consumer's average commute time, what radio station she listens to during that commute, and to what programs she prefers to listen on that radio station.

The same data is available for the magazines she reads, how much she's likely to spend on the next remodel and which room it's going to be. Mark's business helps retailers and manufacturers use this data to translate their brands into an emotional experience that ignites and conveys a point of competitive difference.

Conventional advertising only promoting sales, broad product selection, product attributes, etc. --unfortunately this type of advertising doesn't connect emotionally with consumers, and therefore, you lose consumer traffic and revenues.

Most of you are familiar with Baby Boomers, Gen X-ers, and Millennials or at least heard the terms. What's interesting is how different these groups are within themselves. According to Mark's assessment, there are 66 different lifestyle groups within North America. Knowing which groups are around your store can help you rifle-target your marketing, therefore producing better results for your advertising dollars.

But even knowing more holistically about the three broader groups can help your business. Take the Millennials, for instance.

These are the kids of the Baby Boomers. They're between 20-35 years old today and there are 76 million of them. Within the



## “Changing your approach doesn’t have to be expensive; it has to be different.”

next 10 years, this generation will be driving home purchases. We are in the midst of these folks leaving their parents’ nests. If you watch HGTV, you’ll notice many of the shows feature young adult home buyers looking to move out of their parent’s home. The home and having space is extremely important to them. The inventory of choice for this generation is dramatically different from the Boomers who bought new construction. The Millennial generation, instead, is rehabbing and renovating.

This provides an amazing opportunity for independent flooring retailers.

You don’t have to be an Apple or Kohler to rifle-target consumers or create marketing and advertising that emotionally connects with your customer base. Changing your approach doesn’t have to be expensive; it has to be different. Instead of talking about what all the other flooring guys are talking about, promote how you make a house a home. Patiently walk your customers through the flooring purchase process. After all, walking in a store with thousands of samples is a bit daunting for anyone.

And speaking of patiently walking through the process, “hand-holding” especially gets the millennials’ attention. Why? This group grew up with the helicopter parents, the soccer moms, the parents who stayed a week (not a day) to help their college freshman transition to their dorm and new campus life. These young adults had parental guidance, and depended on it for all their lives. What a fantastic opportunity for a seasoned flooring veteran.

Can you see how “decades in the flooring business” better translates into “We help you easily make your new house a home”? If you’re in an area surrounded by Millennials, give this approach some thought.

How do you create an experience that helps this target group make their purchase? You might create a small booklet that takes them step-by-step through the buying process. This booklet would include questions they should ask, what they should be looking for, and even a comparison between your store and your competition (and the comparison can’t be one sided).

And do you understand the difference between this group and Urban Achievers (a specific demographic who want a quick solution)? Urban achievers have double income earners with higher level positions and stay extremely busy. They value time above money and a long or drawn out process will

actually turn them away and cause them to buy somewhere else. In other words, one group wants their hand held during the buying process and the other group does not. Failure to understand these differences can cost you business. ■

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Josh 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](mailto:josh@unlockyourbiz.com) or (800) 528-5055.

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\*Restrictions apply. For program details go to [wfca-pro.org](http://wfca-pro.org).

# WFCA Website/Digital Marketing Case Study: The Update Process Explained

By Tony King and Kathryn Baird, Partners, Torus Marketing

**B**ackground: The Flooring Gallery of Louisville, KY was selected to be part of the case study after expressing their need to update their website. The company's existing website was built on an older framework without ways to maximize SEO, social media integration and in need of a refresh on design.

When we were looking for a good fit to build a case study, we were looking for a successful, forward-thinking partner with a solid organization and a solid focus on retail. And, as we would be building out the website and digital marketing program as a foundation for WFCA's future efforts, we needed to have someone on board who would be engaged, excited and derive a clear benefit from the case study work.

President of The Flooring Gallery, Nick Freadreacea, and his team have been very receptive to working through this process and sharing it in the pages of Premier Flooring Retailer as it unfolds. Heading the day-to-day effort is The Flooring Gallery's director retail business and marketing Natalie Goodin. She has provided design input and supplier information to assist Torus create the new website, and a new product catalog. The hours of preparation have been extensive to build the new website.

According to Freadreacea, his team was not aware of how big the project would become, but feels the update is truly so important to drive customers to one of the company's five locations: Louisville (2) and Lexington, KY; and Madison and Columbus, IN. "We currently track how many of our customers come into the store by Internet, or television," said Freadreacea. "We recognize the Internet is growing our daily counts," Nick added.

Obviously as we're the first to participate in the World Floor Covering Association's new website and digital marketing program, the upgrades to our website are slower than for other retailers that follow, said Freadreacea.

A big task for Torus and The Flooring Gallery is the creation of a product catalog with photo galleries for all of The Flooring Gallery's product offerings. Because of the nature of this challenge, development will take place in two phases. The first phase will be the initial launch of the website and this will be followed at a later date by the inclusion of a product catalog.

"The new website," according to Freadreacea, "is a long way from being launched," but he is happy to work with Torus on the project. All of the new websites are personalized to the needs and desires of each retailer by Torus.

In this issue's column, we want to walk through our process, why we do what we do, explain our experiences with other independent retailers, and detail how we intend to tie all of the pieces together to create an online digital presence that is scalable, impactful and efficient both in resources and financial commitment.

## A Process Built on Experience

Torus manages more than 300 websites for independent retailers focused on selling products for the home, including appliances, consumer electronics, furniture, and bedding. We have built a platform that is adaptive for the ever-changing algorithms of SEO and leverages the implementation of social networks to enhance consumer engagement.

Growing an online presence requires a complete solution. We built an integrated online presence from the ground up to include eCommerce websites, SEO, local search engine optimization, social media, blogs, YouTube and digital marketing campaigns consisting of re-targeting banner ads, pay-per-click, and demographically targeted email marketing. A new and improved website is not enough. Consider your own online shopping habits to realize that these mediums are seen by the consumer as a continuum, not as separate efforts.

We also knew the retailers we worked with were spending a lot of money and time on different service providers and internal personnel and management. We knew creating a single source service for their digital presence would not only be more effective in delivery, but also provide great cost and time efficiencies.

## All the Pieces Work Together

The end goal is using the online advertising to increase site traffic, social media and blogs to increase awareness and the site as the conversion funnel, working to connect consumers with a team member in your store. In the end, one of the greatest assets an independent retailer has is their customer experience. We view the online presence as a mere extension of that and measure success by engaging consumers, bringing them to the site, and leading them to your door.

“The end goal is using the online advertising to... connect consumers with a team member in your store.”

### The Value of Social Media

Social media is becoming more important and will be absolutely critical in the future. A key part of our process is to get the member/dealer established across all of the major social media platforms and to provide product and lifestyle content to keep a regular stream of updated postings. Blogs and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest provide a way to cross paths of consumers as they do research, while engaging them with your knowledge and brand personality

Fact: The research cycle for the female consumer largely takes place online and it can take up to 4-5 months on average for flooring.

While you can and should leverage social media for promotional efforts, one of its greatest advantages is to connect people in your organization and to showcase your community involvement. More than many other big purchases, flooring installation can be very personal and invasive. Social media is the medium for a true customer experience differentiation if utilized correctly.

### It All Starts With a Profile

Our process starts with the completion of a member profile. This becomes the foundation for building the site, the digital marketing strategy and the social media and blog content. It's the first step in the process of building an online identity.

There are two sets of profile questions that we use to build a complete profile.

The primary profile contains the information we need to begin to populate the site and optimize local search across the various search engines. We gather primary business location information including:

- WFCAN#, Store names and location information, primary contact data
- Mission Statement or About Us (if exists)
- If locations focus on residential, commercial, warehouse or as a design center
- Buying group affiliation (and whether that should be integrated into the site)
- Basic branding and color preferences to guide
- Third party applications integrated into existing site if applicable

- Better Business Bureau Information
- Angie's List
- Existing domain name(s)
- Services offered/featured
- Brand Assets including Logo(s) and Images
- Financing Options/Existing or desired E-Commerce functionality
- Links to existing social media sites
- Google Analytics access on existing site (if not set up, we will get that done first thing to establish a baseline for analysis of traffic and digital marketing effectiveness)
- Product Categories and associated brands for each category
- Products outside of flooring that may need to be included in site

This information will give us the basic structure to build a profile and begin theme building, analysis and local search optimization. The second profile, Digital Marketing Profile, will serve as the foundation for banner/re-targeting, e-mail marketing and social media. For this profile, we get into more specific information that will enable us to build out the digital marketing campaigns, SEO and site structure including:

- Social media outlets, links and passwords/admin access
- DMA or 3-Digit Zip
- Focus Brands/Products
- Main Navigation Headers
- Title Tag Suffix/Meta Descriptions/Keywords
- Website Email Configuration (for example: info@ for contact, request@ for in home estimate, service@, etc...)

In the end, we take all of this information and we build a platform for digital brand story telling, a conversion funnel. It's scalable and built for the future. We have all the pieces in place for the member/dealer to build their story and engage their consumer across every digital front, with the very traditional goal of bringing more people through the doors.

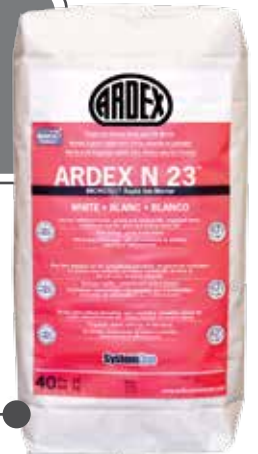
In every issue of Premier Flooring Retailer, we will present a progress update of the study as it unfolds. Contact editor Jeff Golden for details at [jeff@pfrmagazine.com](mailto:jeff@pfrmagazine.com). ■





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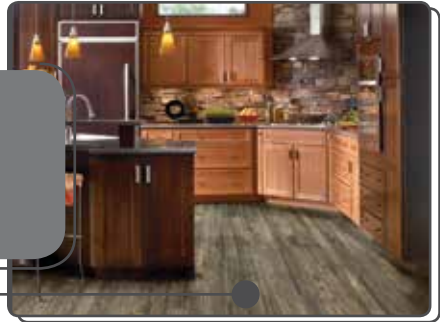


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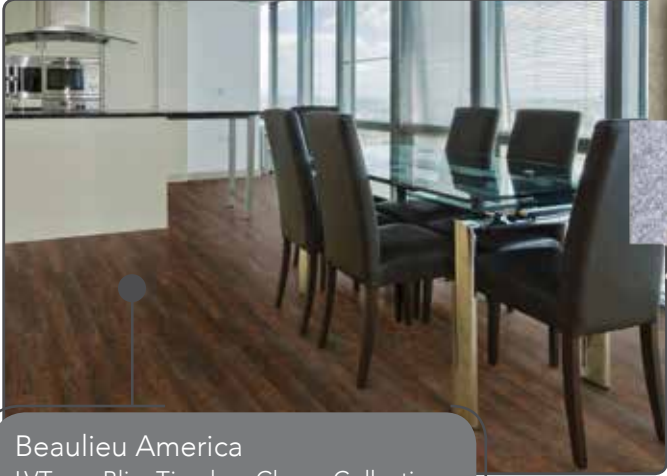


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# The World Floor Covering Association Now Accepting Nominations for Annual Gold Standard Award

Entries for the World Floor Covering Association's (WFCA) coveted annual Gold Standard Award are now being accepted. The Gold Standard Award is presented each year to one WFCA member retailer who exemplifies the standards of a WFCA member and has created an outstanding retail experience for customers.

To receive the award, retailers are reviewed and judged on:

- Knowledge – A knowledgeable and well-managed staff who remain actively informed on their own inventory, as well as news and issues affecting the industry
- Customer Service – Providing courteous service and customer assistance throughout the selection, purchase and post-purchase processes
- Quality of Store Image – A clean, professional, well-maintained store
- Code of Conduct – Adherence to the WFCA Code of Conduct

In addition, companies must also: be WFCA members; have been in business for at least three years; and have favorable Better Business Bureau reports. The winner of this year's award will receive a \$5,000 check, a Gold Standard Trophy, press recognition and a customized WFCA seal for their store entrance.

To enter, applicants must complete the submission form and present multimedia marketing materials and other documents as part of the review process. The deadline for submissions is December 31, 2014. Companies interested in entering or nominating an entrant for the 2014 Gold Standard Award can visit [www.wfca-pro.org](http://www.wfca-pro.org) or call (800) 624-6880 for more details. Note: All entry material will be treated with complete confidentiality and will be reviewed only by the judging panel.

The award winner will be announced at Surfaces in Las Vegas, NV between January 21 and 23, 2015. ■

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

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# My Flooring<sup>®</sup> WARRANTY

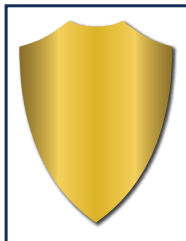
## Become an Authorized Retailer

**My Flooring Warranty is a Turn-Key, Branded, Automated, Customer Retention and Closing Machine.**

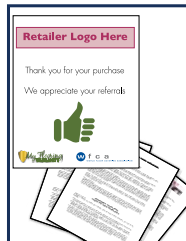
- Provide Your Customer with a One Year Spot and Spill Warranty at NO COST TO YOU\*
- Create a Competitive Advantage Over the Big Box Stores and Other Competitors
- Establish an Automated Customer Retention Program
- All Materials are Branded with YOUR Store Logo and Contact Information

**WFCA Exclusive - Enrollment  
is FREE for WFCA Members (\$695 value)**

**The Program is as Easy as 1 - 2 - 3!**



**1.** Access Your Private Portal and Enter Customer Data.



**2.** Activation E-Mail and Warranty Information sent to your customer.



**3.** Protect and Care Guide, Spot and Spill Warranty Certificate\*, Automatic Cleaning Reminders generated and sent to your customer.

**Sign Up Now at [MyFlooringWarranty.com/WFCA](http://MyFlooringWarranty.com/WFCA)**

**or contact us directly:**

**[ClientCare@MyFlooringWarranty.com](mailto:ClientCare@MyFlooringWarranty.com) • 815.895.9911**



**ENDORSED BY**  **w f c a**  
WORLD FLOOR COVERING ASSOCIATION

**"Unlike anything ever developed before, this program uses critical 'touch points' to digitally deliver your brand and enhance your store's image in a fully automated format. The My Flooring Warranty® Program is the edge over the big box stores you've been waiting for. The WFCA urges you to consider and enroll in this extraordinary brand building program."**

**- Scott Humphrey, CEO, World Floor Covering Association**

\* When partnered with an Authorized Service Provider By becoming an Authorized Retailer you can offer your customers who purchase new carpet a one-year spot and spill cleaning warranty. My Flooring Warranty has negotiated with certified cleaning companies all over the county to ensure you have the best service available in your area. MFW has verified certification, insurance and customer feedback.



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